

# OPINIONS

## SITTING IN

### *Support for Community Vision for hospital land*

By Sheryl Mills

**M**y great-great-grandfather, James Wheaton Converse, and his brother, Elisha Slade Converse, worked to improve their communities. Their philanthropy encompassed support for parks, orphanages, community centers, churches, hospitals and libraries both in Boston and the Malden area, including Fellsmere Park and the Malden Hospital land. Their intent was to provide support for the betterment of these communities.

As a Converse family descendant, I am writing to express my support for the continued use of the Malden Hospital land for non-profit services and protected open space, which will benefit all residents of the community now and for future generations. The land the hospital sits on was donated — not sold — for a specific public charitable purpose: to be used for the common good for the

health of the community, and it needs to continue to be used for that purpose. To sell this land to a person or entity other than a public charity violates the intent and vision of the donors.

The private developer's proposal for housing five times that allowed under current zoning would result in multiple negative impacts on the communities of Medford and Malden including traffic overload, green space deficit and most importantly would benefit the developer, not the community. The community vision proposal is for 16 acres of open space and 2 acres of compatible redevelopment.

As a former National Park Service Ranger-Naturalist at Yellowstone and Mount Rainier National Parks, I have observed the tremendous increase in visitation to all our national parks. The attraction to park land and open space has also resulted in economic benefits to the surrounding communities. We

need open space now more than ever for both our physical and mental health. Malden currently has the fifth lowest per capita protected open space in Massachusetts, while being the sixth highest in population density. We have the fortunate opportunity at this moment to make the wise and benevolent choice of improving this community by supporting open, protected community space. Not only will today's residents benefit, but also future generations will use and be thankful for this valuable space for relaxation, recreation and community gatherings.

When land was set aside and protected in the past from development, little did we know how valuable these open spaces would become in such a short period of time. I urge you to ask public officials and candidates to support the community vision for the Malden Hospital land and continue the legacy for the health and benefit of present and future generations.