

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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CHESTER

Supt. Matarazzo details bus incident, improvements

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

In a letter to district parents dated Jan. 23, Gateway Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo confirmed the details of an incident on Tuesday, Jan. 20 where an elementary school bus went missing.

The letter outlined steps that the district and its bus company will be taking to address the concerns this incident raised. "On Tuesday, Jan. 20, six students at Chester Elementary School

had a frightening experience on Bus #135. After being picked up at Chester Elementary School, their bus driver suffered a medical issue that caused her to veer from her route and drive the students throughout the area for approximately 90 minutes. Students were not physically harmed, but were scared about the ride and what was happening around them," Matarazzo wrote in her letter.

Matarazzo said a parent telephoned Lecrenski Brothers, the bus company,

at 4 p.m. stating that her child had not yet arrived home. This was the first indication officials had that anything was wrong. Lecrenski staff tried to contact the missing driver, but did not hear back. Other drivers who had returned from their duties were sent out to drive Bus #135's route to try and find the bus. In the meantime, more par-



Melissa Matarazzo

ents were calling the bus company to confirm their children hadn't arrived. Despite repeated efforts to reach the driver by cell phone and radio, there was no response. Families also went out to try to find the bus.

Matarazzo reported that parents had also tried to reach staff at Gateway to alert them to the problem, but there were

no staff in the main offices of the school or district. "District staff was still present in multiple locations," Matarazzo wrote, "But not near the office phones."

At 4:24 p.m., Lecrenski notified Gateway that the bus could not be located. Matarazzo contacted 911 and began working with the Massachusetts State Police from the Russell barracks to engage in the search. Just after 5 p.m., Matarazzo emailed all Bus #135 families to let them know that the bus would be late, as this

was the only fact they could establish at that time.

By 5:20 p.m., the bus was found on the side of the road in Chester on Route 20. Matarazzo believes that the driver stopped the bus there to contact Lecrenski and let them know she was lost. This was apparently unsuccessful.

Students remained on the bus until the police arrived and police boarded the bus to reassure the students and to confirm that no one was physically hurt. At

MATARAZZO, page 3

GREAT BARRINGTON

Legislative breakfast big success

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The Mason Library hosted a gathering of nearly 100 including members of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts Library Systems, regional librarians, trustees, patrons and state legislators Friday morning, Jan. 30.

The cold weather, a chilly minus 12 Fahrenheit did not deter participants or attendees.

Trustee Chair Sharon Shaloo opened the meeting and introduced Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Vicky Bianco who said it was her job, "to defend the library agenda," and she stressed, as did everyone, the importance of libraries. One of the many benefits she noted, considering the bitter cold that day, was that often the library is the only warm place available for anyone.

Other speakers included Jennifer Guerin of the W.E.B. DuBois Middle School in Great Barrington who addressed school library benefits and needs. Massachusetts Library System Communications Manager Jack Martin who presented what that organization provides to libraries, including cooperative purchasing, interlibrary loan delivery services.

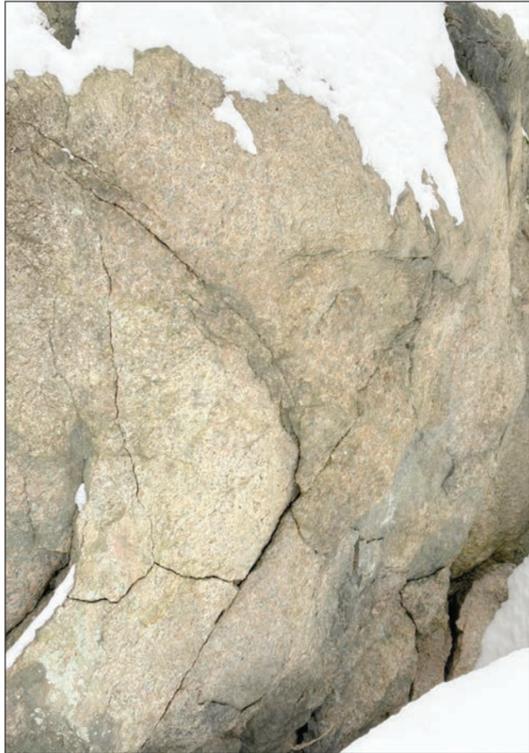
Executive Director of Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CWMARS) Jeanette Lundgren who advocated for funding. She noted that CWMARS is the largest library organization in the state which has over 150 member libraries with access to millions of items. Two newest members are the Peru and Worthington libraries.

BREAKFAST, page 6

HILLTOWNS SNOW SCENES



Turley Publications photos by Deborah Daniels
Following last weekend's snow storm, this crow enjoys some handouts. A squirrel digs through the snow for something eat.



Cracking granite is visible in these huge stones.



Snow partly hides this brook as it meanders through the woods.



A rabbit dug into the snow looking for food. Its tracks are visible in the snow.

HUNTINGTON

Gateway announces application deadline

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo announced Gateway's deadline for students applying for one of the district's two vocational programs for the fall of 2026 was Sunday, Feb. 15.

Applications will be accepted from Gateway residents and from out-of-district students. Gateway Regional School offers two flagship Chapter 74 vocational programs: welding and metal fabrication and early education and care. Each program prepares students for immediate entry into the workforce after graduation.

