

North Reading Public Schools' District Highlights

An informational newsletter showcasing news and events of the North Reading Public Schools

Volume 4, Issue 4
**Spring
2018**

Inside
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Superintendent's Message

It is my pleasure to present to you the spring edition of the North Reading Public Schools' Superintendent's newsletter, "District Highlights."

It has been a long winter and a chilly spring, yet the closing weeks of the 2017-2018 school year are upon us. With this in mind, as I have done in past years with my final newsletter for the given school year, I wish to dedicate my "Superintendent's Message" to thanking the community of North Reading for their many, significant contributions resulting in another successful school year in the North Reading Public Schools.



The list of those whom I wish to thank is extensive and therefore it is unrealistic that I could list all of the names here of those who have been supportive of the work of our school district. It is, nonetheless, appropriate that I extend a general thank you. To all of our students, I thank you for your hard work and for the excitement that you bring to school each day. I wish also to thank our teachers, support staff, and administrators for your hard work and your care and concern for our students. You bring your best efforts to school each day, and I am grateful for your important, noble work.

Thank you to all of the parents of our students for your support and for your cooperation and collaboration. Your partnership with the school district is critically important and, in my opinion, the results of your efforts speak for themselves.

Our Parents' Associations and Parent Teacher Organizations and Booster Groups extend tremendous effort in support of the work that takes place in each of our schools on a daily basis. The work that you do—and the generous donations of resources and funds—supplement our mission as a school district to the benefit of all students. In short, we could not do what we need to do without you.

Thank you to our School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Police Department, Fire Department, Flint Memorial Library staff, Youth Services Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Public Works Department, Community Impact Team, and all of the municipal officials and employees who serve as important partners with our school department and who make our efforts extra special and rewarding knowing that we work in a community that supports our young people and the mission of the school district.

I extend my deep appreciation to the North Reading community at-large for your strong support—moral and financial—of the work of the North Reading Public Schools. You demonstrate time and time again that you care about the children of our special town through your strong support of public education. I am very aware of the challenges that many taxpayers face and remain committed to all that we will work diligently as a school district to ensure that you can always remain proud of the fact that you have invested in a top-rate school district, something that each and every town and city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts strives for, but does not always realize. I am honored to serve as your Superintendent of Schools and commit to you that I will continue to do my very best, in partnership with others, to ensure that you can always be proud to say that you live in North Reading—a community that has an outstanding and well-deserved reputation for excellence with respect to its schools and community spirit.

Thank you all for what you do to support the work of the North Reading Public Schools and the students of the district. Have a wonderful spring and an enjoyable summer!

Jon C. Bernard, *Superintendent*

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North Reading
Superintendent
of Schools
on Twitter:
@nrpsupt**

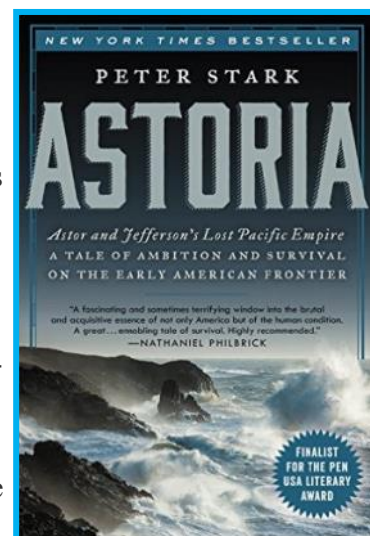
**See page 8 for a
Calendar of Events**

Superintendent's Book Recommendation: *Astoria*, by Peter Stark

I have previously recommended books of great, historic adventure and such is the case with Peter Stark's *Astoria*. I learned so much about the discovery of the west and highly recommend this interesting and exciting book. A review of *Astoria* on Amazon.com reads as follows: In the tradition of *The Lost City of Z* and *Skeletons in the Sahara*, *Astoria* is the thrilling, true-adventure tale of the 1810 Astor Expedition, an epic, now forgotten, three-year journey to forge an American empire on the Pacific Coast. Peter Stark offers a harrowing saga in which a band of explorers battled nature, starvation, and madness to establish the first American settlement in the Pacific Northwest and opened up what would become the Oregon trail, permanently altering the nation's landscape and its global standing.

