

Elephant In The Room

By **NICHOLAS PULGINI**

While the heartbreak and destruction throughout southern California may seem foreign and far away, Milton faced a similar plight in late November.

According to Milton Fire Department Chief Christopher Madden's written account, starting Monday, November 18th, the area of Houghton's Hill in the Blue Hills was consumed by heavy smoke. When the Milton Fire Department arrived, they found approximately one to two acres consumed by fire, but it spread rapidly.

The arid conditions, heavy fuel loads, and gusty winds allowed the fire to explode. Within hours, it had expanded to over 30 acres of land. Firefighters from bordering towns like Canton, Norwood, Dover, Dedham, Sharon, Stoughton, and Abington assembled to help Milton extinguish the brush fire.

They closed off traffic to the surrounding areas and planned to

Big Fires Everywhere



The back burning process at the base of Houghton Hill.

Photo courtesy of **CHRISTOPHER MADDEN**

contain the fire to Houghton's Hill. Thanks to tankers donated by other towns like Foxboro, they established continuous water supplies.

However, as the sun began to set and the fire started to climb, the firefighters decided that back-burning would be the safest option to stop the spread

of the fire. Back-burning is when they set fire to vegetation in the opposite direction of the primary fire to destroy its fuel source. With the valiant perseverance of the firefighters, over 10% of the fire was contained by Tuesday morning.

Starting at 7:30 on Tuesday, Madden led forces that used water and extensive digging to extinguish all hotspots within 30' of the fire's edge. By 3 p.m., 70% of the fire had been contained. Aid from other towns left the scene, and the Milton Fire Department conducted an overnight watch to monitor the fire.

The fire consumed 50 acres with a 2.19-mile perimeter of Houghton's Hill around the Skyline Trail and Racoon Hollow. While the cause is still unknown, the state has launched an investigation and declared it an act of arson.

Madden stated, "95% of all outside fires are human-caused." See

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Milton Public Schools to Restructure Administration for 2025-26

By **GRIFFIN ANGUS**

Major changes are coming to Milton Public Schools' administration for the 2025-26 school year. Superintendent Peter Burrows announced that the system would transition away from K-8 coordinators and high school department heads and instead have a single K-12 administrator for each subject.

He says the goal is to improve curriculum alignment across all grade levels, though he acknowledges that the shift "may leave gaps."

Currently, the high school administrators for the core subject areas are Amy Tom for science, Brian Selig for math, H Hardie for English, and Barbara Wright for social studies.

For the 2024-25 school year, Selig and Wright will already serve as K-12 administrators, while Tom and Hardie will remain in high school-only roles.

Wright transitioned from a 6-12 role to a K-12 role this year, which Burrows described as a "positive move" thus far.

Next year, Hardie and Tom's positions will be restructured, as will all K-8 subject-area administrators.

The K-8 coordinators and high school department heads are responsible for developing and implementing curriculum at their respective levels. They all report to Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Regina Watts.

Burrows was quick to highlight the contributions of staff "working behind the scenes" to develop the

curriculum.

Burrows said the change was made to create a more cohesive educational experience, which, as with any decision the administration makes, will "prioritize the students."

He believes that having a single administrator oversee all grade levels will improve consistency, particularly for students transitioning from middle to high school. However, he admits that some curriculum gaps may still exist and that "there is always room for improvement."

Hardie, who teaches freshman English in addition to his administrative responsibilities, said that in his experience, students come to the high school with significant "content skills and how to be a student skills," adding that Milton is doing "an outstanding job" with the middle to high school transition and curriculum alignment.

Burrows said that staff and administrators have "been pretty open minded" so far in the process, although not everyone is fully on board yet. Hardie said that many high school English teachers are "disappointed" with the decision, since he and them "work well as a team."

Hardie said he is "absolutely disappointed" with his current role being eliminated. "I know I've done a lot in my three years here."

During his tenure, the department has made significant progress in increasing "diversity and rep-

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Buzz-Worthy Kazooligans Hit All the Right Notes

By **AIDAN LESCHUK**

Nearly every day, before and after school, the hallways of Milton High come alive with the sounds of student musicians. From violins and pianos to the occasional recorder, students practice, take lessons, and perform, filling the air with a diverse symphony of melodies.

However, none can be compared to the community of over a dozen students gathered in an everyday music classroom for one purpose: to play the kazoo.