The welding program offers genuine, hands-on experience in state of the art facilities, renovated in 2022. Students learn on modern equipment including a robotic arm and participate in both on-site and off-site internships. Beginning in ninth grade, Early Education and Care students are on a track to become certified professionals. The curriculum includes child growth and development, lesson planning for young learners, CPR and First Aid certification and immersive internship opportunities.

GRS expanded its personalized learning model, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world career readiness for all students in grades 6 through 12 and students considering school choice are also welcome to look into Gateway and can apply anytime. GSR offers an expansive exploratory program through 26 unique course options that include tourism, woodshop, data and statistics in sports,

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HUNTINGTON

Town receives grant for strategic plan

HUNTINGTON – The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Rural Development Fund awarded Huntington a grant to create a Strategic Economic Development Plan.

The plan will provide Huntington with a comprehensive framework and functional action items to drive local economic growth. It

will compile the outcomes of community outreach, capturing both opportunities and challenges identified by residents and stakeholders. The plan will highlight key development areas, such as Downtown and Main Street and outline critical vacant parcels for future investment and opportunity.

It will provide a road-

map for the next five years, with actionable strategies and priority projects designed to encourage growth and development. A working group is being formed to work with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on this project.

Huntington residents and business owners, who are interested in being part of the group, should send a letter

of interest to admin@huntingtonma.us or drop it off at the Select Board office at Town Hall by Tuesday, Feb. 10. Meetings will be held during daytime hours and public forums will be held in the evening. The public forums will offer residents and stakeholders the opportunity to voice their questions, comments and concerns.

Domestic Violence Task Force to meet Feb. 11

HUNTINGTON – The Southern Hilltown Domestic Violence Task Force will meet on Wednesday, Feb. 11 from 3-4:30 p.m. at Gateway High School, 12 Littleville Road, in the Career Center located on

the second floor. Upcoming meeting dates are Wednesdays March 11, April 8, May 13 and June 10. For more information, people may email SouthernHillsDVTaskForce@gmail.com.

DEADLINE

from page 1

and sociology. This framework encourages students to uncover their passions early. By eighth grade, students can gain a headstart in accessing welding or EEC before they even enter high school.

As students reach the tenth grade, they participate in a “demonstration of learning” to chart their

specific goals for their final two years. This tailored approach allows for meaningful experiences.

Including internships, co-ops, dual and concurrent enrollment for college credits and work study placements. “At Gateway Regional School, education is more than coursework—it’s a launchpad,” Dr. WILL

Sullivan, GRS Principal, stated. “We empower our students to excel in life after graduation through intentionally personalized learning pathways crafted to foster achievement and community impact.”

For more information on programs and how to apply, people may visit www.grsd.org.

BLANDFORD

Porter Memorial Library list programs

BLANDFORD – All month long, people may check out winter fun kits.

The Porter Memorial Library has snowshoes for children and adults, snowman kits and more. Every

Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. the Book Squirms meet for stories, songs and sensory play for preschoolers and their families. It’s a great way to meet new families in town.

The week of Monday, Feb. 9, people may drop in all week for Valentine crafts

and make a heart frame. On Saturday, Feb. 14 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Valen-Slime Day, they may drop in anytime to make squishy slime. The library will be closed for President’s Day on Monday, Feb. 16 and will reopen on Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 2 p.m.

School vacation week

On Tuesday, Feb. 17 from 3-4 p.m. Pokemon Club meets. This club is all things Pokemon; trivia or bingo, trade cards and make a craft. On Thursday, Feb. 19 from

2-6 p.m. is Lego Play Day where they play with Legos.

On Friday Feb. 20 from 3-4 p.m. is Stuffy Story Time. Young patrons are invited to bring their own stuffed animal from home and listen to a story.

On Saturday, Feb. 21 at 11 a.m. the adult book club, CommuniTea Reads, will discuss “Watership Down,” the graphic novel. It’s a genre the group does not usually read, but it’s fun to try something new.

COA announces upcoming news, events

BLANDFORD – Kitchen Diva Joann Martin will present a Valentine’s Day Luncheon on Friday, Feb. 13 at noon at the Council on Aging room at Town Hall.

She will have for diners herbed cod with scalloped potatoes, roasted vegetables, spring salad and cherry pie bars for dessert. Then on Friday, Feb. 27, the noontime luncheon will be a favorite, pasta supper including pasta

with homemade meatballs, roasted Brussels sprouts, garlic bread and Gelato with fruit topping. Lunches will have standard beverages available.

There is no charge for the COA lunches, but Director Margit Mikuski asks that patrons consider a \$5 donation to keep the program going. Diners should call the Town Hall at 413-848-4279, extension 400 and leave the name and number of people

attending.

Game Day is Friday, Feb. 6 from 2-4 p.m. in the COA room. People may enjoy fun and frivolity along with friendly competition. No reservation is required.

Should anyone need assistance with transportation for appointments or grocery shopping, the COA van is available. They may call the COA number at Town Hall and leave a message a few days before

GOSHEN

Council on Aging lists February events

GOSHEN – A festive luncheon will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at noon in the Town Hall.

Lunch will be catered by Spruce Corner Restaurant with a choice of chicken divan or vegetarian linguine Normandy Alfredo, a tossed green salad and sliced Italian bread. As always, they will serve a delicious dessert. Reservations had to be made by Feb. 2.

Nurse Lily Stafford from the Foothills Health District will be available to take blood pressure, answer health-related questions and provide resources. Gina Papineau from the Assessor’s Office will speak about tax exemptions that are available for the residents of Goshen.