Six years after Lewis and Clark's began their journey to the Pacific Northwest, two of the Eastern establishment's leading figures, John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson, turned their sights to founding a colony akin to Jamestown on the West Coast and transforming the nation into a Pacific trading power. Author and correspondent for *Outside* magazine Peter Stark recreates this pivotal moment in American history for the first time for modern readers, drawing on original source material to tell the amazing true story of the Astor Expedition.

Unfolding over the course of three years, from 1810 to 1813, *Astoria* is a tale of high adventure and incredible hardship in the wilderness and at sea. Of the more than one hundred-forty members of the two advance parties that reached the West Coast—one crossing the Rockies, the other rounding Cape Horn—nearly half perished by violence. Others went mad. Within one year, the expedition successfully established Fort Astoria, a trading post on the Columbia River. Though the colony would be short-lived, it opened provincial American eyes to the potential of the Western coast and its founders helped blaze the Oregon Trail.



Thank you, Mr. Venezia and Mrs. Koepke!

On Monday, May 7, 2018, the North Reading School Committee and the district administration will bid a fond farewell to two School Committee members, Mr. Jerry Venezia and Mrs. Julie Kopeke.

Mr. Venezia has served on the School Committee for a remarkable nineteen years! His tenure has been marked with many success, and his volunteerism is something to be admired. His impact on the North Reading Public Schools to the benefit of its students is something to be proud of. Mr. Venezia's historical knowledge, keen intellect, and sense of humor will be missed.

Mrs. Kopeke has served on the School Committee for three years. Her passionate advocacy for children and for high academic standards has contributed greatly to the improvement of the school district. Like Mr. Venezia, Mrs. Koepke's impact on the North Reading Public Schools will be felt for quite some time.



As Superintendent of Schools, I have a unique insight into the time and dedication that those who serve as volunteer members of the School Committee give for a purpose much larger than themselves. It takes special people to give the time and energy to work with the school district's administrators to provide a high quality educational experience for all students.

On a personal note, and on behalf of all who have benefitted from your service, I offer a heartfelt THANK YOU to Mr. Venezia and Mrs. Kopeke for your service to the North Reading School Committee. You can leave the School Committee with your heads held high, knowing you have made a difference!

North Reading Public Schools' "Parent University" A Great Success

I am pleased to report that the North Reading Public Schools' first "Parent University" event, held on Saturday, April 7th was a great success. The results of a survey administered to those who attended the event indicate that parents and community members found the workshops offered to be informative. As a reminder, "Parent University" is a day of informational programs for parents to further strengthen the partnership that exists with the North Reading Public Schools and to provide parents with greater insight into their child's education and other useful information.



The vision for "Parent University" is that it be an innovative educational model that promotes learning for parents of North Reading Public Schools, taking families' challenges, needs and educational goals into account for maximum impact on student success. "Parent University" strives to teach valuable skills and provide knowledge that benefits both families and children and promotes an inclusive school culture, helping participants to feel even more valued in their school community, which is crucial in empowering them to become a partner in their children's education. "Parent University" was facilitated by a collaborative management team comprised of school district employees and community partners who share a common vision for our community, each

bringing their years of experience and expertise to have a collective, positive impact on student performance and the overall success of the North Reading Public Schools.

I am grateful to the many educators in the North Reading Public Schools and members of the community who participated and who helped to make our school district's first "Parent University" event a great success. The events of the day on April 7th were fully funded through the generosity of sponsors, and I wish to thank them for their support. The sponsors of "Parent University" are Mr. Tony Maffeo of Integrated Benefits Group (IBG); Mr. Steve Tardanico of Reimbursement Specialists Inc.; Mr. Geof Simons of Ameriprise Financial; Mr. Michael Walbourne and the Reading Cooperative Bank's Charitable Trust; Ms. Anna McGovern and Mr. Chris Callahan of the Chartwells Dining Services; and the North Reading Community Impact Team. I wish also to thank the North Reading High School Student Council and their faculty advisor, Ms. Amy St. Arnaud, for providing "child care services" for the young children of parents who wished to attend Parent University. Please mark your calendar now to attend next year's "Parent University" event to be held on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at North Reading Middle/High School.

