

"Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier.'" – Alfred Lord Tennyson

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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HILLTOWNS

NOTCHVIEW draws family fun

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

Christmas Day rang in white and bright in the Hilltowns with welcome snow falling just days before.

And while most families were opening presents and gathering 'round the tree, some chose a more active pursuit. Notchview, the Trustees of Reservations property located in Windsor that offers cross country skiing and snowshoeing, was technically closed, but alive with skiers celebrating in their own way.

Josh, Michelle and Neil Pysner of Hinsdale were all on skate skis, equipment that enables them to scurry up and shoosh down hills looking something like waterbugs on a pond. The skis are thin and without edges for maximum skate effect. Michelle and Neil were happy Josh was back in town for the holiday and enjoyed being together in what is their own active Christmas tradition.

Further down the trail, Sarah Mayne of Philadelphia, whose parents now live in Lenox, was excited to be outdoors in one of her favorite spots. "It's fantastic here and I grew up in Colorado Springs." Her parents grew



Josh, Michelle and Neil Pysner of Hinsdale celebrating their family Christmas tradition, skate skiing together.
Turley Publications photo by Kathryn Koegel

NOTCHVIEW, page 2

BLANDFORD

Officials offer 2025 wish list

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Many in town positions were asked to respond to the question, "What would you like to see happen, do or accomplish from your standpoint in the community?"

Not everyone responded, but leadership sees attainable futures. Town Administrator Cristina Ferrara going forward would like to have viable options for a new Fire Station to present to the town. She would also like to see a more organized arrangement for tracking contractual expenditures. This would avoid some of the financial footwork for Special Town Meetings to move money. She is especially excited to see the progress for the library's expansion program with the funding provided by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Select Board Chair Cara Letendre said, "I would like to break ground on a new fire department this year; I look forward to continuing progress towards our library expansion. I hope to fill all of our highway department positions and I look forward to continuing working with Cristina."

Finance Committee Chair Jackie Coury cautions that the FY26 budget process will begin this month. This process involves creating an accurate operating budget with each department. In addition, Capital Expenditures needed for projects such as infrastructure repairs, equipment, etc. need to be understood.

"As a committee, our role is to understand the needs of the town and balance the budget in partnership with the Town Administrator, our Treasurer, Accounting and others," Coury noted. One of Finance's primary goals is to ensure once the budget is approved by the town, there are little or no "surprise" unplanned expenses post-budget preparation season which is why thoughtful pre-planning by everyone involved is such a critical part of the creation of a successful budget.

Board of Health, Jennifer Girard said, "Our goal is to complete our swap shop by July 2025 at the transfer station. We received a grant for \$6,000 to help make this possible. When making weekly visits to the Transfer

OTIS

COA holds game and announces events



Shown from left are Diane and Tom Dubiel, Linda Lewis with the die, Dede Loring unwrapping a prize and Tom Kennedy supervising.
Submitted photo

The Council on Aging hosted a fun Saran Wrap Ball Game on Monday morning, Dec. 23 at the Town Hall.

The object of the game was to unwrap a prize using oven mitts. Successful unwrapping of the item meant that the person unwrapping got to keep whatever was enclosed in sometimes several feet of Saran Wrap.

Prizes included small, but useful items like a toothbrush, Kleenex, a stress ball, handkerchiefs, Lindt candies, votive candles, a magnifier book-mark, pocket hand sanitizers, poppits, cell phone

accessories and more. There were 20 prizes in all.

As one tried to unwrap, someone else was trying to roll a pair of sixes with dice to take a turn.

The Council on Aging hours at Town Hall are Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

On Monday, Jan. 6 haircuts with Linda begin at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 8, a foot nurse is available, (the second Wednesday of every month). People should call 413-269-0100, extension 5 for an appointment time.

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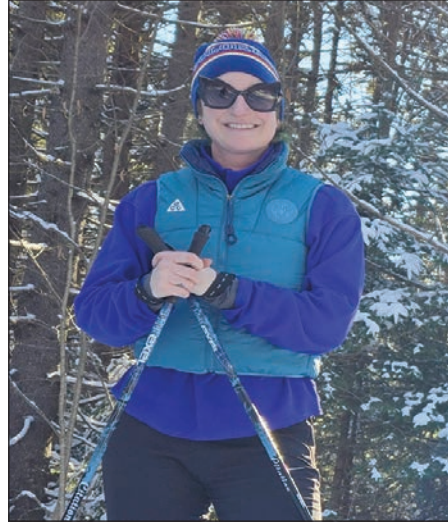
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HILLTOWNS



Sisters Michele Loehr and Jeannette Pierce enjoyed being out in the woods on Christmas Day.



Sarah Mayne, of Philadelphia thinks skiing in the Hilltowns is every bit as wonderful as doing so in Colorado.

NOTCHVIEW *from page 1*

up in Pittsfield where her dad has been cross country skiing for over 30 years. “I started in middle school,” she says. And though she has down hill skied at some of the most famous resorts in the U.S., Notchview is a favorite. “This is what I crave. You don’t have to be a billionaire to ski.”

Sisters Michele Loehr and Jeanette Pierce were enjoying the day out together. Michele runs Instant Replay in Pittsfield, a reuse store, where you can get gently-used cross country ski equipment and snowshoes at an affordable price. She volunteers for the Appalachian Mountain Club and is part of a team that worked with Noble View in Russell on their “All Persons Trail,” which is one of the few Hilltowns areas that have American Disability Act compliant zones for those with disabilities.

What reporter works on Christmas Day? One who likes to snowshoe in a winter wonderland before heading home to cook.



Correspondent Kathryn Koegel proves that it is possible to report on Christmas Day while on snowshoes. Notchview has a special zone for people, who like to ski or snowshoe with their dogs.

Turley Publications photos by Kathryn Koegel

MassDOT announces winners of ‘Name A Snowplow’ contest

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announced the winners of the third annual “Name A Snowplow” contest for elementary and middle school students in Massachusetts.

This contest received entries from public school classrooms located all across Massachusetts to name the 12 MassDOT snowplows that will be in service during this 2024/2025 winter season. The purpose of the contest is to celebrate the snow and ice season and to help recognize the hard work and dedication shown by public works employees and contractors during the winter season.

“Maintaining safe and clear roads across Massachusetts during winter is no easy task. We appreciate how educators are engaging their students in this fun competition that honors this vital public service,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbitts-Nutt. “Congratulations to the winning classrooms, and we look forward to seeing your snowplows out in the field.”

“This contest is a great way for schools across the state to connect with the crews who work tirelessly to keep our roads clear each winter,” said Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver. “Thank you to everyone who took part in this contest, and congratulations to our winners.”

Winning submissions for kindergarten through fourth grade were District 1 “Snowana” Morris Elementary School in Lennox fourth grade teacher Katie Simonelli; District 2 “Control-Salt-Delete” Swift River School in New Salem kindergarten teacher Ms. Koonz; District 3 “Abdomindable Plowman” Brophy Elementary School in Framingham fourth grade teacher Kimberly Tremlett; District 4 “Snow

Force One” Great Oak Elementary School in Danvers kindergarten teacher Mrs. Butler; District 5 “Taylor Drift” Dighton Elementary School in Dighton first grade teacher Lisa Perry and District 6 “Ice S’now More” Mary of the Hills School in Milton fourth grade teacher Kathleen Blaho.

Winning Submissions for fifth through eighth grade are: District 1 “Ice Ice Baby” Pine Cobble School in Williamstown fifth grade teacher Jeff Uhas; District 2 “It’s Snow Problem” Paul R. Baird Middle School of Ludlow sixth grade teacher Tina DeLullo; District 3 “Mac N’ Freeze” Oak Street Elementary School of Franklin fifth grade teacher Abby Normandin; District 4 “Blizzard Buster” North Andover Middle School in North Andover seventh grade teacher Gabrielle Campbell;

District 5 “C 3 P Snow” St. Mary’s Catholic School in Mansfield fifth grade teacher Mrs. Stratton and

District 6 “Meltin’ John” Manville School in Boston eighth grade teacher Sean Milligan

Applications for the Snowplow Naming Contest were submitted by Friday, Dec. 13, 2024. There was no limit to the number of applications that could have been submitted per school. A selection panel composed of MassDOT employees chose two elementary/middle school classroom winners that are located within each of the six Highway Division districts. The winning submissions were evaluated based on two grade-level categories: 1) kindergarten through fourth grade, and 2) fifth grade through eighth grade.

For more information on the contest, people may visit: <https://www.mass.gov/name-a-snowplow-contest-2024-25>.

Legislature to take up Substance Use Disorder Bill

BOSTON – Senator John C. Velis (D-Westfield) and other House and Senate members of the conference committee reached a final agreement on a compromise Substance Use Disorder bill that the Legislature will take up this week.

An Act relative to treatments and coverage for substance use disorder and recovery coach licensure aims to reduce overdoses in the Commonwealth and expand access to substance use recovery programs in communities throughout the state.

“From the onset of my appointment as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery, I made it explicitly clear that one of my top priorities was to send comprehensive pieces of legislation to the Governor that will help keep people alive and make quality recovery resources easily accessible,” shared Senator Velis, who was one of the six legislative negotiators for the final legislation. “The unfortunate truth is that most people in our Commonwealth know someone who is struggling or has struggled with addiction and it is absolutely heartbreaking how many loved ones we continue to lose to this disease. Not only does this legislation bolster access to life saving overdose reversal tools but it also expands access to recovery coaches, vital providers who truly understand what it is like to navigate recovery because of their lived experiences. I am beyond grateful to all my colleagues who have worked on this legislation and worked through this collaborative process to reach this important compromise.”

The bill includes provisions to expand access to life saving overdose reversal treatments, bolster non opioid pain medications and strengthen treatment for residents in recovery including the following:

Mandates that insurance providers cover opioid reversal drugs. This bill mandates that all health plans cover emergency opioid antagonists, opioid reversal drugs such as naloxone and Narcan without cost-sharing or prior authorization.

The bill updates requirements for insurance providers to ensure adequate coverage and access to pain management services without prior authorization, including non-opioid alternatives to pain treatment.

Mandates insurance coverage for recovery coaches. The bill mandates all health plans cover recovery coach services without cost-sharing or prior authorization at no less than MassHealth rates, regardless of the setting in which the services are provided.

This legislation establishes recovery coach licensing and oversight within DPH and codifies the practice of recovery coaching to ensure qualifications, proper use of titles, and compliance with DPH regulations. It also directs BSAS to study and report on barriers to certification, credentialing, and other employment and practice requirements for recovery coaches, as well as establish a peer support program for recovery coaches and their employers that includes mentorship, technical assistance, and other resources.

The legislation directs DPH to study and report findings to the Legislature on alcohol- and drug-free housing, also known as sober homes, including the safety and recovery of sober home residents in the Commonwealth.

The legislation expands required prescriber training to include acute and chronic pain treatment, incorporating available and appropriate non-opioid alternatives. It also requires pharmacists dispensing opioids to distribute printed educational materials on non-opioid alternatives to pain treatment as issued by the

Department of Public Health.