The Goshen Council on Aging and Goshen Fire Department invite seniors to Firefighters and Friends February Fest to Prevent Fires and Falls Saturday, Feb. 21 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. in John James Memorial Hall, 42 Main St. This is an interactive event to engage, educate and promote safety in older adults.

Goshen Fire Captain Steve Estelle will review fire safety including smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and will also discuss an initiative by the fire department on ways to prevent falls. Leader of the COA exercise classes, Joan Griswold, will lead the group through some key exercises for balance and stability. They will

have handouts to educate about fall risks and ways to modify their homes for increased safety. There will be hot coffee and donuts to welcome served and free giveaways. Older adults from all of the Hilltowns are welcome.

On Friday, Feb. 6 from 10-11 a.m. Community Connections meets in the upstairs dining room at the Town Hall. On the first Friday of the month, the COA works with Jennifer O’Connell from the Hilltown CDC to connect seniors to local experts on health, wellness and living intentionally. This month Hannah Morano from Sweet Birch Herbals, a community herbalism center in Ashfield, will discuss foods and herbs they can use to reduce inflammation in their bodies and provide relief from pain.

On Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 9:15 a.m. Goshen and Chesterfield older adults are invited to New Hingham Regional Elementary School for their February All School Meeting which is an assembly hosted by a class where students share recent projects and community members are welcome. They will have a special COA section of chairs, so seniors should let Kerry know if they plan to attend. The COA hopes to make this a monthly event.

On Tuesdays, Feb. 17 and Feb. 24 Highland Valley Elder Services grab and go lunches are available. HVES deliv-

ers meals to Goshen COA on the third and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Participants pick up their hot lunch at the Goshen Town Hall from 12:30-1 p.m. The lunch for Feb. 17 is a choice of Sloppy Joes on a bun or goulash and the choice for Feb. 24 is tuna salad or chicken salad. The meals also include milk, vegetables and dessert. There is a suggested \$4 donation given to Highland Valley Elder Services to offset the cost of the meal. They may call Kerry at 413-268 9354 if they would like to sign up to get these nutritious and delicious meals. The COA would love to increase participation in this program.

On Wednesday, Feb. 18 from 2-4 p.m. crafts group will meet on the third Wednesday in the library or dining room adjacent to the library if they need more space to work. They may bring a crafting project and work together with a supportive and fun group. Participants will get some new ideas and share their ideas and skills with others. There have been many articles written that conclude participating in the arts creates paths to healthy aging.

On Thursday, Feb. 19 technology help in the library will be available from noon-2 p.m. People can ask questions regarding their computer, phone, tablet or any other technology related question and they will do their best to help.

BECKET

MassDOT announces upcoming bridge repairs

BECKET – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces bridge repairs on I90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 20 in Becket.

The work is scheduled now through Friday, Feb. 6 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. each day and will require lane closures. Appropriate signage, law enforcement details and advanced message boards will be in place to guide drivers through the work area.

Drivers traveling through the affected areas should expect delays, reduce speed

and use caution. All scheduled work is weather dependent and subject to change without notice.

For more information on traffic conditions, travelers are encouraged to download the Mass511 mobile app or visit www.mass511.com to view live cameras, travel times, real-time traffic conditions and project information. Dial 511 and select a route to hear real time conditions. Follow @MassDOT on X, formerly known as Twitter, to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.

Valentine cookie sale benefits outreach program

BECKET – The Yoked Parish of Becket is having a Valentine’s Day home baked cookie sale at the Guild Hall of the First Congregational Church, 22 YMCA Road, on Saturday Feb. 14 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

The funds raised will go to the Community Emergency Outreach Program sponsored by the churches to benefit those in the community with fuel assistance, electrical and plumbing emergencies and other necessities.

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CHESTER

Carm's Restaurant rejuvenated under new ownership

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

CHESTER – Jon and Sierra Haskell have purchased Carm's Restaurant in Chester, previously owned by Erin Patrick and Aaron Allen.

The Haskells have refreshed and deep-cleaned the diner, reworked a few menu items and nearly doubled their portion sizes. Newly refurbished signs above the counter announce the soup of the week (Chicken Pot Pie) and the January drink specials (coconut cream latte or coffee).

They decided to keep the diner feel and haven't changed many of the menu options. They kept the same crew including cook Norm Robitaille. "They're the team. We're really blessed to have them," Jon said. "They love to work here and they take pride in their work."

While the purchase went through on Wednesday, Jan. 21, the pair had already started working in the diner on Thursday, Jan. 1, closing for about a week while they repainted and deep cleaned. They painted the walls, trim, the brown woodwork and even the tin ceiling above the far right section of the restaurant. Their goal was to make the restaurant warmer and welcoming and to revamp some of the recipes. The restaurant reopened on Saturday, Jan. 10.

Haskell said he looked into buying the business because he had learned that the owners had planned to sell Chester Common Table, their other restaurant located on Main Street. Jon had been a tenant in the three bay garage behind Carm's for the past four years and decided he preferred buying the building himself to having a new landlord.

Jon Haskell grew up in Worthington and was homeschooled. From March through the summer, he would go down to visit his Uncle Gary in Texas, who owns four or five Southern barbecue restaurants. Jon's role was to start the smokers at 5 a.m. and be on the premises until clean up, after the restaurant closed at 10 p.m. "I've always wanted to open a restaurant," Haskell says of the experience. Jon played several sports at Gateway Regional High School and had long harbored a dream of opening something called the "Gator Pit," after the rollicking student section of the home gym.