School Safety Summit: May 29, 2018

In an effort to offer greater insight into the protocols and programs in place across our school district that are intended to provide safe and secure schools, the North Reading Public Schools and the North Reading Police Department are hosting a "School Safety Summit" on Tuesday, May 29, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center at North Reading Middle/High School. North Reading Police Chief Michael Murphy and I extend an invitation to attend this important event to the parents/guardians of current students attending the North Reading Public Schools as well as the faculty and staff of the school district.

At the "School Safety Summit," school and public safety personnel will be present to update those in attendance on some of the programs that are in place to provide safe and secure learning environments in all of the schools in the North Reading Public Schools and to provide other, relevant information. While it is planned that there will be a fairly detailed presentation made, please understand that some of the efforts at strengthening the safety and security of our schools are not able to be referenced or discussed publicly as doing so would compromise their integrity and efficacy.

School safety--and the safety and security of all who work and learn in our schools--is of the highest priority and continues to receive significant attention. It is essential that we create the safest educational environments if our students are going to learn at the highest levels and if our educators and staff are going to do their very best work.

I hope you are able to join school and public safety personnel at the "School Safety Summit" to be held on Tuesday, May 29, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center at North Reading Middle/High School.

Superintendent's Educator Goals

At the May 7, 2018 meeting of the North Reading School Committee, I presented an update on my progress to date to meet the goals established through my Educator Plan and which are aimed at further enhancing the good work that is taking place in our school district. The Goals that I have established, and which were adopted in May of 2017, are “two-year goals” meaning that their full realization is scheduled for the Spring of 2019. The goals are divided into three categories as prescribed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Professional Practice, Student Learning, and District Improvement. The Educator Goals for my continued work as Superintendent of Schools are as follows:

Professional Practice Goal: To ensure the continued, highest level of effective, strategic leadership for the North Reading Public Schools, the Superintendent will continue to engage in and support professional development activities that will further develop his skills in strategy development, data analysis, instructional leadership, leadership team development, and School Committee-Superintendent relations.

Student Learning Goal: The Superintendent will work to create the conditions necessary for all students to achieve at the highest levels. By the end of the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, each of the five schools in the district will have met or shown significant progress toward meeting their identified student growth target for the “High Needs” and “All Students” subgroups. Strong collaboration with school principals and other administrators on the development of administrator goals, activities, and benchmarks will serve to establish a framework for elevating student achievement through targeted efforts.

District Improvement Goal #1: The Superintendent will facilitate the execution of the school district's strategic plan, “NRPS 2021: A Strategy for the Future,” that includes a shared vision and strategic direction for the North Reading Public Schools. The strategic plan includes identified objectives in the areas of Teaching and Learning, Student Support Services, and Technology Integration. The strategic plan serves as a blueprint for elevating student achievement and providing an overall advancement of the school district through the year 2021.

District Improvement Goal #2: The Superintendent will actively participate in the comprehensive review and update of the school district's Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) through collaboration with both school and public safety personnel; new initiatives will be implemented as applicable.

District Improvement Goal #3: The Superintendent will work to increase the use of social media and other technologies to serve as methods of communication and as informational resources among and between the school district and the community.

District Improvement Goal #4: The Superintendent will serve as an active partner in the development of Digital Learning initiatives that strive to meet the objectives of a twenty-first century learning experience for all students.

District Improvement Goal #5: The Superintendent will lead, co-lead, or otherwise participate in Social Emotional Learning activities that serve to address the social emotional needs of students.

District Improvement Goal #6: The Superintendent will facilitate the development of North Reading “Parent University,” to further engage the community and parents of school-aged children on topics of interest and relevance.

These goals align with identified initiatives as delineated in our school district's five-year strategic plan, “NRPS 2021: A Strategy for the Future,” and will serve to ensure that our school district continues to thrive and provide a robust classroom and co-curricular educational experience for all students. You can access [a status report on my progress](#) to achieve the identified goals.

**The 2018-2019 school year calendar is now available.
Please check the school district's website at
www.north-reading.k12.ma.us
to access next school year's calendar.**

North Reading Public Schools Join the “Leading the Nation” Effort

By Dr. Patrick C. Daly, Assistant Superintendent

In public education, it is rare that we take the time to step back and appreciate our achievements and celebrate our accomplishments. Graduation and grade level transitions allow us time to reflect upon our experiences, but in truth there is so much that is accomplished daily that we rarely are able to recognize the successes of our students and staff.