Boosts anti-discrimination protections for people with substance use disorder. This legislation clarifies DPH authority to enforce anti-discrimination protections for people with SUD who are covered by public health insurance. It prohibits discrimination against those lawfully possessing or taking medication for opioid-related SUD treatment as prescribed. It also directs the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) to examine and then report to the Legislature including any recommendations or necessary legislative or regulatory changes on the disparate impacts of SUD, overdoses, overdose deaths and clinical outcomes for

members of historically marginalized communities.

This bill ensures that public health and harm reduction organizations are protected from civil or criminal liability and professional disciplinary actions if they are providing drug checking services in good faith and prohibits medical malpractice insurers from discriminating against health care practitioners who provide harm reduction services.

Both the Senate and House plan to take up the final legislation on Thursday, Dec 19 and Senator Velis noted that he hopes that Governor Healey will promptly sign the bill into law before the end of the legislation on Dec. 31.

Girl Scout Cookie Drop begins on Jan. 11

Girl Scout cookie season is almost here. Soon it will be time to buy Do-si-dos, Thin Mints, Tagalongs, Samoas and other favorites.

The Girl Scout Cookie

Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world, with Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts serving over 5,000 girls from five counties in central and western Massachusetts. And it all gets rolling with the annual Cookie Drop.

Saturday, Jan. 11, hundreds of Girl

Scouts, troop leaders, staff and volunteers from across central and western Massachusetts will descend on central locations in Springfield, West Springfield, Townsend and Worcester to unload

the initial run of 32,629 cases (391,548 packages) of Girl Scout Cookies to bring back home and sell. It’s a fun and exciting time for everyone involved.

The annual Cookie Drop will take place on Saturday, Jan. 11 beginning at 7 a.m. in all locations save for Townsend.



BLANDFORD

Town announces open burning season begins Jan. 15 - May 1

BLANDFORD – Open Burning begins Wednesday, Jan. 15 and continues through Thursday, May 1.

Permits are available through the Fire Department online via the town's website at townofblandford.com. No permits are issued in advance due to the potential for changing weather conditions. If a resident does not have internet access or has difficulty online, burning permits are available by telephone; call 413-848-4279, ext. 600.

Requests for burning permits must be made every time anyone wants to burn. The following regulations must be observed: People may only burn brush. All other materials are illegal. No leaves, grass, hay, stumps, building debris or any other materials may be burned.

All open burning must be a minimum of 75 feet from buildings or

structures. Burning starts at 10 a.m. and must be extinguished by 4 p.m. Any open fire must be attended at all times by the permit holder.

No person shall set, maintain or increase a fire in open air at any time except by permission.

They must be 18 years or older to apply for a permit and/or set, maintain or increase a fire once permission has been granted by the Fire Department. They must have an appropriate means to extinguish an open-air fire completely at the end of the day or if requested by the Fire Department.

The Fire Department can refuse or cancel a permit at any time. Example: Violation of permit regulations, or change in weather conditions. Permits are only issued between 8:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. and only on the day anyone wants to burn.

Second head-on collision occurs on Otis Stage Road

BLANDFORD – A head-on collision on, Route 23, Otis Stage Road in Blandford, the second in as many weeks, was less serious.

The Thursday, Dec. 12 accident in Russell saw two people taken by LifeStar to Baystate.

According to the Mass. State Police Media Relations Division, at approximately 6:21 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 26 Troopers assigned to State Police Russell

barracks were dispatched to Route 23 at mile marker 31 (about a quarter-mile east of Hiram Blair Road) for a two-car crash.

It was a two-car head on collision and occupants (drivers) of both vehicles were transported to Noble Hospital. Injuries at this time are unknown. The roadway was closed shortly after 7 a.m. until the scene was cleared at 7:46 a.m. Media relations had no further information about the vehicles.

Library presents David Bartone, author of 'Old Farmer's Almanac'

BLANDFORD – People may meet the author of the 2025 "Old Farmer's Almanac," David Bartone, on Saturday, Jan. 11 from 11 a.m.-noon at the Porter Memorial Library.

Bartone is a small farmer in Western Massachusetts, a poet, and educator. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in liberal studies with a concentration in history from Boston



David Bartone

University and a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing/poetry from UMASS Amherst.

Library Director Nicole Daviau calls this program "a lively discussion about the creation of the 2025 Almanac." Participants will find out how his personal interests, background and education brought him to write this year's "Old Farmers' Almanac."

Public Health District holds survey

BLANDFORD – Shared Services and Regional Public Health nurse MaryAnn Deming asks residents of Blandford, Granville, Montgomerly, Russell, Southwick and Tolland to complete a health survey for the Western Hampden County Public Health District.

There are five questions on the survey, which ask about awareness of the shared nurse program, that there is a Public Health

Nurse on staff, how people hear about events provided by the shared services, what times work best for programs and what topics have the most interest.



Scan the QR code to complete the survey.

For more information or questions, people may call Shared Services Coordinator Caileen Simonds at 413-333-7455 or email csimonds@southwickma.gov.

COA luncheon takes place Jan. 10

BLANDFORD – The Council on Aging luncheon will be held on Friday, Jan. 10 at noon at Town Hall. Menu, courtesy of Joann Martin, is set for beef stroganoff, braised red cabbage, apple walnut spinach

salad and brownie a la mode. Beverages are included. People may call 413-848-4279, extension 400 to reserve their place. There is no charge, but a \$5 donation is suggested to keep the program going.

WISH LIST

from page 1

Station, the foundation for the swap shop is off to the right. Residents will be able to leave or take useable items.

Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo would like to have the town's annual street list forms completed and returned in a timely manner. "Every member of the household must be included on the form," she said, as this contributes to the town's ability to apply for grants or special funding. The 2025 forms will be mailed to residents in February.

The Water Department has a laundry list of things that need to be done according to Water Superintendent Gordon Avery. Finishing the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition project, which is a system used to monitor and control water supply process. He sees a need to design a new pump house and water storage tank; completion of the rate study and securing funding for water main replacement on Russell Stage Road, Maple Lane and on North Street. Water Commissioner Chair Michael Keier said, "That covers it."

Deaconess Ann Savery and Pastor Ciprian Droma for the First Congregational Church will continue in the coming year to reach out with many community events. Landscaping is planned for the front of the church to make it look more inviting with visible signage along with a small library box to pick up a devotional, Bible or good book to read and maybe a prayer if they need help.

According to Pastor Droma, "So much of our community is suffering financially; with that in mind with the growth of our congregation we would also like to have a small food bank in the church so that people could come and at least pick up one meal or two for their families."

Local News.
Local Deals!

Country Journal

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



Can my wife claim her SS now and get half my SS benefit later?

Dear Rusty:

My wife will reach her full Social Security benefit at 66.5 years of age which is just under 2 years away for her now.

If she were to begin to get her monthly check now (i.e. early), would that prevent her from being eligible for the spousal benefit to receive half of what I am currently drawing?

Signed: Curious Husband

Dear Curious:

If your wife claims her own SS retirement benefit now (e.g., at 64.5 years) and you are already collecting your own SS benefit, then she will be automatically deemed to be filing for her spousal benefit immediately when she claims her own benefit. She does not have the option to defer claiming her spousal benefit until later.

This is a change made by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, which requires all those first claiming SS to file for all benefits they are eligible for when they claim. What that would mean is that your wife's benefit now, including her spousal boost from you, would be actuarially reduced by the number of months early she claimed.

Her own SS retirement benefit would be permanently reduced by about 15% and her "spousal boost," the additional amount she would get as your spouse, would be reduced by about 19%, yielding a combined benefit which is roughly 42% of your Full Retirement Age SS benefit.

The only way your wife can get half 50% of your FRA benefit entitlement is by waiting until her own full retirement age (66 years and 10 months) to claim. Note too that your wife's spousal benefit will be based on your FRA entitlement, so if you claimed earlier or later than your own full retirement age, her spousal benefit will still be based on your FRA entitlement.

Also, your wife should be aware that anyone, who claims early, is subject to Social Security's "earnings test," which limits how much can be earned while collecting early benefits. Thus, if your wife is working, she will be restricted on how much she can earn before Social Security takes away some of her benefits.

FYI, the earnings limit changes annually,

SECURITY, page 6

Corrections policy

If you notice a factual error in our pages, please let us know, so that we can set the record straight. Email information to countryjournal@turley.com, or call us at 413-283-8393.

Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.

Air traffic controller shortage & holiday travel...



GUEST COLUMN



I received an email from a Brimfield resident on Dec. 15. He said he checked out a pond in Ludlow in preparation for doing the Christmas Bird Count with the Allen Bird Club. He said, "My wife and I have been covering the town of Ludlow since 1989 and did my first count with the club in the late 1970s."

He saw four American Wigeons. He said, "Males with white crown/forehead and female with gray head brown body was swimming with the males. The male's white spot was very visible even to the unaided eye."

The American wigeon is 21 inches long. The male has a white forehead and crown, gray head and a green iridescent patch through the eye. The male has a white spot before the tail, which the Brimfield mentioned in his email.



American wigeon

The female has brownish sides, grayish head and sides, a dark eyespot and light gray bill with black tip. The female wigeon lays six to 12 white eggs in a grassy nest. The nest is concealed in rushes, sedge or under tree clumps.

American wigeons feed on pond weeds, milfoil, wigeon grass, wild celery and eelgrass. They may eat vexation stirred up by diving ducks such as canvasbacks. They summer on lakes and marshes and winter

BACKYARD, page 6

A New Year of possibilities



I spent last night curled up on the couch with a seed catalog in hand. It was a nostalgic few hours for me, in which I was transported back decades, to when gardening was new and my time and energy were boundless.

Regardless of it being the present day, I began circling this and that, and even curled a few pages too. All the fruit and vegetables I could grow, and store, and preserve, and eat, all year long.

Could my homesteading nature be bubbling back up to the surface? Perhaps. And wouldn't that wonderful if it could be a reality? It surely would. Talk about an admirable ambition for the New Year.

I started to think about what my family eats on a regular basis and what I would have to do to grow enough food to last throughout the year or at least seriously supplement what we typically buy. The most important considerations are taste and productivity.

If a variety is productive, but doesn't taste great, then what is the point?

I have "plugged" Fedco Seeds a number of times through the years. The newsprint catalog is full of such great information; follow up by looking online (fedcoseeds.com) to get a color picture of what you will grow. I specifically enjoy reading the personal recommendations from the trialers in many of the descriptions!

The biggest problem I have growing tomatoes is with early blight. Last night I found a great disease resistant paste tomato called Plum Regal that will suit my needs well, hopefully yielding many quarts of sauce for the cupboards.

And what about that Little Dipper Butternut Squash? Disease resistance reigns

GARDEN, page 6

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Country Journal welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to The Country Journal, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to countryjournal@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that

Friday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the news-

paper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in The Country Journal.

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Letters to the editor should be 500 words or less in length. We require letter writers to include his or her name, town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

HILLTOWN HISTORY

What the Ice Age left behind

By Deborah Daniels
Correspondent

People who have ever been to Shelburne Falls have seen the potholes in the Deerfield River.