The building was originally Witcher's garage and was one of the first Ford dealerships between Pittsfield and Springfield. It reportedly dates back to the 1870s and photos show its transition in 1924 when it was fronted with pink Chester granite, mined several miles west on Route 20. Among the other his-



Turley Publications photos by Wendy Long

Staff with new owners of Carm's Restaurant in Chester: Caydence Hussey, Brynn Neal, Sierra and Jon Haskell, Tom O'Connor and Norm Robitaille.

toric photos on display in the restaurant is the town's Homecoming Parade in 1918 when veterans of WWI returned.

In time, a diner opened, in addition to the garage and it became a Mobile gas station; the red Pegasus symbol is still mounted in front. If the couple ever sell the restaurant for another use, the photos will go to the Chester historical society, Haskell said.

The couple have already started looking at plans for the future of Carm's. Sierra, who grew up in Deerfield, noted that there used to be an ice cream shop next door that

they'd love to bring back. They are considering a possible addition to accommodate that and perhaps creating and renting an apartment in the attic space. The previous ice cream shop is now a gift

shop that sells handcrafted items.

No stranger to business, Jon and his father Tom run Limited Budget, LLC which does a range of services including construction

management, landscaping and snow removal. Jon and Sierra also own a couple of two family homes in Chester. Sierra works full time as a dog groomer. As if they don't have enough irons in the fire, the couple have purchased the Knowlton Estate across from the Huntington Public Library. The house was in disrepair when they got it, but they have been able to save about 2/3rds of the structure, which dates back to the 1800s. They hope to move in this year.

They have a collection can on the counter and welcome diners to donate to help people, who cannot afford to pay the full price of a meal. In time, the Haskells would like to provide 20-30 meals to the homeless each week. They already offer a 10% military discount.

As for the restaurant, Haskell said his ultimate goal is simple. "Give back to a big, family community that has taken care of us in our other businesses."



Historic Carm's Restaurant, located at 241 Route 20 in Chester, has been purchased by Jon and Sierra Haskell. It serves breakfast and lunch and is open from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., daily.



Submitted photo

This photo shows some of the mineral and crystal collection at the Hamilton Memorial Library in Chester.

Hamilton Memorial Library holds geology talk Feb. 7

CHESTER – A special free geology and local history talk with James Higby, co-sponsored by the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers, will take place on Saturday, Feb. 7 at 10 a.m. at the Hamilton Memorial Library, 15 Middlefield Road, Suite 7 in their unique mineral and crystal museum.

The Historic Hamilton Memorial Library has a

Hulda Burdick mineral collection. This collection was donated to the library by Hulda Burdick, who worked for Dr. Heman Lucas, founder of the emery business in Chester. The Hamilton Memorial Mineral Collection contains not only many rare and beautiful gemstones, but also an original hand-drawn preliminary mineral survey by United States Geologic Society

geologist Steven A. Norton; this is a unique and historic geologic document. Higby enjoys exploring, mapping and sharing the known history of the Chester Emery Mines. He will bring familiarity with the displayed minerals as well as historic documents available from the United States Geologic Survey including a Bedrock Geologic Quadrangle Map and an Aeromagnetic Map.

MATARAZZO

from page 1

that time, several parents had arrived at the bus and a police officer released three children to the care of their families. A second vehicle arrived from the bus company to take the remaining three students home, with local police following to ensure that each student was received by an adult at their home. Matarazzo messaged families at 5:34 p.m. to inform them that their children had been found and were on their way.

Emergency crews treated and transported the bus driver to the hospital. Matarazzo said that she will not serve as a bus driver for Gateway again.

The principal and counselors checked in with the six involved students at school the next day. If needed, additional support was offered to further cope with the fear and anxiety the incident had caused. Lecrenski has assigned a temporary

driver and monitor to the bus, and a permanent driver will be identified soon.

Matarazzo announced three immediate next steps that emerged from this incident. First, the district will determine a way for families to report emergency concerns after school hours. "We may start with an approach that we can quickly implement and then develop a more sustainable solution over time," Matarazzo said.

Gateway will also look into bus tracking options and their costs, to "determine how to invest in this important technology." Finally, the district will convene a working group that includes the bus company and local police to outline specific criteria and actions to take in the case of bus emergencies including an efficient communication protocol to get information to affected families and staff.

"We know that these next actions cannot erase the fear and anxiety that this incident caused for our students and families, from those directly impacted to those of you who have heard about this event and developed concerns of your own," Matarazzo shared. "Hopefully, this chronology of events shows our commitment to honesty and openness and the next moves we make demonstrate that we will improve our systems and processes to serve you and our students better every day."

Matarazzo said she had spoken with each family directly impacted by the incident and will be returning calls to others who had reached out soon. She invites anyone who wants additional information, or wishes to voice their concerns, to reach out to her by emailing mmatarazzo@grsd.org or calling 413-685-1012.

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Column offered a sad chuckle

The Jan. 15, 2026 publication, specifically the article by Teri Frykenberg RN in the Opinion section gave me both a chuckle and disappointment.