At the state level we do celebrate achievement and growth scores on standardized assessments, through district accountability, and via other quantitative measures, but there is certainly a need to transcend these measures and focus not only on those aspects of the educational experience but also on the experiences that have educated the whole child. From inviting learning spaces, student engagement, and athletic and academic competitions to performances, showcases, awards and achievements, there is much in North Reading and Massachusetts to recognize and celebrate.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has designed a campaign entitled Leading the Nation that is meant to promote the achievements of the Massachusetts Public Schools.

Among the achievements of Massachusetts that the DESE recognizes on its website, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/leadingthenation/>, is that Massachusetts is:



#1 in the U.S. in reading and math on [NAEP](#), "The Nation's Report Card" (2005-2015)

#1 in the world in reading on the [PISA](#) international assessment (2016)

#1 in [Advanced Placement](#) success in the country (2017-2018)

An integral piece of this campaign is the celebration at the local district level for the ways in which North Reading is a leader. We have gathered information and created a website, available on each of our school sites and the district site, to represent all the ways in which the North Reading Public Schools are leading the nation. On social media we are using the hashtag #leadingthenation and we are adding new information to the website with each new accomplishment.

As you will see on the site, we are celebrating large areas of our district: Digital Learning; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Supporting all Students; and Finance and Operations. Each of these categories contains links to presentations, social media feeds, graphics, charts, and much more that help to document the ways that the North Reading Public Schools are #leadingthenation.

In addition to the broad categories, we are celebrating the following areas in North Reading as “Ten Ways the North Reading Public Schools are #leadingthenation”:

1. Our students thrive in a safe and supportive learning environment.
2. We are a future ready school district.
3. We believe in personalized learning.
4. Our students achieve at the highest levels.
5. Our students excel at athletics and competitions.
6. Our Visual and Fine Arts program is outstanding.
7. Our learning spaces are inviting, and our educators are exceptional.
8. We engage our families and communities.
9. We have a growth mindset.
10. We have a strategic plan.

As you are able to see on the live website, each of these ten areas represents a clickable link. Most of the links bring you to a sub-page with additional links, photographs, articles and videos that celebrate the achievements across all five schools.

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From the Desk of the Director of Finance and Operations

By Michael A. Connelly, Director of Finance and Operations

The North Reading School Committee is preparing to vote a fiscal year 2019 budget on April 30, 2018 to put forward at North Reading's annual open town meeting which is scheduled for June 4, 2018. For the last several years, the school department has operated under a modified level services budget. That means that spending has essentially been the same as the previous year with the exception of modifications due to shifts in enrollment, contractual salary obligations, operational fixed cost increases, and modest enhancements driven by the school district's strategic plan to make continuous improvements to the school department. The fiscal year 2019 recommended budget for the school department is \$31,198,533. This represents a 5.3% increase over Fiscal year 2018.

The fiscal year 2019 budget was driven by many factors and challenges, which led to the need to make staffing and expense adjustments all netting to a \$1,564,988 increase over the FY18 appropriation. These factors can be summarized by the following bulleted points:

- ◆ Contractual obligations with employees and employee unions;
- ◆ Additional staffing to address the following: (1) to maintain educationally sound student/teacher ratios; (2) to meet the needs of students with special needs; (3) to address the social/emotional needs of students; (4) to provide academic support to identified students;
- ◆ Associated costs to properly operate and maintain the middle/high school campus;
- ◆ Increase in out-of-district costs for tuitions and transportation to appropriately meet the needs of all students;
- ◆ Restoration of school expense budgets and small capital and equipment line items
- ◆ Increases in revenue offsets and reliance on one-time revenue sources (anticipated fiscal year end reserves in school revolving accounts);

The fiscal year 2019 recommended Preliminary Budget includes funding needed to implement a portion of Year Three of the school district's strategic plan, "NRPS 2021: A Strategy for the Future." The three major strategy areas of "NRPS 2021" are Teaching and Learning, Technology Integration, and Student Support Services. The budget priorities identified below are directly connected to two of the three major strategy areas and are supported by the work of the Leadership Team on the strategic plan.