There are some 50 potholes ranging from inches in size to some 40 feet in diameter. They are very spectacular and must see viewing.

Becket has its own potholes hidden deep in the woods. High up between Mt. Gobble and Gobble Mountain at the end of Captain Whitney Road in Becket lies a gorge that drains water some 250 feet down to the West Branch of the Westfield River.

A hike with the Hilltown Hikers on Saturday, Dec. 14 explored this wondrous sight first hand. A million years ago a mile high sheet of ice covered North America. The climate warmed 12,000 years ago and the glacier melted and receded.

Potholes are the work of glaciers. They are hollowed out bowls in metamorphic rock as a result of rapidly rotating, churning whirlpools of turbulent water and sediment as the glaciers melted. Think of miles of solid ice melting and creating a tidal wave of water grinding into the bedrock in Becket.

There was a giant cauldron shaped pothole about one third the size of a football field in diameter; the first one we hiked to. Its walls were mostly caved in, giving it a crater like appearance with a central island of collapsed wall lying in the middle. All about were huge 10-12 foot flat sheets of rock tumbled about. It was as if some giants had abandoned a game of dominoes leaving the tiles, plates of rock, wherever they fell. There were many plates of rock stacked on top of each other. It was an eerie primeval scene.

Hiking further downstream there were more semicircular potholes carved vertically into the sides of the bedrock. Five potholes were located here. These potholes do Becket proud. Hopefully there hidden remoteness will help preserve them for generations to come.

Now about another type of potholes the ones on the roads, motorists should avoid driving over them because they



Whirlpool action displayed in the Westfield River in Becket.



A pothole carved into the side of the canyon in Becket.



A photo showing the sidewalls of the largest pothole. Turley photos by Deborah Daniels



A photo showing the giant tile of rock collapsing into the biggest pothole.



Another photo showing the wall collapsing down into a pothole with Hilltown Hiker Frank marveling at the site.



Liz Massa, Hilltown Hike leader, stands inside a vertical pothole.

definitely will damage their car.

It is interesting to learn the name for potholes came about because colonial potters, who wanted a cheap source of raw materials for making clay pots often found clay under roads. So they dug into the deep ruts in the road to reach clay deposits underneath. Teamsters driving horse wagons and coaches over those

roads knew who and what caused those holes. They referred to those trenches as potholes.

Apparently pot making won over a smooth ride back in the day.

There are five types of damage hitting a pothole with a car may cause. They are bent rims that will cause vibrations in the wheel at highway speeds or

the will lose air in the tire. A tire bubble or blister can occur or leaking struts will make the car harder to control and feel bouncy while driving. Damaged wheel bearings and lastly bent suspension arms cause the car to no longer be in alignment. That is a public service announcement to drivers, so beware because pothole season is here, welcome to 2025.

For the Future of the Hilltowns, Look to the River

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

When people ask me why after 30 years in New York City and a childhood spent in Southern California, I have chosen to settle in Huntington, I sometimes note the realities.

I was in my 50s and no longer had the corporate job that funded a row house in Brooklyn. I had two children to put through college solo. I needed a place to live that was affordable, but had access to the arts that I so love. But the honest truth about why I ended up in Huntington is that I bought, not a house, but access to a river.

Growing up in Southern California, water is a precious resource and when it does come it is entirely encased in a massive and ugly concrete channel. The LA River is not so much a water source as a place to shoot cop shows.

When I turned 30, I bought a cottage from a family member in Dummerston, Vermont and began a love affair with a river. I swam in the West River under a covered bridge on hot days, letting the current float me down as I stared up at the clouds.

After I had children, I began to spend summers in Vermont. I'm a writer so thus

an early telecommuter. Every day we went to different swimming holes and the river became our constant and our summer joy. From 3-5 p.m. daily we just hung out riverside with the children building rock piles and sandcastles.

Come winter, it got even more exciting as where the West River meets the Connecticut there is a shallow spot below which were once fields that flooded out in a hurricane in the 1920s. As soon as the guys dragged their huts out there with their 4X4s and started cutting holes with their ice augers, we tied up our skates and did sprints. We played hockey and tag all afternoon on the ice. We sailed past the islands of vegetation and stopped to chat about the day's catch with the ice fishermen.

When I saw a small house with beamed "stairs" down to the river in Huntington, I knew I had found my next home. I moved here knowing nothing about the Hilltowns and having absolutely no friends or connections here. My retailer in the Valley discouraged even visiting the house after I saw it online, saying that it was very backwards here. I persevered.

In an effort to meet people, I blindly signed up for town committees, events, historical society, etc. There was a notice that the town needed a representative for the Wild & Scenic Westfield River

Committee. I also heard a rumor that a canoe race went right by my house.

That first year I learned about the environment of the Westfield River from the Wild & Scenic group and offered my services to the Westfield River Wildwater Races. On the latter, I figured that if I had gotten hired to work on sponsorships for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, I might be useful to them. I am now the managing director of the races and along with Harry Rock, have gotten them on a sound financial footing with more volunteers, sponsors and donors than ever before in 2024. We are planning the 70th running as a celebration not just of the race but of the river we call home.

But there is something that gives me great pain about this river. Many local people think it's ownable and want access confined to the people who live here or even more restrictive, to the people who own land on it.

Every summer there is an argument about management of the Rte 20 pull off across from the Hilltown Community Health Center in Huntington due to overuse and trash. There are no trash or restroom facilities. Parking is now "live" and enforced by the state police to 20 minutes maximum. Yet, this pull off was designed in the 1920s to greet the tourists, who came from the cities of Springfield

and Lee to enjoy the country air and the river. There are picnic tables and placards about the history of the Jacob's Trail Scenic Byway, which is considered one of the top 10 most beautiful scenic byways in the country.

The American Whitewater Association has protested to the town of Huntington as they cannot use the river for kayaking and canoeing if they have no place to park and take out boats. This past year Mass Fish & Wildlife did not stock the river from Huntington to Woronoco as they had noted the parking restrictions and didn't think fishing was possible. We are losing access to the resource that connects the Hilltowns and makes them so special.

Additionally, as Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation lost funding over the last decades, they have had to curtail usage of sites like Windsor Jamb, the Chester Blandford State Forest's Boulder Park, which had a swimming area with a bathhouse as well as dozens of grill pits and Gardner State Park.

A recent survey of Huntington residents was held in conjunction with the Pioneer Valley Planning commission in order to create an updated Outdoor Space

OPINION

SECURITY

from page 4

but for 2025 it is \$23,420 and, if that is exceeded, SS will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 over the limit. And, FYI, the earnings limit goes up a lot during the year FRA is attained and the earnings test no longer applies once full retirement age is reached.

I hope this answers your question, but if you have need additional information, please feel free to contact us directly at SSAdvisor@amacfoundation.org, or call us at 1-888-750-2622.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated

GARDEN

from page 4

true here, with taste and productivity ranking high too. Twenty-two fruits from three plants? I'll take it.

Succession planting is paramount if I want to grow lots of food consistently. This planting method is defined as "planting more than once."

It can be planting lettuce, for example, every two weeks throughout the growing season or planting beets in the spot the peas vacated. Reading the catalog reminded me that not every variety is suited for successional sowing.

In other words, the lettuce I sow for an early spring sowing might not be best for planting in the summer, and summer lettuce definitely won't be the best to extend my growing from fall into winter. I will definitely plan accordingly.

Likewise, I may love "Jade" green beans, but they wouldn't be the best for my first sowing because they are white seeded and typically white seeded beans rot in cool soil. I'll start with a dark seeded bean.

I am really looking forward to trying to grow a few new things this year, watermelon and cantaloupe to be exact. Less fruit to buy is a good thing, right?

I learned some tips from the cata-

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log. Namely, to start the melons indoors, then transplant at two or three weeks old, before the roots tangle, into soil that has been amended with lots of aged manure or compost and prewarmed with black plastic mulch.

Using row covers over the plants until flowers appear will keep off the cucumber beetles and provide additional heat. The catalog also provided some interesting tips on how to harvest ripe melons.

When I did manage to grow a plant to maturity, there is absolutely nothing worse than cutting into a melon notoriously unripe with no way to ripen it. Best to call it chicken food at that point.

So this year I will grow ripe melons, lots of lettuce and butternut squash along with gallons of tomato sauce. And more. A New Year of possibilities.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

BACKYARD

from page 4

on wet meadows, lakes and protected costal waters. They are usually found in small flocks. During courtship competing males give whistling calls and lift folded wings nearly vertical above their back. Males give soft descending three syllable whistles.

Other birds

Other birds seen by the Brimfield resident at the Ludlow Reservoir were 63 Canada geese, six mallards, 83 hooded mergansers, 161 common mergansers, one ring-billed gull, three common loons and one bald eagle flew directly overhead just above the tree tops. Other birds were two American crows, two tufted titmice and two dark-eyed juncos.

Hooded mergansers

I received an email from a woman on Dec. 14. She said, "The ponds on Brook Road in West Warren have more treasures. Two days ago I saw a pair of hooded mergansers. I sat and watched for several minutes and they spent most of the time under water."

Bird at feeder

I received an email from a woman on Dec. 20. She wrote, "I have spotted a bird I believe to be a yellow warbler coming to my feeder. My knowledge of the bird is that it migrates south or the winter." She sent a photo, but the bird was eating so the beak and head were not visible. It had two white wing bars, olive color and some yellow. It may be a male American goldfinch in winter plumage. They do spend the winter here and retain some of their yellow feathers.

Loon fact

Most of the fish loons catch are small enough to be swallowed whole when they're still underwater. However, when a loon captures a larger fish, it may

need to return to the surface to subdue it before it is able to consume it. Loons may slap a fish against the surface of the water or repeatedly drop and recapture it until the fish stops struggling and is manageable enough to be swallowed.

Loons swallow fish whole, head-first. When a loon starts to swallow a large fish, it will first ensure that it is oriented properly, sometimes dropping the fish and picking it up several times until it is properly positioned. Once the fish is aligned so that it is headfirst in the loon's mouth, the loon begins the process of swallowing. Loons have sharp, rear-facing projections along the roof of their mouths and on their tongues. These projections, called denticles, interlock with the fish's scales, ensuring that the fish is not able to escape back into the water. Loons then press their tongue into the fish and begin to inch it down the throat, into the esophagus. Depending on the size of the fish a loon is trying to eat, it may take a few seconds to several minutes for the loon to swallow. Once in the esophagus, the fish moves down into the gizzard. A loon may open its mouth and repeatedly extend its neck upward and then contract it back towards its body to help move particularly large fish through the esophagus to the gizzard.

American crow

I saw about five or six American crows foraging on a lawn on my way to church this cold Sunday morning. With the temperature registering 8 degrees F, the crows had their feathers all puffed up for warmth.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

RIVER

from page 5

and Recreation Plan. The last study like this had been done in 2003 and showed that increased river access was desired and a lynchpin of economic development. In 2024, while 25% of residents answering the survey said they swam in the river now, 48% said they would like to but could not now due to access.