The article covered everyone's cognitive abilities and was very informative. Teri indicated that one of the methods used to measure a person's cognitive performance is to have the person

"draw a clock showing a particular time." Then she elaborated that "with the number of young people today who can't read a clock, they'll have to come up with another test at some point."

It's very disappointing that all our children are unable to read/understand the time on a clock, but it also gave me a chuckle, in a way, since society has

to unfortunately develop a new simpler method, other than drawing a clock, to test the cognitive function our current children when they become adults. It most likely will involve a picture of a smartphone since that is what our kids look at too often in their life. Very sad.

Thank you.

Walter Houlihan
Becket

Resident appreciates snowstorm clean up

The town did its usual fine job keeping Harlo Clark Road open during the storm, thank you.

I would like to specifically commend the clearing job done on the sidewalk along Route 112, from downtown to the school. This is an important walk-

way for kids going to school and for town residents just seeking a place to walk. Even with recent temperatures it is mostly bare a few days after the storm. Thank you.

Gary Winsor
Huntington

GUEST COLUMN



By Russell Gloor

Am I entitled to more Social Security as a Veteran?

Dear Rusty:

I served in the U.S. Army from July 1964 to July 1967. Am I eligible for a higher Social Security payment?

Thank you.

Signed:
Vietnam Era Army Vet

Dear Army Vet:

Please accept my sincere thanks for your military service. I believe you are referring to the "Special Extra Credit for Military Service," which has been the subject of many published articles. That refers to a special Social Security accommodation available only to those who served in the military during specific periods of time, but it does not add to your monthly Social Security payment. Rather, it adds to your military earnings record for the years you served, which may or may not result in a higher Social Security benefit when you later claim Social Security.

Here's how it works in your case:

Serving between 1964 and 1967, if you told Social Security of your military service when you applied for Social Security benefits or gave them a copy of your DD-214, they would have added up to \$1,200 per year to your military pay record. FYI, those who served after 1966 were automatically given earnings credit for their military service years. However, whether those special extra credits would affect your monthly Social Security benefit depends on your lifetime earnings record when you later claimed Social Security.

When you applied for benefits, Social Security reviewed your lifetime earnings and used the highest earning 35 years of earnings over your lifetime (adjusted for inflation) to calculate your "Primary Insurance Amount" or "PIA," which is what you get if you claim benefits to start at your Social Security full retirement age. If, after your military service, you had 35 or more years of earnings which were higher than your earnings while serving in the military, Social Security would have used your later higher earning years to calculate your benefit, and your military earnings would not have had an effect on your Social

Security benefit. However, if any of your military earnings including the "special extra credits" were among the highest over your lifetime, then those higher military earnings would be included when calculating your Social Security benefit.

So, whether you would benefit from these "special extra credits for military service" depends largely on your earnings history after you were discharged from active duty. If your military earnings were among the highest earning years over your lifetime, and you provided SSA with a copy of your DD-214 when you applied for Social Security, then your current SS benefit already includes consideration of your military service. FYI, Social Security should have asked about your military service when you applied. If you didn't tell SS about your military service when you applied for Social Security, or if you aren't sure, you should contact the SSA at 1.800-772-1213 and ask if you were given those "special extra credits for military service" for your 1960s military service years when you applied for Social Security. But if you had at least 35 years of higher earnings after you left military service, your current SS benefit is already based on those later higher earning years, and you will not get any additional Social Security benefit because of the "special extra credits" for your military service years.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



GUEST COLUMN

Onion culture, continued

This morning, after reading last week's column, my mom commented, "Boy, I didn't realize onions are so challenging to grow."

Oh no, I truly hope that the column did not convey that message. I've been growing onions for years, and find them no more challenging than any other vegetable that you start indoors.

I hope I didn't discourage anyone. In fact, I hope just the opposite happened, whereby everyone purchased some seed to give growing onions a whirl.

Read on to learn more from where we left off last week.

Growing on

How does one achieve lots of top growth so that by seasons' end a big bulb will result? Provide sufficient moisture and nitrogen, and lots of it, but only early in the gardening season.

Amend a 100 square foot area with a bushel of aged manure or finished compost prior to planting, then top dress when plants are six-eight inches high and again for the last time three weeks later. Fish emulsion is a great foliar fertilizer for this purpose.

Because onions have limited top growth and are relatively shallow rooted, it makes it hard for them to compete with more aggressive plants for moisture and nutrients. For that reason, be sure to address enemy #1: weeds!

I have found that a hand held circle hoe is great for getting into the narrow space between plants as well as within the rows. Perform this task once or twice a week and you will be weed-free all summer.

You can also apply grass clippings or chopped up leaves as mulch. It will reduce weeds and conserve moisture, and, as it breaks down add valuable organic matter to the soil.

As the summer solstice draws near, the need for nitrogen drops as the bulb switches from top growth to bulbing up. From this point on, no additional fertilizer is necessary and



by Roberto McQuaid

mudroom works great.

Here simply cut the tops to one inch prior to bagging up. When you are going through them to cut, or braid, be sure to separate out those with double bulbs, as well as those whose necks remain thick; neither will be good keepers and should be used first.

This is also a great time to think about good traits and the prospect of saving some of your best onions for seed production.

Save the seeds

Saving the seeds of your open-pollinated, non-hybrid onions is the next frontier for allium aficionados. In the north, we employ what is called the "bulb to seed" method.