The Kazooligans, Milton High's resident kazoo choir, are a group of dedicated individuals to the long-ridiculed craft of the kazoo. They meet weekly and have performed at numerous official school concerts.

Cofounder Dan Winterberg initially sought to create a jazz group "with exotic instruments." The idea morphed to surround just one of these unorthodox instruments and eventually developed into the concept of a kazoo-based musical group.

After gaining the approval of music teachers who, in the worlds of Winterberg, "thought [it] was funny," this strangely fascinating idea became a reality.

Their song selection is also wildly unorthodox, ranging from "Funky Town" to "Super Mario World," and they even plan on playing "Copacabana" at an upcoming performance.

Even though the Kazooligans are 100% serious about what they do, that doesn't mean everyone else is on



The Kazooligans.

Photo courtesy of **AIDAN LESCHUK**

the same page. Jay Serwetman, a Kazooligans member, said they were "the only ensemble that got laughs during our performance."

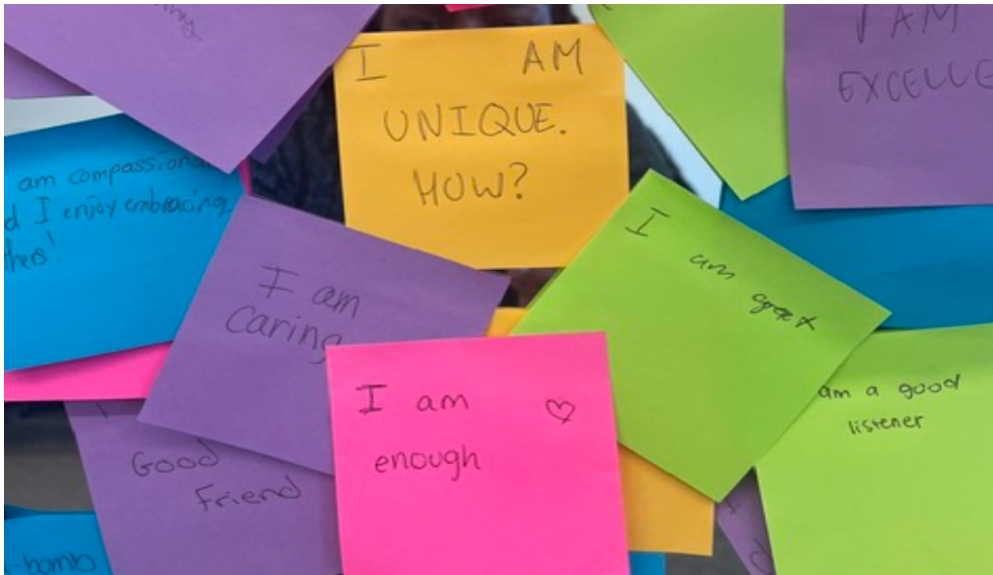
Winterberg and the others have accepted this sentiment, saying, "We know it's silly."

In fact, the promise to not take oneself seriously is far more valuable than the kazoos themselves. "You do absolutely have to acknowledge that this is not a serious cause," said Serwetman. "It's a kazoo choir; it's not going to be professional." Being able to laugh at yourself and have fun playing music is the most important part.

The Kazooligans embody a unique mentality, a rare combination of extreme dedication and humor. Their passion for the strange and unusual serves as a reminder that no matter the stakes, nobody should take themselves too seriously.

FEATURES

MYAC Hosts Milton High’s First Mental Health Fair



Students chose to write what makes them unique on a sticky note and placed it on a mirror. Photo by MYRIAM FRANCOEUR

By ISABELLE GOBBI

Before December break, Milton Youth Advocates For Change (MYAC) hosted Milton High’s first Mental Health Fair. During periods C and D, vendors from local businesses and organizations ran booths in the back of the library.

Macy Burns, president of MYAC, led the planning of this event. “The goal was to have students be able to talk to vendors who could help them with any issues or questions regarding mental health,” she explained.

MYAC, which used to be a town program exclusively within the Milton Coalition, became a school club last year. The club has focused on issues ranging from substance abuse to racial microaggressions, although their focus since moving to the school has been on mental health.

Their goal, in the words of

Burns, is to “make Milton change for the better” and to help students and teachers “learn to deal with the stigma on mental health.”

The club members scheduled the fair before December break to ensure students had access to the resources needed to navigate the stresses and challenges often associated with the holiday season.