My neighbors know that I am never going to post my land and I welcome their children using "my" beach on the river for water access. I developed and got Wild & Scenic to fund the first public mural project in the Hilltowns at Gateway Middle School in summer 2023. While there used to be river access directly from the school, we needed to have the children walk in groups along busy Rte 112 and cross the road to my house so that could participate in a river ecology session with Meredyth Babcock, the Wild & Scenic community outreach coordinator and John Burns, environmentalist. The children marveled to learn about the microinvertebrates in the river and the geology of glacial retreat that formed it. They were also astonished at just having access.

Note: If you do not live on the river, with so much land now posted and parking restricted, unlike along the West River in Vermont, you do not set foot in that river.

With climate change, there will be a need for more cooling areas and the Hilltowns are cutting themselves off from what is not just an absolute necessity for residents but what could also lead to the economic boost that the Hilltowns desperately need: managed tourism. If Vermont can do it, why can't we? On summer weekends, all along Rte 30 cars park near Dummerson and Newfane and people head to their favorite swimming holes. Sure, there is some trash, but enough people literally bring an extra bag with them and take out even more than



Littleville Lake has a large amount of parking at the southern and northern end. It was originally built with the idea of more recreation including swimming.

Turley Publications photo by Kathryn Koegel

they brought in.

What would managed tourism on the river bring? People to buy things, short term rentals, a few more restaurants. Yes, try getting a cup of coffee or a sandwich in Russell or Huntington. It could also bring jobs and encourage the young families that we so desperately need to fill our schools. Their children might stay once they graduate.

I went to a conference on behalf of Wild & Scenic held by another Wild & Scenic River, the Nashua. It was eye opening but used all the principles I had learned in my New York and international communications career. You can model, and change human behavior through effective communication. We learned how to assess an existing river access point and work to guide the behavior we wanted to encourage. You find the best access point that will do the least damage to the river bank in terms of erosion. Situate the parking appropriately and guide the

path of the user. You create better signage directing positive action not just saying what not to do. Remember that not everyone in the region speaks English. Adding a Spanish translation is a first step.

Signage is not enough. Sometimes you do need people on site to remind picnickers and those wanting to create campfires of how to treat the river. A friendly crew dedicated to monitoring on holiday weekends would go a long way. Remember that if you grew up in a city, as I did, "carry in, carry out," may not mean anything to you.

The in-person approach was done at the Chesterfield Gorge in the 80s and 90s as described by Jim Caffrey of the Trustees in an interview in the December 6th edition. I saw it work in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, one of the most accessed public green spaces in the country. Little clubs of retirees met for coffee and brought bags and trash sticks and combed various spaces on Monday morning. They

enjoyed the good work, the exercise and the results.

To this end, I propose a test case for that Rte 20 pull off for this coming summer. Anyone want to join me and "adopt a rest stop"? We work with one of the porta potty companies to donate their service in exchange for us promoting them on social media and in PR about the project. Approach one of the local trash companies to join us in sponsoring the site. We set up a Google calendar where everyone in the group takes a weekend and stops by at the busiest time to welcome people, hand out trash bags and encourage them to explore other areas that are more suitable for picnicking (where you can park for more than 20 minutes) to places like the Chesterfield Gorge or the base of Knightville Dam, Littleville Lake.

We also have an area that could and should become a focal point for water access. Littleville Lake. It has extensive parking lots at the south entrance and up at Dayville in the north. There are two maintained trails on each side. As any of the locals who use it at sunset each day to walk know, this could be a lake in Switzerland with its verdant trees falling dense down to the water and the way the light hits it. As Steve Cormier's recent book about the Westfield River The Sacrificial Land recounts, that lake was built with the idea of not just the dam but as a recreation area, thus all that parking. A last minute move from Springfield to use it as a backup reservoir overrode the original intent. It has equipment to connect it to the Cobble Mountain reservoir that has never been activated.

What's that going to take? Honestly, I am not sure, but if we start asking these questions and take one action like "adopt a rest stop", which mimics what is done nationally for highways, it is one step in the right direction.

HUNTINGTON

Westfield River Wildwater Races announce fundraising campaign

HUNTINGTON – The Westfield River Whitewater Races organizing committee announced the launch of their fundraising and sponsorship campaign for the 2025 races.

This will be the 70th running of the country's oldest whitewater canoe and kayak race and the largest outdoor sporting event in the Hilltowns region. Last year over 300 racers took to the Westfield River and the committee expects the number to grow with the reputation of the race which will be held this coming year on Saturday, April 19, 2025.

J.L. Raymakers & Sons of Westfield has stepped up to be the local presenting sponsor with a donation of \$5,000, a \$1,000 increase over last year. Their logo will be on the race bibs. John Raymakers, Jr. is an avid paddler, who has participated in the races since he was 17. "My friends and family think I am a little over the top about the races, but it literally is my favorite day of the year," said Raymakers. "I would not miss it and this is a race for people who are truly committed. I even loved it the year it snowed." In 2025 Raymakers will be making his 20th run.

The committee will be reaching out to local and national sponsors as well as individuals to help support the day of the races as well as new events that celebrate the 70th running of the historic event. "We held an ideas session with past and current racers and volunteers to develop a plan for how to more closely tie the races into the communities they run through," says race managing director Kathryn Koegel. "Our goal is to celebrate our past as we build our future. This event is not just about racing but about celebrating the river as the defining feature of the Hilltowns.

"Part of that celebration will be a community dance called 'Dance Like It's 1954', which will be held on Saturday, April 12 in Stanton Hall in Huntington," says Koegel. "We're asking everyone to come out, take off their shoes and dance

to a live band playing Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and Elvis.

In keeping with the theme of celebrating the past, the 2025 event logo and graphic is an update of one that was first used 25 years ago. The new graphic was designed by Huntington-based art school student Lucia Maioreescu.

The committee is also sponsoring a series of historic talks about the Westfield River including: Indigenous History of the Westfield River (3/20); History of Strathmore Paper Mill, which is at the finish line (3/27) and History of the Westfield River Wildwater Races (4/3). People who lived and worked on the river and experienced the races are encouraged to contact the committee at: wrraces@gmail.com and share their memories and photos that will be included in the presentations.

"We're very excited to be creating a platform of events and growing our volunteer numbers to ensure the future of the races," says race committee chair Harry Rock. "The program we are enacting starting in March is about uniting us all on this magnificent river. We encourage individuals and local businesses to support us. We are taking tax deductible donations through our registration platform at: raceroster.com/98738. People can also send checks to Westfield River Watershed Association, PO Box 1764, Westfield MA 01086. (Put: Wildwater Races in the memo.) A sponsor information packet is available at: westfieldriver.org/races or contact Kathryn Koegel at wrraces@gmail.com for more information.

The committee is also looking for volunteers to help with all the events surrounding the race including the historical talks and the dance. Go to raceroster.com/98738 and click on "volunteer" for a list of available positions. "Last year we had nearly 100 people step up to help out and we are looking forward to welcoming them back and having new people join. This truly is a community event."



John Raymakers, Jr. of Westfield stepped up to donate \$5000 to support the races. 2025 will be his 20th run. *Courtesy photos*



Spectators at the first start of the Westfield River Wildwater Races in 1954. *archives of the Westfield River Wildwater Races*

To get information on the races and all the surrounding activities, go to westfieldriver.org/races. Like "Westfield River Wildwater Races" on Facebook, follow on instagram for regular updates and photos of past events.

The Westfield River Wildwater Races are a sub-committee of the Westfield River Watershed Association, (WRWA), which is a volunteer-led

501(c)3 non-profit, founded in 1952 to make the Westfield River Watershed in Massachusetts a better place in which to live, and to this end promote the restoration and conservation of the natural resources of the watershed; promote knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the river and its watershed and promote opportunities for responsible recreation on and around the river.

Library lists upcoming events

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – Library Director Amanda Loiselle announces the January calendar of upcoming events for the Huntington Public Library, 7 East Main St.

Crafternoon will be held on Thursday, Jan. 9 at 4 p.m. All ages are welcome to exercise their creativity in a relaxed and fun setting. Participants should bring their own project or make use of the library's variety of craft supplies.

Also the monthly Book Club will meet that same day and time to discuss December's read "Irena's Children" by Tilar Mazzeo. This book tells the true story of Irena Sendler, who led the rescue of approximately 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. Even when arrested and tortured, Sendler refused to divulge the network of Polish people, who successfully hid the children and helped them survive.

The Huntington Public Library Book Swap Club meets on Saturday, Jan. 14 at 4:30 p.m. Instead of everyone reading the same book, bring a book they've read and loved and swap titles with other patrons.

Game Night will take place on Thursday, Jan. 16 at 4 p.m. All ages are welcome to use the various games at the library or to bring their own. Registration is required so that staff know how much pizza and soda to get. Food is not guaranteed for walk-ins. People may call 413-512-5206, email library@huntingtonma.us or visit online at the huntingtonpubliclibrary.org website events page to register. The monthly game night page also has descriptions of games available at the HPL's "Library of Useful Things."

The Block Printing Workshop scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 18 at 2:30 p.m. is

now full, but people can contact the library to see about a wait list in case there are cancellations. This is the first of a series of three hour-long workshops that will teach basic techniques for carving and printing 4x6 inch images.

Abigail Killian, a nutrition coordinator from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, will offer a workshop called Create Better Health, which will be held on Friday, Jan. 31 at noon. She will discuss MyPlate, dietary guidelines, reading nutrition labels, shopping on a budget, physical activity and more. This one-hour class is in collaboration with SNAP-ed, is open to the public and is an excellent way to work toward health and wellness goals in the new year.

The Book Club read for the month of January will be "The Salt Path" by Raynor Winn. Named the best book of 2019 by NPR's Book Concierge and shortlisted for the Costa Book Award, "The Salt Path" recounts the true story of Raynor and Moth Winn, who lost their home, farm and livelihood within days of learning that Moth was terminally ill. Running out of time and resources, the couple decide to walk the 630 mile-long South West Coast Path through Devon and Cornwall. With every test faced, the couple redefine "home." Copies may be picked up at the library, while available, ordered through interlibrary loan or borrowed digitally through Libby. The club will meet on Thursday, Feb. 6 at 4 p.m. to discuss the book.

Looking ahead to February, local author Stephen Cormier will be at the library at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 22 to talk about his latest book, "The Sacrificial Land." This book details the building of Knightville and Littleville Dams in Huntington.