Our bulbs are harvested normally and stored over the winter, and when the ground is ready for planting, three or four of your best onions are replanted three inches apart. Soon a flower stalk will form. It can get quite tall (three-five feet!) so place a stake for support early on and tie it off as you need to.

After the flower head has formed be on watch for the black seeds to ripen and loosen up- you want to catch them before they shatter. This can be accomplished by clipping a few sections of the head at a time.

Dry in an airy spot for a few days before storing in paper envelopes in a cool, dry location for use the following spring. Be advised that to avoid cross pollination, only one variety of onion can be in flower at a time; it is fine, however, to have first year onions in the garden.

Onion seeds are viable for one-two years.

Now that you know the ins and outs of onion culture, embrace the challenge and try growing onions from seed this year.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 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.

watering can be cut back some.

Harvesting

In early fall your onion tops will begin to yellow and bend at the necks. As mentioned earlier, reduced daylight has signaled the plant to go into dormancy.

When half have bent, bend the rest and allow them to remain in the garden just a few more days. If no rain is in the forecast, pull them up and lay them on edge in place, turning on occasion. This will begin the curing process.

Should rain threaten, they can easily be protected with a tarp or moved under cover.

After three days to a week of sunshine it is time to move them to an airy, dry location such as a shed to cure for an additional two-three weeks. Should this time frame include lots of rain or humidity, sometimes a household fan can help the drying process along.

Dry onions will definitely be the best for long term storage.

Storage

You have a good idea that your onions are ready for storage when the necks have withered away and the outer skin is dry and starts to slip. Nineteenth century gardeners would have braided and hung them in the root cellar, where cool and dry conditions would, fingers crossed, keep them fit for use as needed into the spring months.

Onion braids have modern day appeal- they look pretty and it is easy to simply tug the perfect size onion from the braid as you need it. The key to success is to attach twine or string to at least one of the braiding strands - this will give your braid strength, not to mention a way of hanging it up.

We can also store onions in mesh bags or old hosiery in a household location that remains close to freezing and relatively dry. My unheated

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

OPINION

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Coyotes inhabit both wild and urban areas

By Deborah Daniels
Correspondents

Are you still keeping those new year's resolutions, you betcha, fitness through shoveling and ice chipping, it works.

Turning thoughts to how this arctic weather affects the animals outside consider the coyote. Coyotes and fox dig foxholes 4-7 feet deep below the frost line. That is deep enough underground where water doesn't freeze. Surprisingly they prefer to sleep above ground hidden by brush rather than in the den.

The den is mostly used for birthing pups in early spring. Right now the snow pack creates an above ground insulating layer to a den that is most certainly being used. Coyotes will also den in rocky outcroppings as we have seen on Hilltown Hikers hikes in the spring. The scat gives them away. The rocks keep predators out and provide a safe nursery area for pups to exercise.

Coyotes are apex survivors that are thriving in both urban, suburban and wild settings. Cats always land on their feet and coyotes make their home wherever the wind takes them. Take the coyote that swam across San Francisco Bay, 1.25 miles, to Alcatraz Island on Jan. 27 this year.

No he was not visiting Al Capone's cell at the notorious federal prison. He needed a home and he appears to be thriving on the island. The National Park Biologists are not too happy with his feasting on the nesting sea birds. So he may just be vacationing. The island is 22 miles in size and a tourist site.

The park rangers will probably take care of his ride back, that is relocate him if necessary. But where to relocate him? The San Francisco Peninsula is crowded with coyotes thriving in the city. Coyote's are very territori-



A coyote shows typical coloring, pointy ears and thin muzzle.



This photo shows coyote pups. Submitted photos



The coyote swam the San Francisco bay to Alcatraz this January.

al and the theory is that this coyote left because there was no more unclaimed land for him to make a home. Road kills are just not thinning the coyotes enough in the city.

Wolves were the main predator of coyotes but most of them have relocated to Canada. They have also been pressured right out of the U.S.A. for the same reason, no land left to make a habitat.

So you know, coyotes in the wild rarely attack people. They will defend their pups if people approach or endanger their young. There are reports of aggression by coyotes, who have been fed by humans also.

They hunt at dusk and dawn and they can outrun most of their prey. They have been clocked from 25-45 mph with very agile bodies that can slip through underbrush and urban debris with ease. People will recognize a coyote by their prominent pointed ears, long narrow snout and bushy tail often with a black tip, that usually is held down flat when they run. Their coats are a mix of gray, tan and reddish hues.

They mate for life and both help to raise four to nine pups per litter that leave the



Eastern coyote.

Submitted photo

den at nine months. Coyotes are intelligent and adapt to any environment. For example a coyote walked in the background of live TV coverage of a young mountain lion being tranquilized after it was caught in the streets of San Francisco. One predator sympathizing with another saying they caught you huh, as it walked by, all caught on camera. Coyotes have been seen running near the T (subway) in Boston. They earn their keep feasting on rats and garbage along the route.

Coyotes yip, bark and howl mostly at dawn and dusk, communicating with one another. They yip to bond with family members, when they reunite with family or to warn rivals away from their territory as well as to coordinate hunting with pack mates and to signal danger. It is eerie to hear their yipping, but there is no need to be frightened because it is more about them communicating with other coyotes then adding you to the menu. Should you want some more



The author's trusty canine named Cooper learned coyotes can be aggressive around their pups.

coyote entertainment watch the podcast about Weave an orphaned coyote pup that was raised by a hunter.