Burns and Samantha Quirion, vice president of the club, agree on the importance of talking about mental health in school.

“[School] is where most stress comes from,” Quirion said. “Most people try to bottle it up, so it’s important to talk about it before it gets into something too serious or too big.”

Laura Rosenthal, who works in the prevention department at Bay State Community Services, a social services organization in Quin-

cy, helped coordinate the fair and invite the volunteers. She explained that although conversations on mental health can be uncomfortable, “we need to end the stigma.”

Rosenthal believes it is crucial for students to understand the resources and strategies available when dealing with suicidal thoughts or self-harm.

Each guest at the event shared valuable insights and solutions for improving mental health. From the holistic approaches of an acupuncturist from Blue Willow to the mindfulness techniques introduced by a yoga instructor from Muscle and Flow, students were exposed to a wide range of tools and practices designed to promote well-being.

In addition to the booths, the mental health fair featured a display of mental health-themed artwork created by students. Melanie Chan-

der-Blood, one of Milton High’s art teachers, encouraged her students to explore mental health topics through creative projects. Open submissions were also welcomed.

Zakai Perkins, the secretary of MYAC, described art as “a great therapy,” highlighting the role of creativity in fostering emotional well-being.

As Rosenthal said, “Total health includes mental and physical. You cannot have one without the other.” For this reason, members of MYAC, as well as the volunteers present at the event, believe it is important to talk about mental health.

Burns was “thrilled” with how the fair was going and hopes that MYAC can host a similar fair next year.

“It’s a lot of fun,” agreed sophomore Nate Guthrie. “There are a lot of things to be learned here.”



Students were encouraged to paint their palms with the color they felt best represented their current emotion (yellow for sadness, orange for stressed...) Photo by MYRIAM FRANCOEUR

Power of a Pen: New Club Brings Hope to Hospitalized Children

By MADELINE ALLEN and LILA ASANZA

For many children battling illness, hospitals can feel like a lonely place. However, a group of students at Milton High are determined to change that. They have launched Milton High’s very own chapter of Create For Kids, an organization dedicated to creating art to spread cheer, laughter, and kindness that will bring smiles to the faces of hospitalized children.

Recognizing the growing compassion and creativity among students and their desire to provide opportunities to express themselves in meaningful ways, Create for Kids aims to foster a supportive environment for students to help others through the power of art.

Create for Kids is a non-profit organization based in Tampa, Florida, created by high school student Suma Gadde. The organization’s mission is to get high school students more involved in their communities by finding easy and accessible ways to give back to those less fortunate.

Students can earn community service hours by creating handwritten cards and kits for children battling disease that seek encouragement, entertainment, and fun.



Charlotte Sia and Camila Abboud. Photo courtesy of LILA ASANZA

High schoolers can even volunteer online by merely mailing their cards and kits to hospitals, making Create For Kids an excellent organization for students to easily acquire community service hours while brightening the days of people going through hard times.

Milton High students Camila Abboud and Charlotte Sia were among the many teenagers worldwide who found the organization and volunteered online.

However, they had an urge to do more—specifically within Milton.

Abboud explained, “We came across the Instagram page, and we thought it was something our school needed.”

Abboud and Sia decided to create a chapter for Milton High School to not only give their classmates a way to earn volunteer hours but also to give them a chance to show their support for children fighting against sickness in the Milton community.

The chapter hopes to meet on Mondays after school in Mrs. Burns’ room, the club advisor. All students are welcome to join.

Joining this chapter of Create for Kids offers students a unique opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of others. By dedicating their time and creativity to writing letters of encouragement, hope, and support, students will not only bring joy to hospitalized children but also develop valuable life skills such as empathy, compassion, and effective communication.

The club promises to be a rewarding experience for all involved, fostering a sense of community and purpose among its members, as the friends hope to “get [their] school more involved with the community,” according to Abboud.

More information can be found on their Instagram page: @createforkidsmilton.

New members are always welcome to join!
Meetings are every Wednesday morning at 7:00 in room 212

MHS Brings Back Beloved Europe Trip for 2025

By **LAWSON BEAUDOIN**

After years of hiatus, Milton High School is bringing back its highly anticipated student trip to Europe, a unique opportunity for cultural exploration and hands-on learning. Between April 18th and 26th, 40 students will travel across Europe in what promises to be an unforgettable experience supported by ACIS Educational Tours.