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RUSSELL

ALL PERSONS TRAIL OPENS AT NOBLE VIEW

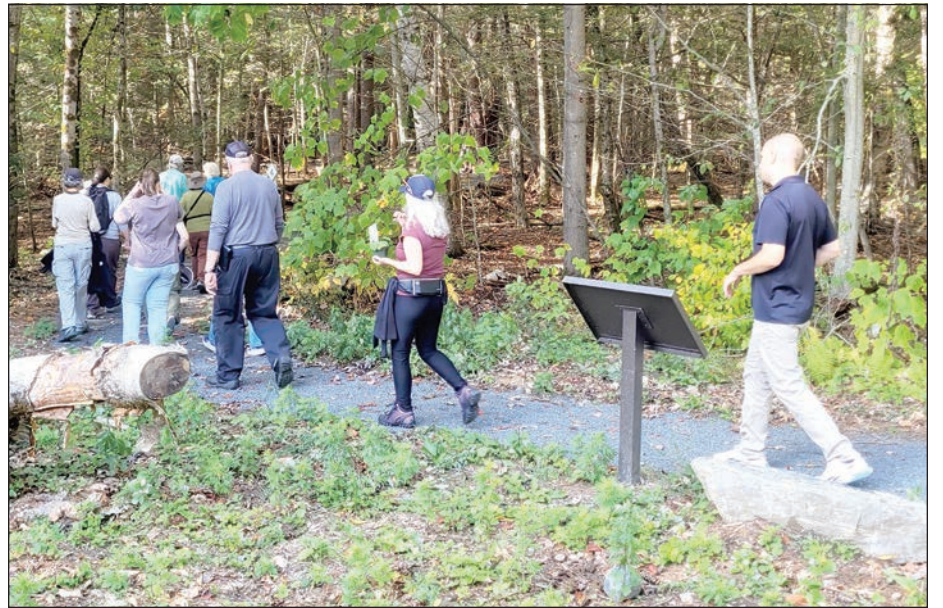


A large group attended the grand opening of the All Person's Trail at Noble View in Russell.

Submitted photos



The new trail at Noble View is wheel chair accessible.



Following the grand opening of the All Person's Trail at Noble View, people hiked the trail.



This was the ribbon cutting at the grand opening of the All Person's Trail at Noble View, 635 South Quarter Road, Russell in September 2024.

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MIDDLEFIELD

Christmas giving sparks joy at the Blossom Center

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

MIDDLEFIELD – On the night before Christmas Eve word went out.

Free pumpkin pies were to be had at the Blossom Center in Middlefield. Costco in Westfield donated 75 eighteen inch pies to the community center and they had to find takers quickly.

So Joy Pires, chief organizer of Blossom Center, a privately-run community space in the town of Middlefield, took to Facebook to get the word out. Locals responded and by Christmas, all but 18 were taken.

“We have a local volunteer, who started working with Costco to gather produce they were giving away as it was about to expire. The plan was to use it with animals but it turns out that they have lots of food to give away, but most local food pantries do not have walk-in refrigeration or the freezer capacity we have,” says Pires. She provided a tour of a wealth of foods from meats to produce, all free for the taking with no paperwork or financial cutoff for access.

The Blossom Center is a community space started by Tamarin and Adair Laurel, who also operate a successful wholesale business for new age goods called Azure Green. The business, started in Easthampton in 1986 but moved to rural Middlefield in 1991. They have 20 employees, who fulfill orders in a large warehouse and had unused space on the second floor.

As Tamarin Laurel describes it, the Blossom Center was the outcome of a realization that the town had so few resources for its residents. “This is what neighbors needed,” she said. When they started, residents were “fearful that the general store would quit [which happened]. This place is a substitute for that. Neighbors get together over food both formally and informally.”

Building a privately run community center was not without its challenges. “In 2008 we went from having lenders say ‘only do downstairs warehouse business,’ as they did not understand the community space. They torpedoed the plan. It remained unfinished until we amassed enough money. We opened the day care space just before the pandemic and also have an all purpose children’s space. It’s still a work in progress.”

On Dec. 24, the center was quiet with the exception of locals showing up with glee for those pies. Pires showed off the center, which is extensive with a gym room, showers for anyone who might need them, a room for homeschooling as well as the well-appointed and organized children’s play space. The large commercial kitchen hosts cooking lessons, community suppers like Taco Tuesdays and is a facility for locals, who are trying to start their own baking businesses. Adair Laurel was cooking



Joy Pires poses with Joy Salvini, who was picking up a free pumpkin pie.

Christmas dinner for anyone who wanted to join.

In one of the community areas, chef and food truck owner Lance Whalen was catching up on his reading with his Italian Mastiff by his side. The weather was not conducive to his business and he was spending the holidays with his mother in Middlefield. This was a place of community for him until his truck, “Smoke,” went back out on the road.

Pires, a mother of six, relocated to Middlefield from Eastern Massachusetts where she grew up in Fall River. She homeschools her youngest in the space and welcomes other parents to the center and the area. “We wanted to be in the mountains,” she says. The real estate market was challenging. She found her property online and put in an offer without even seeing it in person. “The other properties all went in bidding wars,” she says. “My family was homeless for a time. It’s important to pay attention to the rules and regulations and how what town administration does impacts the community.” She sees the Blossom Center as an oasis in an area of distinct need. “It’s such a small town and so secluded no one pays attention,” she says.

For her, and other local residents, the Blossom Center is their community space and support. “My family would not have survived without it,” Pires says. With that, she hurried back into the kitchen to pull out more pies for eager families.



Food truck owner and chef Lance Whalen was in town for the holidays with his Italian Mastiff.

Turley Publications photos by Kathryn Koegel



Tamarin Laurel, co founder of the Blossom Center, with Joy Pires, who coordinates activities in a room under a glass pyramid they use for yoga and events.



The large children’s play space is open to all with no membership fees. There use a separate room for homeschoolers.

NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

The Town of Huntington Collector Office will have some LIMITED HOURS over the next few weeks.

These are noted below:

1/7	12-3
1/9	12-3
1/15	12-3
1/16	CLOSED

Personnel will be available for all other normal office hours

We are sorry for any inconvenience.



Free Fly Tying Classes



Sponsored by the Western Mass Fly Fishermen starting January 9th, 2025.

Held at the Ludlow Elks Lodge, 69 Chapin Street, Ludlow, Mass.

Thursday nights for 8 weeks from 7PM to 9PM.

The classes are open to the public with children 10 years and up being accompanied by an adult.

Classes are geared to the beginner or novice. Course materials and tools will be supplied!

Space is limited.

To reserve a seat please contact John Lawor at 413-579-1994.

For more information visit <http://wmffclub.org>

WORTHINGTON

COA lists upcoming events

WORTHINGTON – The Council of Aging will hold a potluck luncheon on Monday, Jan. 13 at noon in the Town Hall.

Following the lunch, Marianne Shelvey, the First Assistant District Attorney of Berkshire County Attorney's office will speak at 12:30 p.m. People may attend either lunch and the program, "Knowledge of Power Elder Safety Empowerment" or both. The District Attorney's office is trained and prepared for the special needs of the elderly population and to ensure equal access to the criminal system. There will also be a blood pressure clinic.

The foot nurse will be at the COA Office on Wednesday, Jan. 15 for nail cutting and a warm foot massage. People should call Deb Deane at 413-667-0880 to make an appointment.

On Thursday, Jan. 16 from noon-1 p.m. the COA offers Grab N' Go Meals through Highland Valley Elder Services. Pick up is at the Town Hall. Meal choices for the free monthly every third Thursday will be lasagna or lentil stew, sweet potatoes, winter blend vegetables, bread, dessert, milk. People should reserve a meal

by calling 413-238-1999 by Sunday, Jan. 12 and leave name, address, phone number and the names of the additional people receiving the meal.

One time enrollment forms are available at the Town Hall and COA office bulletin board. People may drop off the completed form in the Town Offices and COA drop box. They will need to RSVP and they can fill out the form when they pick up the meal by reservation. They should bring their own bag. A donation to the Highland Valley Elder Services would be appreciated.

Healthy Bones and Balance Class is Monday and Friday from 10-11 a.m. at Town Hall. People may call Marcia Estelle at 413-238-5554 for more information.

Yoga class for first timers is Sunday and Wednesday from 9:30-10:30 a.m. in the Town Hall. People may call Eileen Daneri at 238-4461 to check on any schedule changes.

There is on Monday from 4-5 p.m. Aerobic Training and Thursday from 4-5 p.m. Strength Training

at the Town Hall. Cost is \$10 per class and \$12 per class for walk-in. People may call Judy at 413-238-4457 for more information.

GOSHEN

Re-imagine Goshen Center announces quilt raffle winner

GOSHEN – On Sunday, Dec. 8, residents gathered in the Goshen town hall for the quilt raffle drawing.

The hand-crafted quilt had been on display since September at local businesses and craft fairs as part of a fundraising effort by the Goshen Open Space Committee for the Re-imagine Goshen Center project. The full/queen size quilt was pieced and donated by Lorraine Brisson and professionally quilted by Sue's Quilt Studio, Chester, Vermont.

Congratulations go to raffle winner, Scott Carpenter of West Chesterfield. Thank you to everyone who donated in support of this fundraiser, which raised \$1,146. Thanks also to Steve Smith of Williamsburg Market and Tim Hogan, Goshen transfer station attendant for providing space to display the quilt.

The mission of the Re-imagine Goshen Center project is to create a vibrant town center that provides a recreational, cultural and social gathering place that welcomes people of all ages and abilities; promotes community pride through beautification of our town center and provides a landscape to encourage physical activity and social gatherings.

Their vision is to redesign the existing

outdoor spaces to create an integrated town green. The enhancement of the town center will convert the existing underutilized areas into an accessible public space, which will serve as an outdoor civic center for Goshen residents.

Accomplishments to date include removal of the tennis court fence and asphalt, cutting down trees by the tennis court, pruning and tree/shrub removal in Memorial Park and installation of a privacy fence next to the Highland Village Circle senior housing complex.

The Open Space Committee extends its gratitude to all their sponsors, donors and volunteers, who have supported this exciting project. They look forward to future collaborations with community members. The estimated project cost is \$400,000 and while they have community preservation funding and Community Project Funding from the Massachusetts state legislature, every donation helps them reach their financial goal.

To learn more about the Re-imagine Goshen Center project or to donate, people may visit their website at www.goshen-ma.us/departments/open-space-committee/. For inquiries or to volunteer, people may email reimaginegoshen01032@gmail.com.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Fitchburg State University announces winter graduates

FITCHBURG – Fitchburg State University recently held the winter ceremony of its 128th commencement exercises, conferring hundreds of graduate and undergraduate degrees. It was the first ceremony for Dr. Donna Hodge, who joined the Fitchburg State campus this summer as its 12th president.

Local graduates are Elijah Stathis of Northampton, Bachelor of Science

in computer science; Michelle C. Baity of Pittsfield, Master of Business Administration; Christopher James Brinton of Pittsfield, Master of Education in education 5-12; Ashley Lillian Farina of Pittsfield, Bachelor of Science in psychological science; Abram M. Perez of Pittsfield, Master in Business Administration and Malaina Margaret Hollister of Southampton, Master in

Business Administration.

"Today, I am filled with profound pride and gratitude," she told graduates and guests at the ceremony, which was held in the university's Athletics and Recreation Center. "This marks my inaugural semester as president of this esteemed institution and it is an honor to witness this pivotal milestone in your academic journeys. I am particularly humbled

to serve as the first woman president in Fitchburg State's 130-year history. You are my first graduating class, among some of the first students I met upon my arrival this summer, and officially tonight, you have all become part of my own story. Our historic moment underscores the progress we have achieved as a university committed to equity, inclusion, and the pursuit of excellence."