Strategy	NRPS 2021 Recommended Positions	Cost
Teaching & Learning	1.0 FTE Academic Teacher (High School)	\$63,720
Student Services	1.0 FTE School Adjustment Counselor (High School)	\$63,720
Student Services	0.4 FTE School Psychologist (Batchelder School)	\$25,488
Student Services	0.5 FTE Reading Teacher (Little School)	\$31,860
Student Services	1.0 FTE Elementary Team Chairperson	\$63,720
Total	3.9 FTE	\$248,508

The cost for these new positions (3.9 FTE) is a modest \$248,508 which represents an overall increase of only 0.85%. It is worth noting that there were many other positions that are also identified in the district's strategic plan "NRPS 2021"; the unfortunate reality is that the cost to fully fund "NRPS 2021" far exceeds affordability for the upcoming fiscal year.

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From the Desk of the Director of Finance and Operations

By Michael A. Connelly, Director of Finance and Operations

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The recommended budget proposal that will be discussed at the April 30, 2018 School Committee meeting, currently includes a budget gap of \$482,522 from what the Town's revenue plan for fiscal year 2019 is currently able to afford. The Administration and School Committee remain hopeful that additional revenue will be identified between now and the April 30, 2018 budget vote that will reduce the current budget gap. Additional revenue may be identified through one or all of the following sources; 1. state chapter 70 aid increases identified in the House and Senate budgets; 2. increase in special education circuit breaker state funding; 3. additional funding due to qualification for extra-ordinary relief special education funds; 4. Reduction in fixed costs i.e. health insurance rate increases. The School Department will be paying very close attention to these funding sources as we approach the April 30th budget vote. It is likely that although additional revenue will be identified, difficult decisions to fund a balanced fiscal year 2019 budget lie ahead. The School Committee is set to discuss and debate these decisions at their April 27th budget workshop and then again at their April 30th School Committee meeting in the coming days.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of the work by the Principals and Directors, and by my colleagues on the Administrative Council throughout the long budget process, who worked so very hard to discuss student needs, think creatively, and make difficult decisions that ultimately affect the quality of the student experience in the North Reading Public Schools.

Town and school officials have held a series of public meetings to discuss both the town and school budget requests throughout this spring. You may follow the budget process and review key documents on the district website at <http://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us/business-office/pages/budget>.

You may also follow me on Twitter for key budget updates at [@nrpsfinance](https://twitter.com/nrpsfinance).

North Reading Public Schools Join the “Leading the Nation” Effort

By Patrick C. Daly, Assistant Superintendent

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Our hope is that this page becomes a living document that is constantly refreshed with each new achievement. I will work to curate the site but I would certainly appreciate input from our entire school community. To that end we have created the email address leadingthenation@nrpsk12.org to be used as a way to communicate information that you would like to see included on the website in the next update. This could be in the form of a blurb, link to a news article, photograph, video, or other related celebration of our growth and achievement as a district.

We look forward to our entire school community joining in this ongoing celebration, especially as we experience Leading the Nation week on May 7-11, 2018. Please check out our website, follow the hashtag on social media, and share any relevant information via email or social media to positively recognize our students, staff, and school community in North Reading. As always, please feel free to contact me at any time with questions about #leadingthenation.

Looking for School District Information?

www.north-reading.k12.ma.us

Be sure to sign up for the “Notify Me” alerts on the home page of the district or any school website to receive important website updates.

Introducing the Digital Learning and Technology Plan for the North Reading Public Schools

I am pleased to present to you the North Reading Public Schools' [Digital Learning and Technology Plan](#). The introduction of the North Reading Public Schools Digital Learning and Technology Plan for 2018-2021 shares the district's commitment to providing a technology-rich learning environment that promotes the development of skills and understandings necessary for students and staff to compete in the global workforce. This plan helps the school district meet the needs of our 21st-century learners with a technologically infused and progressive curriculum that utilizes technology to help us collect and analyze student, educator, and district achievement. This plan is designed to set specific targets to monitor and evaluate our success using technology as an instructional tool.