Over the course of nine days, the students will spend two days in Barcelona, Spain, two days in Provence, France, and finally three days in Paris, France.

This tour offers a nine-day cultural immersion through guided tours of iconic landmarks like the Sagrada Familia, the Versailles Château, and the Eiffel Tower, along with hands-on experiences, such as a Taste of France cooking workshop and a Trencadís art session. With round-trip flights, meals, centrally located accommodations, and local transportation all included, this trip provides a seamless and enriching way to explore the history, art, and traditions of these three renowned European regions.

When the trip was initially announced back at the start of October, there was a general consensus of excitement and eagerness to be one of the 40 students that would be part of the week-long trip.

Senior Ronan Kelly said, “As someone who has never left the country, I am really excited the school has given me the opportunity to explore the world.”

Milton High has not had a trip to Europe since the COVID-19 pandemic, which made the announcement even more thrilling. After years of limited travel experiences, students were eager to take advantage of this unique opportunity to travel abroad and immerse themselves in European culture.

Yet, obviously, with the round-trip flights, hotel accommodations, dai-



Infographic by **LAWSON BEAUDOIN** using CANVA

ly meals, and daily experiences, a fee was required to be paid for the trip. At a price of \$4,866 for the nine day trip, many students felt that despite the amazing opportunities the trip has to offer, the price was the deciding factor that deterred them from being one of the 40 students to travel.

Senior Syndey Burns described how, for her, “the price

was definitely the biggest reason why I chose not to go on the trip—even if it’s reasonable for Europe, five grand is still a lot to ask for.”

Many seniors were already planning their “senior trip,” often a vacation trip with their friends to a place outside Massachusetts. As a result, the expensive combination of the cost of that trip with the cost of the Europe trip led to many choosing their senior trip over a school-sponsored trip.

Additionally, for all nine days of the trip, students will be accompanied by a chaperone. Although it is crucial to the safety and security of the student, the accompaniment of a chaperone limits the individual activities students can do while in Europe.

Senior Jacque Timmins emphasized how, “I chose not to go on the trip because we would have to be with a teacher or chaperone the whole time, and I would prefer if I could do some things by myself.”

However, for those who ultimately decided to sign up for the trip, immense enthusiasm and anticipation fill the air as they look forward to exploring Europe.

Senior Juliette Yunger said, “My mom is the leader of the Europe trip, which gave me an easy entry and a good reason to go. I love traveling and I love Europe and my mom asked me if I wanted to go. I’m really excited about the food and visiting new cities.”

For other students, the ability to explore cities they’ve likely never traveled to sparks immense excitement all well.

Whether or not all students chose to sign up, the reintroduction of the trip to Europe reflects Milton High School’s dedication to offering enriching educational experiences beyond the classroom. For the 40 students heading on the trip, it’s sure to be an incredible adventure that blends education and exploration in a way they’ll remember forever.

“Wicked” is Wickedly Good

By **MACY BURNS**

If you’re a fan of Broadway musicals, Ariana Grande, or just a good story, “Wicked” is a movie you don’t want to miss. Based on the stage musical by Stephen Schwartz, which is based on Gregory Maquire’s book, “Wicked” takes us into the land of Oz, but in a different way than L. Frank Baum’s The Wizard of Oz.

The movie tells the hidden story of the witches of Oz, specifically the “Wicked Witch of the West,” Elphaba (played by Cynthia Erivo) and Glinda the Good Witch (played by Ariana Grande), two very different characters who meet in school.

Elphaba, born green, arrives at the story’s school, Shiz, and is portrayed as smart, passionate, and a bit of an outcast. Glinda is a very “popular” girl with a bubbly, attention-grabbing personality and a closet full of pink.

Despite their “loathing” of each other initially, the two girls form a friendship, defying the relationship we all thought they would have from the original story, “The Wizard of Oz.” But as Glinda says, “Pink goes good with green.”

The production of the movie is very impressive, from set design to

costume design—and after the years of planning that the movie took before it started, that’s a good thing. The special effects, especially surrounding the use of magic in the film, are impressive, along with the work the team did to truly make Cynthia Erivo appear green.

The set design did, however, try to remain as true as possible to the stage production, with Elphaba’s green skin, a massive green train, the Emerald City, and a huge field of tulips all being real. The movie’s look resembles what you would see in a storybook or dream.