BAA College Fellowship Juried Show deadline is Feb. 23

PITTSFIELD – Berkshire County, Massachusetts college art majors are invited to apply for the 2025 juried Berkshire Art Association College Fellowship Show.

Five thousand dollars in fellowship grants will be awarded to college art majors, whose work is selected. People may visit <https://baafellowshipshow2025.artcall.org> for submission information. The deadline is Sunday, Feb. 23 at 11:59 pm.

Submissions may be made by visiting <https://baafellowshipshow2025.artcall.org>. There is no cost to register and submit. The show will open at the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, 28 Renne Avenue, Pittsfield, during the month of April. An award ceremony will be held Saturday, April 15 from 3-5 p.m.

The College Fellowship Show is open to Berkshire County, Massachusetts residents enrolled at the undergraduate level

as art majors at any college in the country, as well as non-residents majoring in art at a Berkshire County college; Berkshire Community College, MCLA, Williams College and Simon's Rock College.

The BAA Fellowship is funded in part by the Norman and Rose Avnet Fellowship Endowment and has been funded over the past three years with a grant from the Feigenbaum Foundation and private donations. Additionally, local

artists support the Fellowship through their donations of 10x10 inch art to the 10x10 Real Art Party, which will be held at Clock Tower Artist Studios at the Clock Tower Business Center in Pittsfield on Thursday, Feb. 20 as part of the City of Pittsfield's 10x10 Festival. Ticket sales for this 10x10 event support the Fellowship Show as well as other projects that benefit secondary school art students in Berkshire County.

OTIS

COA

from page 1

On Wednesday, Jan. 15 features a pizza party, people should call the above number to sign up. There is a \$5 donation to cover costs and Wednesday, Jan. 22 Tritown Health Services will conduct a program on thyroid awareness from 11:30 a.m.-noon.

Seniors are invited to visit the COA room at Town Hall on Mondays and Wednesdays for coffee and conversation. For appointments and food events, people should call the Town Hall at 413-269-0100 and ask for extension 5. The COA will be closed Monday, Jan. 20 in honor of Martin Luther King Day.

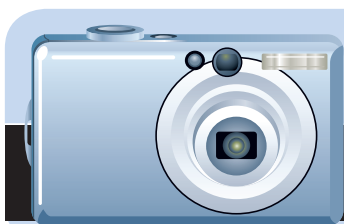


Dede Loring, from left, rolls the die for a turn while Elsie Devoti tackles a ball.



Diane Dwyer, from left, rolls the die while Kendra Rybacki unwinds the plastic wrap.

Submitted photos



Send Us Your Photos!

countryjournal@turley.com

CHESTER

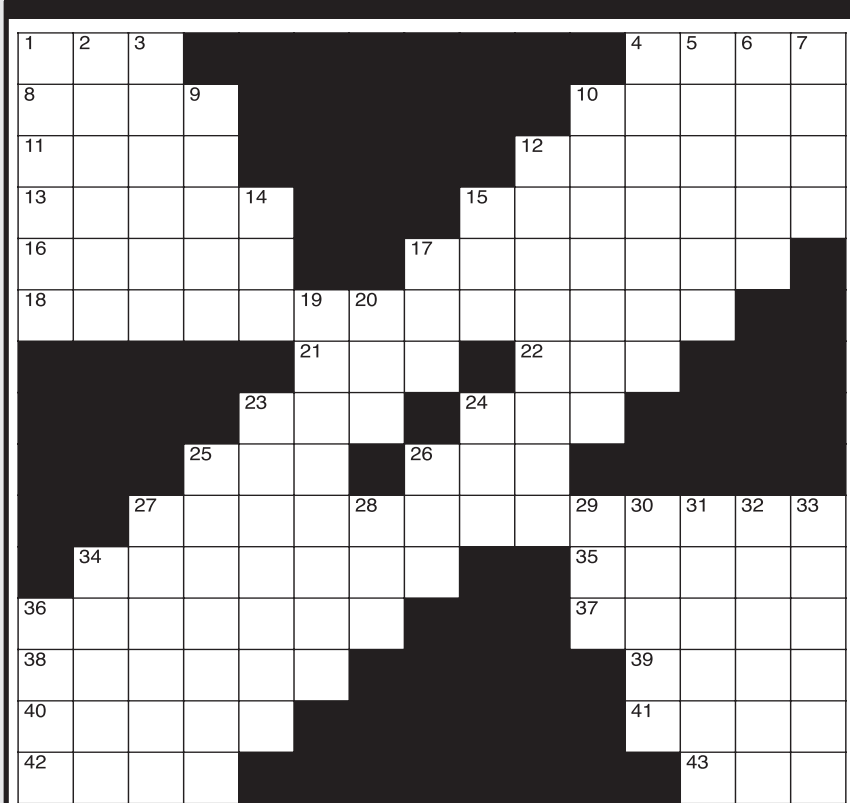
Hamilton Memorial Library host movie 'If' on Jan. 7

CHESTER – Hamilton Memorial Library, 195 West Main St., will hold a series of children's' movies at the library

beginning on Tuesday, Jan. 7 at 4 p.m. They will be featuring the movie, "If." This is a story about a girl, who

after going through some really hard times, begins to see everyone's imaginary friends.

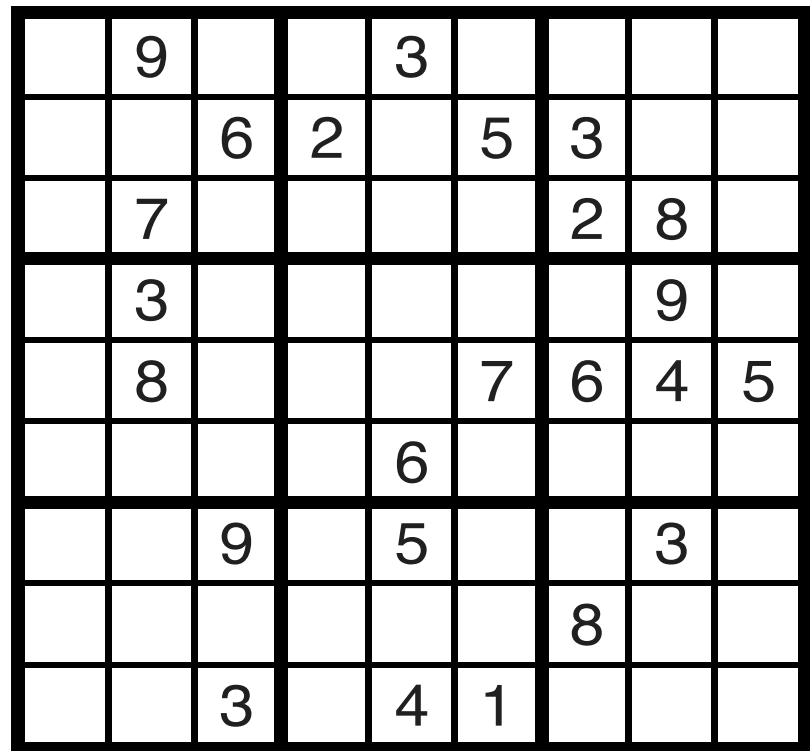
She sets out on a magical journey to reunite children with their forgotten imaginary friends.



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Americans' "uncle"
 - 4. Chair
 - 8. Ancient kingdom
 - 10. Egyptian city
 - 11. Alaskan glacier
 - 12. One from Somalia
 - 13. Ancient alphabets
 - 15. Relating to vocabulary
 - 16. Small mongrels
 - 17. Natural settings
 - 18. Weekend entertainments
 - 21. Line from which light seemingly streams
 - 22. Your own private code
 - 23. Swiss river
 - 24. Satisfaction
 - 25. A person's brother or sister
 - 26. Folk singer DiFranco
 - 27. The Blonde Bombshell
 - 34. Kids' school project
 - 35. Bluish greens
 - 36. Classifying
 - 37. Cube-shaped
 - 38. Choo-choos
 - 39. Indian religious god of dissolution
 - 40. French department
 - 41. Leak into gradually
 - 42. Foundation
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Counterbalancing debt
 - 2. In slow tempo
 - 3. Glamorous city
 - 4. Japanese lute
 - 5. Makes law
 - 6. Informative book
 - 7. Animal's body part
 - 9. American playwright
 - 10. Blood poisoning
 - 12. Angels
 - 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
 - 15. Written account
 - 17. Unwelcome pest
 - 19. Saddle horses
 - 20. Type of gibbon
 - 23. Delta is one
 - 24. NE Massachusetts cape
 - 25. Soup cracker
 - 26. Yes vote
 - 27. Muddy ground
 - 28. Physics apparatus (abbr.)
 - 29. Type of drug
 - 30. German city
 - 31. Animal disease
 - 32. Martini ingredients
 - 33. Get away
 - 34. Spanish municipality
 - 36. Thrust a knife into

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

- ARIES**
Mar 21/Apr 20
You are likely to question information you receive this week, Aries. Investigate things further, but remain receptive to what others are saying.
- CANCER**
Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, this week you may be looking to clean house, so to say. You are tossing away old beliefs and habits and are ready to embrace something new. It might be an exciting time.
- LIBRA**
Sept 23/Oct 23
Do what you can to help others in need, Libra. Offer your services and insight, and be prepared to help in other ways as well.
- CAPRICORN**
Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, you've been waiting patiently to say something and looking for an opportunity to share your input. You might need to interrupt if you feel it is important enough.
- TAURUS**
Apr 21/May 21
It is time to solidify plans and any grand schemes you may have; otherwise, you may not know which path to take. For now, start outlining your ideas.
- LEO**
Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, everything that you are going through right now is part of a cycle that has a beginning and an end. If you wait it out, you will find that patience pays off.
- SCORPIO**
Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you are giving off an energy lately that others might be attracted to. Don't be surprised if your fan club increases in the next few days. Enjoy the attention.
- AQUARIUS**
Jan 21/Feb 18
Your mind feels as if it's going in a million different directions, Aquarius. One way to alleviate distractions is to direct your energy to an assortment of small projects.
- GEMINI**
May 22/Jun 21
Practice your communication skills, Gemini, as you are likely to need them this week. You may need to resolve a sticky situation and serve as a voice of reason.
- VIRGO**
Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, maintain open lines of communication. Some may offer advice, while others may seek it. Be receptive to the former and do your best to accommodate the latter.
- SAGITTARIUS**
Nov 23/Dec 21
Communication from a former friend or an old roommate may catch you by surprise this week, Sagittarius. Embrace this opportunity to reconnect.
- PISCES**
Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, sometimes it seems like what you are saying is going in one ear and out the other. Don't let your frustration get the best of you. Keep trying to be heard.



SUDOKU

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

answers

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FLORENCE

Florence Bank pledges to Caring Health Center's Capital Campaign

FLORENCE – The Florence Bank pledged a gift of \$100,000 to Caring Health Center of Springfield and officially presented the award on Thursday, Dec. 19 at the center.