The NRPS Digital Learning Planning Team developed strategic focus areas that include the areas of technology infrastructure and devices, professional learning, content and instruction, and data assessment within the framework of the Friday Institute Digital Learning Progress Rubrics, and aligned their work with the NRPS 2021 Digital Learning Goals and the Future Ready Framework. Furthermore, district administration has been utilizing the Future Ready Leadership Assessment to further identify areas of alignment between the NRPS 2021 and Future Ready Gears.

Several key areas of focus are addressed in this plan to support digital learning and curriculum goals as well as to provide guidance and support to strategic goals associated with technology infrastructure and digital resources. Outlined below are the areas of focus identified in this plan.

- ◆ Introduction and Implementation of the Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards
- ◆ Digital Learning Specialists Model at All Schools
- ◆ Robust Digital Learning Resources and Technical Support
- ◆ Wireless Access in All Classrooms District Wide
- ◆ District Guidance for the Use of Social Media
- ◆ K-12 Implementation of Robotics and Computer Science
- ◆ 1:1 Learning Initiative
- ◆ Personalized & Data Assisted Instruction
- ◆ STEAM and Digital Learning Interdisciplinary Pathways That Support 21st Century Skills

The Digital Learning and Technology Plan was presented at a public meeting of the North Reading School Committee on March 26, 2018 and final edits have been made over the course of the past month.

I am grateful to the district staff, most especially the Director of Digital Learning for the North Reading Public Schools, Dr. Daniel Downs, who participated in the development of this comprehensive plan and hope that you will find some time to review it as your schedule allows. The plan will certainly serve well the students and staff of the North Reading Public Schools as we seek to fulfill our goals for continuous improvement.

Upcoming Important Dates and Events

Early Release; Educator Professional Development	May 25, 2018
No School; Memorial Day	May 28, 2018
School Safety Summit	May 29, 2018
Town Meeting	June 4, 2018
Class of 2018 Commencement Exercises	June 8, 2018; 6:15 p.m.
Last Day of School	June 26, 2018
National Night Out	August 8, 2018
First Day of School; 2018-2019 School Year (Grades 1-12)	September 5, 2018
Pre-K and Kindergarten Orientation	September 5 & 6, 2018
First Day of School; 2018-2019 School Year (Pre-K and K)	September 7, 2018



ANGST: RAISING AWARENESS AROUND ANXIETY

**A FILM CREATED TO START COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ANXIETY
& PROVIDE TOOLS, RESOURCES, & HOPE**

**NORTH READING SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENTS ADVISORY COUNCIL, WITH SUPPORT
FROM THE NORTH READING PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY IMPACT TEAM IS PROUD
TO HOST A SCREENING OF "ANGST" AND A DISCUSSION ON**

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2018

7:00 PM

NORTH READING HIGH SCHOOL

189 PARK STREET

DISTANCE LEARNING LAB

**A second screening for our High School and Middle School students is scheduled for
Friday, May 4, 2018 at 2:30 p.m.**

We welcome all members of the North Reading community, especially parents and students (suggested age 10+) to join us for a special screening of the documentary *ANGST*. The event will feature a viewing of the 56-minute film, followed by an informative discussion, led by

Dr. Jaclyn Mansfield, the School Psychologist at the J.T. Hood Elementary School.

Through candid interviews, the film tells the stories of kids and teens who face anxiety and the impact on their lives and relationships, as well as how to find solutions and hope. In addition, the documentary, along with the following conversations, will provide discussions with mental health experts about the causes of anxiety and its sociological effects along with the help, resources, and tools available to address the condition.

Please RSVP: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0d44aeab28a57-angst>

For more information: <https://angstmovie.com/>
Victoria Labriola, NRSEPAC, viclab@live.com



Join us for North Reading's 5th Annual National Night Out!

Tuesday, August 7, 2018
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
At Ipswich River Park

Residents of all ages are encouraged to come check out our night to celebrate a safe community. Featuring:

- rescue and law enforcement truck demonstrations
- information on protecting seniors and your family from identity theft and scams
- disaster preparation information for all
- face painting, bounce house, and fun
- FREE barbecue for everyone
- "In Plain Sight" drug education walk-through



For more information, email northreadingcit@gmail.com or call **(978) 357-5281**.

Rain Date: Tuesday, August 14, 2018

Need a ride? Contact Elder Services at (978)664-5600.



Images from “Parent University”: Saturday, April 7, 2018