Truly, the heart of “Wicked” is the music. Songs such as “Popular” or “What is This Feeling?” are huge hits, along with the famous “Defying Gravity.” The choreography is well-planned and complements the music perfectly. Every song adds something to the plot.

Erivo and Grande do a wonderful job of bringing their characters to life, and it truly seems like they melted their own personalities into them.

If you want to see “Wicked,” make sure that you are ready for the two hours and forty minutes that it plays. And if you haven’t seen the play

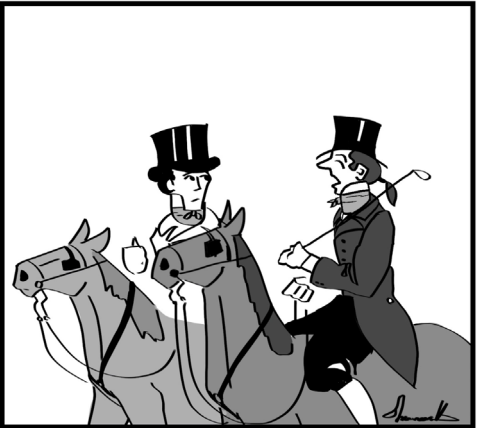
or read the book before, be warned: it will leave you on a cliffhanger. Why? Because the nearly three-hour movie is only part one of the two-part film adaptation of the Broadway play. The second part is scheduled to come out in November 2025.

Overall, “Wicked” is a great movie with a great cast (Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Jonathan Bailey, Jeff Goldblum, Ethan Slater, etc.), and it will leave you thinking about it long after you leave the theater.

So, if you haven’t seen it yet, make sure you find the time. After all, “No One Mourns the Wicked” movie! Rating: 4/5



“Wicked” movie poster. Photo courtesy of IMDb



“Contrary to what Mr. Thorburn says, my new whip, Red Stallion, has got 2 horsepower on her.” Comic by THOMAS HAYDEN

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MHS Goes to Court

By VALERIE HUANG

Objection, non-responsive! After months of relentless practice—mastering every objection, organizing after-school scrimmages, and memorizing affidavits word for word—Milton High’s Mock Trial team has proven they are a force to be reckoned with, securing a coveted spot in the State tournament.

If you have never heard of MHS Mock Trial, you are not alone. As a first-year team founded by H Hardie and junior Ethan Xie, their 3-0 record speaks for itself about the team’s talent and dedication.

Hardie said, “I am incredibly proud and impressed with how we were able to get so many talented students who knew nothing about mock trial three months ago and turn them into someone who swept the region.”

On Monday, January 13, Milton Mock Trial walked into the Brockton Probate and Family Court to face off against the region’s defending champion, Thayer Academy, in a civil case.

After hours of objecting, presenting clever witness statements, and waiting in suspense, the judge declared the plaintiff, Milton, to be the round’s winner by a single point.

Just one week and one day lat-



From left to right: Jack Lydon, Rafa Corcoran, Michael Lydon, Jacob Carlin, Jazz Do, Billardo Verdieu, Madyn Dwyer, Ethan Xie, Izzy Jones, Ellie Janulewicz Lloyd, Valerie Huang, Viena Do, Moss Morisette Berrospi, Dusk Zukowski, Chloe Bergeron, Katie Scott, Griffin Angus, Reagan Gilmartin, and H Hardie.

Photo courtesy of
MOCK TRIAL CLUB

er, MHS Mock Trial returned to the courtroom radiating with confidence, this time going up against Braintree High School as the defense. Once again, the team emerged victorious, further solidifying themselves as an unstoppable force.

Nerves began to rise as it dawned on the team that the final obstacle blocking their path to States was Hull High School.

On the afternoon of Monday, January 27, the team entered the courtroom fueled by determination and a drive to execute their most exemplary performance yet.

When the judge announced a tie, the room fell deafeningly silent. Hearts pounded in anticipation waiting to hear which side received the tiebreaker point. As it was revealed that Milton had been awarded the extra point, sighs of relief were quickly followed with triumphant smiles.

Xie, co-founder of the club, said “I’ve never heard of a first year team doing so well.”

With States scheduled for March 2nd, the team is taking a well-deserved break before weeks of arduous preparations.

Fires

(continued from page 1)

ing the immense destruction caused by the brush fire, Chief Madden urges citizens to “take out what you take in [to the woods].”