There have been several encounters with coyotes while hiking so it was high time to learn about these creatures. There was one instance when the coyotes were clearly playing and wanted to join with the hike dogs. However there was also one instance when a coyote showed aggression to

my large dog, she had puppies nearby that we didn't know about. Make no mistake she was vicious in her defense of our accidentally finding that she had puppies.

Should you meet one, experts warn that you should yell, make noise, flap your arms and back away. Do not turn your back on a coyote because this triggers a chase response. Stay warm and resume hiking and get wild when the thaw is on.

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DEATH NOTICE

CARROLL J. KIDA
Died January 31, 2026.
Services will be held in the spring at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

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 (with a word limit of up to 500 words) 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.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

First Congregational Church of Blandford
Pastor Ciprian Droma
91 Main St., Blandford, MA 01008
413-848-2052
Sunday service 10 a.m.

First Congregational Church of Chester
334 Skyline Trail, Chester, MA 01011
Pastor Susan Borsella
Service with Live Music: 10 a.m. - Sunday
Coffee and Sweets Social: 10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

First Congregational Church of Williamsburg
Rev. Jack Kraaz
4 North Main St., Williamsburg, MA 01096
413-268-7557
burgychurch@gmail.com • burgychurch.org
Facebook:
First Congregational Church of Williamsburg
YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyH1EA-fduamqHYeekw5w
Office Hours: Tues. - Fri. 9 a.m. - 12 noon
Days and Hours of Services: Sun. at 10 a.m.

Hilltown Community Church
Dr. Robert Perreault, Senior Pastor
55 Main St., Russell, MA 01071
413-275-3232
Office: 413-862-3341
hilltownchurch3341@gmail.com
hilltowncommunitychurch.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/p/Hilltown-Community-Church-61580281487624/
Sunday Mornings 10 a.m.

Holy Family Parish
Rev. Ronald F. Sadlowski, known as Fr. Ron
5 Main St., Russell, MA 01071
413-862-4418
Office Hours: No set times.
Please call, leave a voice message or email: holyfamilyrussell.org
parish@holyfamilyrussell.org
Saturday Vigil: 5 p.m.
Sunday Masses: 8:15 a.m. & 11 a.m.

New Boston Congregational Church
4 Sandisfield Rd., PO Box 81
Sandisfield, MA 01255
Services held twice monthly, check website: www.newbostoncongregationalchurch.org

Pioneer Valley Assembly of God
Pastor Javier Melendez
63 Old Chester Rd., Huntington MA 01050
413-667-3196
[pvagliffe@gmail.com](mailto:pvaglife@gmail.com)
www.pioneervalleyag.org
Facebook: Pioneer Valley Assembly of God
Sunday service: 10:30 a.m.

Pioneer Valley Mennonite Fellowship
Deacon Jerald Reinford
400 Huntington Rd., Russell, MA 01071
(413) 297-6037
Sunday worship at 10 a.m.
Visitors appreciated.

News, photo publication policy

As a community newspaper our focus has always been local news. While we try very hard to run upcoming events as a public service whenever space allows, space does not allow us to run an upcoming event repeatedly. Our policy is to limit publication of upcoming events to one article in advance of the event and, space permitting, a second brief reminder article the week prior to an event, and to run those articles in only one section of the paper, and not in multiple sections simultaneously.

All such public service announcements and photos are subject to space limitations and deadlines, therefore publication cannot be guaranteed. Whenever copy for the week exceeds allotted space, news copy will take priority, and public service copy is the first area to be cut. We also reserve the right to edit for style and space, and are under no obligation to print lists of sponsorships, or articles that arrive after deadline, unless time and space allows.

Deadline is Friday at NOON.

LEE

Lee and Westfield receive \$20,000 MassDEP grants each

BOSTON – The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced \$120,000 in Technical Assistance Grant awards to six municipalities and community groups.

The TAG Program, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection helps communities get involved in cleaning up waste disposal sites in their neighborhoods. The funding can be used to bring in experts, engage more resi-

dents and offer educational resources for the public.

“So many Massachusetts residents care about the environment and are interested in making sure their water and air are protected but get stymied by the complex technical information that informs assessment and remediation,” said MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple. “These funds support local leaders and residents in gaining the knowledge and confidence

to actively shape decisions about the cleanup of contamination in their own communities.”

The town of Lee received \$20,000. It will use its award to engage technical expertise to review and interpret information about the Upland Disposal Facility, an area permitted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the storage of contaminated sediments from the Housatonic River Superfund Site, to provide

technical assistance to local officials and outreach to citizens. Contaminants of concern include polychlorinated biphenyls, potentially affecting the aquifer.

Westfield Residents Advocating for Themselves, Inc. received \$20,000. They will use their award to engage technical expertise to review and interpret disposal site documents and information for the Barnes Air National Guard Base to increase public awareness by

providing valuable insights into the extent and nature of residents’ health concerns and issues. Contaminants of concern include Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances affecting soil, surface water and groundwater and impacting municipal and private drinking water supplies.

MassDEP’s mission is to protect and enhance the Commonwealth’s natural resources – air, water, and land - to provide for the health, safety, and welfare

of all people and to ensure a clean and safe environment for future generations. In carrying out this mission MassDEP commits to address and advance environmental justice and equity for all people of the Commonwealth, provide meaningful, inclusive opportunities for people to participate in agency decisions that affect their lives and ensure a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

STOCKBRIDGE

Grange hosts community dinner

STOCKBRIDGE – The Stockbridge Grange hosts a community dinner on Sunday, Feb. 8, from noon-12:30 p.m. featuring spaghetti and meatballs, salad, and bread with dessert choices

of chocolate cream or lemon meringue pie.