Florence Bank is committed to supporting initiatives that improve healthcare for vulnerable populations, and its mission aligns with that of the center. Among those at the check presentation were Tania M. Barber, president and CEO of Caring Health Center, and other leaders of the organization; Florence Bank President and CEO Matt Garrity and other bank officials; and local dignitaries.

The event underscored the need for health equity in the region's diverse communities, and Barber told those who gathered that the bank's donation offered the center a significant step toward the completion of its capital campaign.

"The funds will advance Caring Health Center's mission to eliminate health disparities and achieve health equity by enhancing access to high-quality, value-driven care for our multi-ethnic community," Barber said. "This gift will support capital improvements, including completing the Boston Road construction project, creating vital space to meet growing patient demand and diverse healthcare needs."

Driven by a strong commitment



Tania Barber, CEO of Caring Health Center and Matt Garrity, President and CEO of Florence Bank are shown at Caring Health Center of Springfield. Florence Bank presented \$100,000 to Caring Health Center. Submitted photo

to serving the community, community members established the Caring Health Center to fulfill local needs. Since its inception in 1995, the organization has been dedicated to providing essential health services to community members, positively impacting the lives of many, serving over 20,000 patients.

Its offerings include comprehensive primary care, behavioral health, dental services, paid on-the-job education through the Tania M. Barber Learning Institute, and community-focused programs like health and wellness initiatives, all delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.

Barber believes that all people, regardless of their ethnicity, ability to pay or background deserve quality healthcare, and she is grateful for Florence Bank and its reputation for community giving.

"The bank is deeply embedded in its history and culture of community partnership," Barber said. "For generations, the bank has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting the neighborhoods it serves by investing in initiatives that foster growth, equity, and well-being."

Garrity told those who gathered that Florence Bank is committed to supporting initiatives that improve healthcare for vulnerable populations and its leaders were proud to make the \$100,000 gift to Caring Health Center.

"Our goals for community health and wellness are well aligned with that of Caring Health Center," Garrity said. "We are neighbors here in Hampden County, and we stand firmly behind the center's mission to eliminate health disparities in all communities in our midst."

Florence Bank is a mutual savings bank chartered in 1873. Currently, the bank serves the Pioneer Valley through 12 full-service branch locations in Florence, Northampton, Easthampton, Williamsburg, Amherst, Hadley, Belchertown, Granby, Chicopee, West Springfield and Springfield.

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WESTFIELD

New fleet of F-35s at Barnes Air National Guard Base

WESTFIELD – Congressman Richard E. Neal joined U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey, Governor Maura T. Healey, Major General Gary W. Keefe, Colonel David L. Halasi-Kun, State Sen. John Velis and Westfield Mayor Michael McCabe in celebrating the stationing of a new fleet of F-35 aircraft at Barnes Air National Guard Base, which was made official after Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall signed the Record of Decision.

After the Secretary of the Air Force approved Barnes ANGB as the preferred location for the new fleet of F-35s on April 17, 2023, the selection required favorable completion of an Environmental Impact Statement. Upon favorable completion, the Secretary of the Air Force needed to sign and report to Congress the ROD.

Once reported to Congress, the decision to station the new aircraft at Barnes became official, putting in motion the assignment of twenty new F-35A Lightning II aircraft at Barnes ANGB.

“This is a great day for the City of Westfield and all of western Massachusetts, as Barnes has solidified its place in our community for years to come. The decision to station a new fleet of F-35 aircraft at Barnes comes after years of advocacy by the Western Massachusetts Delegation, as well as Major General Keefe and state and local officials. Ultimately, the Air Force recognized not only Barnes’ critical role in defending our nation, but also something we in Massachusetts already know – we take care of our servicemembers,” said Neal. “I want to thank the dedicated airmen and women of Barnes who faithfully serve our nation. It is their integrity that has upheld the superb reputation of the 104th – an integral factor in this decision-making process.”

“This decision is a big win for Massachusetts. I worked hard to get this commitment for Barnes to enhance our

national security, position our F-35s at a more climate-resilient base, and strengthen our economy in western Massachusetts,” said Warren. “I’ll keep working to bring home more wins for Massachusetts servicemembers and their families through my work on the Senate Armed Services Committee.”

“Finalizing the decision to assign F-35s to the 104th Fighter Wing ensures Barnes Air National Guard Base will remain a key part of our nation’s air defense and a vital contributor to the western Massachusetts economy,” said Healey. “This decision not only reinforces the Wing’s historic legacy but also provides a lasting economic impact, creating high-quality jobs and enhancing the region’s resilience. This decision is a testament to the 104th’s extraordinary history and their ongoing dedication to the defense of our state and our country.”

The decision to station the new fleet of F-35 aircraft came after a rigorous selection process by the U.S. Air Force that reviewed F-15C units throughout the nation. Barnes was ultimately selected in April 2023 after the Air Force considered several factors, including community support, environmental factors, and cost.

The review process also included an assessment of the location’s ability to facilitate the mission and infrastructure capacity.

“The Department of the Air Force’s decision to allocate F-35s to the 104th Fighter Wing marks a monumental moment for our unit and its critical role in our nation’s air defense,” said Keefe,

The Adjutant General, Massachusetts National Guard. “The 104th Fighter Wing has long been a cornerstone of our nation’s air defense capabilities, and this transition to the next-generation airframe solidifies our readiness and relevance for decades to come. This decision not only enhances our operational capabilities but also ensures the

Wing’s ability to continue its proud tradition of excellence as we look forward to future missions and challenges.”

“This Record of Decision continues the 78-year legacy of fighter aircraft operating at Westfield-Barnes Regional Airport and solidifies a bright future for the 104th Fighter Wing and the 1100 dedicated airmen and civilians

who work on this base. We look forward to our nation’s most capable fighter aircraft, the F-35, inheriting the air defense mission from our venerable F-15C,” said Halasi-Kun, Commander of the 104th Fighter Wing. “This new aircraft ensures the critical defense of the airspace of New England and New York and the protection of the 40 million Americans beneath that blanket of freedom. None of this is possible without the support of our local communities and our elected officials. Local, state, and federal representatives were instrumental in this decision-making process. Their efforts ensured the future of this fighter wing for generations to come, and soon the premier aircraft will be placed in the most capable hands at the best location to defend this nation we love.”

“I am beyond thrilled that the Secretary of the Air Force has solidi-

fied the assignment of the F-35As to the 104th Fighter Wing today, ensuring that the 104th remains a critical piece of our country’s national defense strategy for decades to come. This final signature is the product of the Commonwealth’s steadfast dedication to remain one of the best states in the nation for our service members and families to call home,” said Velis, Chairman of the Legislature’s Veterans’ Committee and a U.S. Veteran. “Through the passage of legislation such as the SPEED Act, and subsequently parts of the HERO Act, Massachusetts has demonstrated to the Department of Defense our commitment to continually surpass all expectations related to our care for service-members and military families and today’s announcement is a recognition of that support for our military.”

“With the stationing of the F-35s at the Massachusetts Air National Guard’s 104th Fighter Wing, the 104th will continue its proud stewardship as the first line of defense for the northeastern seaboard of the United States,” said McCabe. “The City of Westfield is honored to host them and would like to thank everyone who worked with us to make this happen.”

For nearly eight decades, the 104th Fighter Wing of the Massachusetts Air National Guard has played a critical mission in our nation’s air defense. One of the oldest flying units within the Commonwealth, the 104th provides operationally ready combat units, combat support units, and qualified personnel for active duty, all of which support the Wing’s goal to organize, train, and equip personnel to provide an operationally ready squadron to the Air Combat Command.

The assignment of a new fleet of F-35A aircraft at Barnes ANGB guarantees the long-term viability of the base, ensuring the 104th Fighter Wing can continue its vital mission for years to come.



STOW

Chimney fires prompt heating fire safety reminder

STOW – After two recent fires that spread from chimneys to the surrounding structures, Holland Fire Chief James Gagne, Holyoke Fire Chief John Kadlewicz and State Fire Marshal Jon Davine are reminding residents that having their chimneys and flues inspected and cleaned can help reduce the risk of one of the season’s most common types of fires.

The fires took place on Island Road in Holland on Nov. 24 and on Lynch Drive in Holyoke on Nov. 28. Fortunately, no injuries were reported at either event. The Holyoke fire caused damage to the area around the home’s fireplace, but the Holland fire caused serious damage to the structure. Local officials and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal’s office determined that voids or gaps allowed flames or embers to escape the homes’ chimneys.

“Most chimney fires start with a buildup of creosote from a season or more of burning wood,” said Chief Gagne. “Creosote is flammable and having your flue professionally cleaned each year can reduce the risk of it catching fire.”

“A crack or gap in your chimney can allow sparks, embers, superheated gases and creosote fires to ignite the walls or roof around it,” said State Fire Marshal Davine. “Having a professional inspect

your chimney each year can identify problems before they become emergencies.”

Massachusetts fire departments reported 1,351 heating equipment fires last year, and nearly 500 of them involved chimneys and flues. These fires caused five firefighter injuries, one civilian injury and more than \$3.3 million in damages. Most of these fires can be prevented by having the chimney and flue professionally inspected and cleaned each year. It’s not too late to have it done this season, fire officials said: it could save your home, and more importantly, it could prevent a tragedy.

To learn more about solid-fuel heating fire safety, people may visit the Department of Fire Services’ website. www.mass.gov/info-details/chimney-and-woodstove-safety.



St. Joseph’s National Catholic Church hold baked fish dinner

WESTFIELD – St. Joseph’s National Catholic Church, 73 Main St., hosts a community dinner on Sunday, Jan. 19 at noon.

This community dinner will feature baked fish with crumb topping, rice pilaf, and glazed carrots. Dessert served will be lemon surprise. Coffee and bottled water will also be available. Everyone is welcome.

Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. To purchase

tickets and reserve a place, text or telephone Cliff at 413-977-2007 and if leaving a message, provide name and telephone number.

Take-out meals-to-go will be available for pick-up at 12:30 p.m. When ordering tickets, indicate if dinners are to-go.

Deadline for purchasing tickets is Thursday, Jan. 16. All community members are welcome. There will be a fun raffle as well as dinner.

CUMMINGTON

Friday Night Cafe set to take place on Jan. 10

CUMMINGTON – Josh Wachtel, a longtime friend of the Friday Night Cafe, kicks off the 2025 season on Friday, Jan. 10 from 7-9 p.m. at the Village Church in downtown Cummington in the heart of the Cummington Cultural District with an intimate set of originals and rarities.

Wachtel’s music is a comment on the times and ourselves, full of fun, humor and deep roots. The versatile Dave Christopolis will accompany him for the evening.

The event is free, donations are appreciated, snacks are provided, Bring Your Own drinks. The show will

take place in the intimate Vestry space. Masks are welcome and encouraged. Once again this sponsored by the friendly folks at the Village Church, who believe music can be a powerful force for building community.