While Milton has experienced fires of a similar size, there continues to be of peculiarity surrounding the Blue Hills brush fire. Usually, fires occur throughout March through May. However, Massachusetts experienced a critical drought throughout the fall of 2024, which allowed for the perfect storm.

According to the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, Massachusetts experienced up to 8-11 inches of rainfall deficit. Because of this, almost 700 fires occurred through October and November alone.

With the help and support of neighboring towns, Milton could extinguish the fire quickly and efficiently. Chief Madden refers to the Milton Fire Department as “lucky.”

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. Over the past few weeks, we have seen what can happen when people are unprepared to handle natural disasters. But this wasn’t the case in Milton. The Elephant in the Room would like to thank the many brave firefighters throughout Massachusetts for their perseverance and determination to keep our town safe.

2025-26 Administration

(continued from page 1)

resentation in the materials” they use, and has significantly transformed its course offerings.

Burrows says the district is “still working on” determining exactly what will happen to administrators whose roles are being changed. Hardie says he is “highly optimistic I’ll be in Milton in some role” next year, although he is not sure “what that role will be.”

Since he is inexperienced in elementary and middle school education, Hardie will not be returning as a K-12 administrator. However, he doesn’t “think they’ll have a hard time finding someone who is qualified” to fill that role while acknowledging that it is difficult to find “somebody who is equally skilled in elementary and high school” curriculum development.

Burrows added that staff support for the change “depends on what you’re used to,” with mixed support from the staff largely being due to their comfort levels with the current system. Each school district has different ways of breaking down administrative responsibilities.

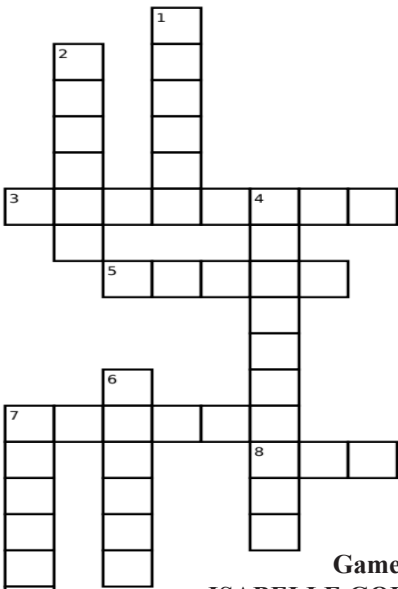
In Massachusetts, Burrows says there is “a mix,” with some towns having district-wide administrators, some having K-8 and high school administrators, and many other combinations.

In fact, Milton has had many different ways of organizing over the years, including high school, K-8, 6-12, and district-wide administrators in just the past two years, varying in subjects.

Despite the difficulties of the district-level role, Hardie believes the “staff at Milton High School is skilled enough to help anybody make the adjustments” required to be successful.

Milton Public Schools is currently running on a deficit, and there will soon be a town-wide vote on a budget override. Burrows says that the “outcome of that [vote] will determine what we can support” in terms of staffing in the system.

MPS Directors and Department Heads (Last Names)



Game by
ISABELLE GOBBI

- Across:
- 3. Director of Literacy K-8
 - 5. Director of Mathematics
 - 7. English Language Arts Department Head
 - 8. Science Department Head
- Down:
- 1. Director of Early Childhood Education
 - 2. Director of Fine Arts & Applied Arts
 - 4. Director of Science K-8
 - 6. Director of Social Studies
 - 7. Director of World Languages

1

REMAIN **INDOORS** WITH WINDOWS AND DOORS CLOSED OR SEEK ALTERNATE SHELTER. **EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY** IF AUTHORITIES TELL YOU TO DO SO

STOP

DROP

AND READ ON HOW TO

EVACUATE

A WILDFIRE

2

IF TRAPPED, **CALL 911** AND GIVE YOUR LOCATION, **TURN ON LIGHTS** TO HELP RESCUERS FIND YOU AND UNDERSTAND **HELP MAY TAKE A WHILE TO ARRIVE**

3

CONNECT WATER HOSES AND FILL GARBAGE CANS, TUBS, POOLS, ETC. WITH WATER **TO HELP FIREFIGHTERS** IF THEY END UP ON YOUR PROPERTY

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

SOURCE: U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION

Infographic by LAYLA RAYMOND