Friday Night Cafe receives promotional support from the Cummington Cultural District and is supported in part by grants from the Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Hinsdale-Peru, Plainfield, Williamsburg, Windsor and Worthington Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

OBITUARIES

Gary L. Lane, 73

Gary L. Lane, 73, of Lee, died Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024 at BayState Medical Center.

Gary was born in Pittsfield on June 2, 1951, the son of Francis and Helen Harris Lane. He was raised in Washington and was schooled in Becket.

Gary, known to his friends as "Bear," was a regular at Joe's Diner in Lee, where he met his bride, Kay Cahalan. They married Aug. 9, 2008.

"Bear" was an outdoors man, who loved fishing and kayaking on Buckley Dunton Lake in Becket and loved working outside in his yard. He enjoyed going out on the boat, playing a round of golf, rooting on the Steelers and enjoyed relaxing on his porch. He loved hopping on his motorcycle and going for a ride. Gary found great pleasure in spending time with his kids and their families and having his dog, KiKi, always at his side.

Gary worked at the Mead Corporation for 28 years, retiring in January 2009.



Besides his wife, Kay, those left behind to cherish his memory are his children: Helen Oleksak and her husband, Josh of Chester; Betsy Braman and her husband, Bob of Blandford and Christine Biagiotti and her husband, John of Pittsfield. In addition, he leaves behind his six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Gary was predeceased by his daughter, Jennifer Williams, his parents, and his three siblings.

The family received friends on Monday, Dec. 30 from 4-6 p.m. at the Kelly Funeral Home in Lee.

In lieu of flowers those wishing may make a donation in Gary's memory to the American Heart Association or the Berkshire Humane Society. Checks made out to either may be mailed in care of the Kelly Funeral Home, 3 Main St., Lee, MA 01238.

If you would like to leave a message of condolence or share pictures with the family, please visit our web site at www.kellyfuneralhome.net.

Carl Meissner, 96

It is with great sadness that we announce the peaceful passing of Carl Meissner on Dec. 20, 2024 at the age of 96. Carl was born on July 21, 1928 in Atlanta, Georgia to Carl E and Miriam (Tyler) Meissner. He was predeceased by his wife, Ruth E. (Thayer) Meissner on June 23, 1999, his brothers: Bill, Frank, Jim and Tom and sister, Norma.

He is survived by his sister, Dottie Clawson of Canton, Connecticut along with several brother and sisters-in-law. He leaves four sons, Carl 4th with wife Nancy of Canaan, New York; Dwight of Pittsfield, James and Raymond of Russell and daughter Heidi with husband Tom Witkop of Springfield, six grandchildren, Amy, Carl, Adam, Eric, Kendra and Linzi. Five great-grandchildren and three great-great grandchildren.

Carl grew up in Springfield and moved to Russell in 1953 where along with his loving wife of 46 years, Ruth, raised their family in a home that he mostly built himself. He was a member of the Russell Community Church where he served on several boards. A Mason for over 65 years and a Shriner for over 25.

Carl was a lifelong truck driver, starting his career



driving large Euclids and Bellydumps in the construction of the Mass. Turnpike and Route 91, then on the road for 20 years for Westfield River Paper and 14 years for Contrans Division of Erving paper.

Two highlights of his career he was proud of were when he won Ryder leasing northeast district driver of the year and the fact he drove 2 million safe miles before retiring in 1993. Carl did some traveling, but his favorite vacation was always his yearly trip to the family reunion in Maine, hosted by his brother, Frank.

In his retirement Carl was active in the American Truck Historical Society and owned a 1966 Brockway, which he enjoyed driving, and bringing to antique truck shows.

The family would like to thank Armbrook Village in Westfield and the Atrium in Agawam along with Baystate Hospice for their expert and compassionate care in the past year.

There will be a small graveside service at a later date. Any donations can be made to the Shriners Children's Hospital in Springfield. www.firtonadams.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON ZONING

BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) of the Town of Huntington will hold the Continuance of the May 14, 2024 public hearing on **Tuesday, January 21, 2025 beginning at 6:00 pm** in Stanton Hall.

The Public Hearing

Continuance is for the Special Permit Application of Hull Forestlands, LP c/o William B. Hull for an Earth Removal Operation at 61 Goss Hill Road (Parcel # 324-32-A), 0 Goss Hill Road (Parcel # 326-26-0) & 0 Worthington Road (Parcel # 326-24-0).

A copy of the application will be available for review at the Public Hearing.

The Zoning Board

of Appeals (ZBA) of the Town of Huntington will hold another public hearing on **Tuesday, January 28, 2025 beginning at 6:00 pm** in Stanton Hall.

This Public Hearing is for the Special Permit Application of Robert Hebert and Ingrid Evenson to operate Boulder Designs by Huntington Stone Works, LLC in their garage at 224 Worthington Road, Parcel Number 326-12-0.

A copy of this application will be available for review at the Public Hearing, or by appointment with the Town Administrator during regular office hours (Monday-Thursday 10-3).

ZONING
BOARD OF APPEALS
TOWN OF
HUNTINGTON

01/02, 01/09/2025

DEATH NOTICES

LANE, GARY L.

Died Dec. 21, 2024
Family received friends Dec. 30
Kelly Funeral Home

MEISSNER, CARL

Died Dec. 20, 2024
Small graveside service at a later date

Country Journal OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph.

Death Notices & Paid Obituaries should be

submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.



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To help make the dream of ending MS come true, call 1-800-FIGHT MS or visit us online at nationalmssociety.org.



Clark Art offers program for preschoolers

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025 at 10 a.m. the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., offers a free activity program for young children in the Michael Conforti Pavilion.

This free program for preschoolers gives them a creative start with themed painting talks, art-making activities and gallery guides designed for this age

group, age three to six and their caregivers. Art-making can be messy so they should dress for the mess.

For more information, people may visit clarkart.edu/events.

For accessibility questions, people may call 413 458 0524. Admission to the Clark is free January through March 2025.

Clark Art Institute holds teatime event

WILLIAMSTOWN – The Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., first Sunday free series continues on Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025 from 1-4 p.m.

This month's them is "Its Teatime." The Clark celebrates the beginning of a new year with art, community and fresh tea. At 2 p.m. an all-ages, educator-led tour explores tea-related objects in the institute's collection. Throughout the afternoon, tea tastings are provided by Heart's Pace, a North Adams based tea and healing arts lounge.

Special activities will take place in the Clark Center lower level and Museum Pavilion from 1-4 p.m. Capacity for tours is limited; pick up a ticket at the Clark Center admissions desk, available on a first-come, first-served basis. Admission to the Clark is free January through March 2025.

For more information, people may visit clarkart.edu/events. For accessibility questions, they may call 413-458-0524. Family programs are generously supported by Allen & Company.

Clark Art Institute offers gallery tours

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025 at 10:15 a.m., the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., hosts the next in its series of free tours of its permanent collection galleries designed specifically to meet the interests of new parents/caregivers and their infants.

Participants should meet at the Clark's main admissions desk. The program is specially designed to provide new parents and caregivers with a stress-free experience that offers chances to socialize with others. who

are caring for young infants. The guided gallery tour offers an informal visit to the Clark's permanent collection free from any concerns about short attention spans or fussy babies. Works by a variety of artists are featured during the casual tour of the collection. This program is best suited for adults with pre-toddlers. Strollers and front-carrying baby carriers are welcome.

For more information, people may visit clarkart.edu/events. For accessibility questions, they may call 413-458-0524.

Clark Art Institute presents gallery talk Jan. 21

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 11 a.m., the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., presents Reflections, a free monthly gallery experience during which visitors are invited to look contemplatively as they engage with works of art from the Clark's collection.

With a gentle tone that encourages investigation and audience participation, the group explores one or two artworks


with the help of a Clark educator, working together to explore its meaning, find understanding, and raise questions.

Advance registration is required; capacity is limited. People should meet in the Museum Pavilion. For more information and to register, people may visit clarkart.edu/events. Admission to the Clark is free January through March 2025.

WILLIAMSTOWN

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The **Town of Oakham** is seeking an experienced municipal **Treasurer/Collector**. 15 hours a week, negotiable pay based on experience. Please send resumes to admin@oakham-ma.gov.

TOWN OF BLANDFORD HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT

The Town of Blandford is seeking a qualified individual for the position of Highway Superintendent. Salary range starting at \$75,000-\$80,000+ negotiable based on experience/skills. Please visit our website TownOfBlandford.com or email Administrator@TownofBlandford.com for more information.

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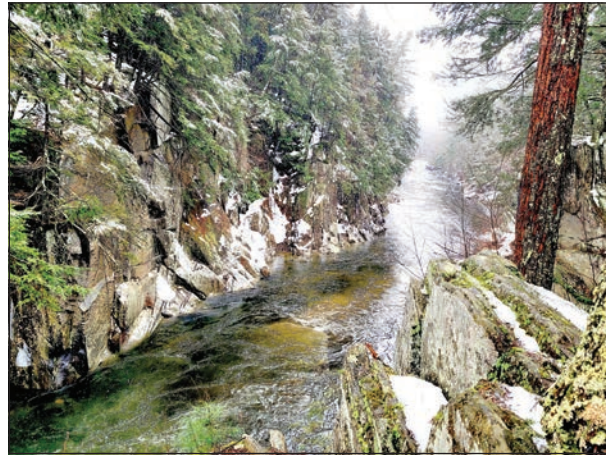
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The Wild & Scenic Westfield River in Chester is shown in January.



Chesterfield Gorge is a popular hiking spot in Chesterfield.



April is the time for the Westfield River Wildwater Races as seen in Russell. *File photos*

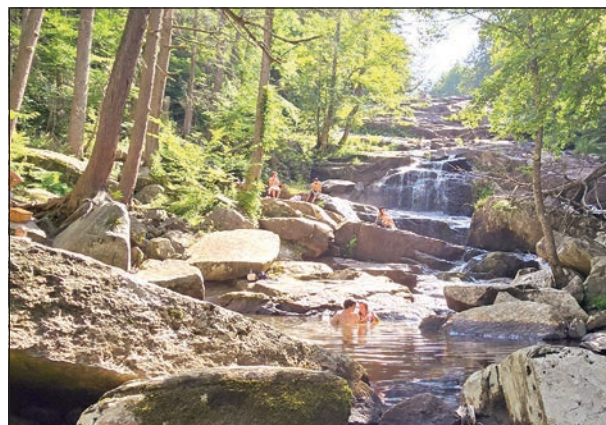
BEST of the BEST Looking Back at 2024



March brought an ice storm to the Hilltowns. This is a scene in Worthington.



Worthington votes hold up their cards at the Annual Town Meeting in June.



Glendale Falls in Middlefield is a favorite place to go on a hot summers day.



This Keystone Arch Bridge is in Chester.



People enjoyed the midway at the Cummington Fair held in August.



Sunflowers bloomed in September.



Strathmore Mill #1, located in Russell, collapses on Nov. 11.



The annual tree lighting took place in Worthington during December.



This Jersey oxen team took part in the Fourth of July parade in Chesterfield.