Dinner is \$17 per person, take out only with 12-1:30 p.m. pick up at the Stockbridge Grange Hall, 51 Church St. Orders may be

made by calling either 413-243-1298 or 413-443-4352.

Inclement weather postpones the meal for a week. Grange dinners are held to raise money for non-profit projects and building maintenance.

MIDDLEFIELD

Council on Aging serves lunch

MIDDLEFIELD – Middlefield Senior Center will serve lunch on Wednesday, Feb. 11 at noon.

Take out is available.

Donation is \$4. The menu includes sausage quiche or pineapple chicken, tropical vegetables, green beans, steamed rice and Mandarin oranges. Coffee will be

served.

People should RSVP by Monday, Feb. 9 by calling 413-623-9990. A board meeting will be held at 1 p.m.

GREAT BARRINGTON

W.E.B. DuBois Freedom Center holds Scottsboro Boys exhibit

GREAT BARRINGTON – The W.E.B. Du Bois Freedom Center, 612 South Egremont Road, in partnership with the Scottsboro Boys Museum, presents the Scottsboro Boys Traveling Exhibit on view in Great Barrington for the first time outside of Alabama.

Opening Tuesday, Feb.

10 at the Du Bois Freedom Center’s Main Street office, the exhibition tells the story of the nine Black teenagers whose wrongful conviction in the 1930s became one of the most consequential civil rights cases of the twentieth century, shaping landmark Supreme Court decisions and the future of racial justice

advocacy in the United States.

As part of the opening week, the Du Bois Freedom Center and the Scottsboro Boys Museum will present a featured public conversation entitled “Reflections on Justice: W.E.B. Du Bois, the Scottsboro Boys, and Legacies of Injustice.” The program examines the

Scottsboro case, the National Association for Advancement of Colored People’s involvement, the responses of Northern communities including Massachusetts and the legal strategies that emerged from the case and continue to influence justice movements today.

On Thursday, Feb. 12 at

the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, 14 Castle St., in the Indigo Room exhibition viewing is at 5 p.m. and moderated conversation at 6 p.m. The event is free, but reservations are required.

People may visit <https://mahaiwe.my.salesforce-sites.com/ticket/#/instances/a0FQK000007K6Mz2AK>.

The program features Dr. Thomas Reidy, Executive Director of the Scottsboro Boys Museum, and

Dr. Whitney Battle-Baptiste, Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Center at UMass Amherst, moderated by Marcus P. Smith, History and Archival Fellow at the Du Bois Freedom Center.

BREAKFAST

The Geiger family from Stockbridge spoke about the necessity for and availability of their library for the family.

Addressing the gathering, Sen. Paul Mark cited Pres. Thomas Jefferson’s home, which had books, but not for those who were owned by him. “Massachusetts takes the path of knowledge,” he said, adding, “You will have my support as always.”

State Rep. Leigh Davis thanked everyone for participating and for reminding legislators how important libraries are.” She also cited her need for and use of her library.

State Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier said, “the budget is terrible this year, and it’s going to get worse,” citing specifically school funding. She challenged the group for a bigger turnout next year which would include great-

er diversity, different people for all library positions that would truly reflect everyone.

Lastly, she acknowledged all libraries, students, and the people in the streets of Minneapolis.

The Otis library was represented by trustees Susan Brofman and Diane Dyer, Friends of Otis Library member Roxy Crittendon and their construction Owners Project Manager Adam Thiebault-Downes of Downes Construction. The Otis Library is in the same construction program that Blandford is and is working towards a completely new building rather than an expansion. Blandford was represented by Library Director Nicole Daviau and a trustee.

The Library Legislative Breakfast was supported by the Western Massachusetts Library Advocates.



Turley Publications photos by Mary Kronholm
State Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier of Pittsfield, who regularly attends Western Mass. Library Legislative Breakfasts speaks.



Shown from left are Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner Vice Chair Timothy Cherubini of Williamstown, State Sen. Paul Mark and Porter Memorial Library Director Nicole Daviau at the Library Legislative Breakfast, Mason Library, Great Barrington, Friday morning, Jan. 30.



Nearly 100 at the Library Legislative Breakfast, Mason Library, Great Barrington, Friday morning, Jan. 30 listen as Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Vicky Biancolo speaks.



Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Vicky Biancolo at table with Head of Library Advisory and Development/Government Liaison Robert Favini.

from page 1

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Horace Smith Fund to award scholarships and fellowships to eligible local students

The Horace Smith Fund will be awarding \$317,000 in scholarships and fellowships to residents of Hampden County, who have also graduated from an eligible high school or private school.

This year 21 scholarships, four fellowships and one William R. Rooney Award for students with special needs will be presented to recipients at the June 18 Awards Night ceremony at Storowton Carriage House

in West Springfield.

Scholarships are offered not only to graduating high school seniors, but also to students already in college or those wishing to return to college. Scholarships of \$12,000 are distributed as \$3,000 annually and renewable each year until graduation. Fellowship awards of \$15,000 are distributed as \$7,500 annually and renewable for one additional year to students pursuing

a full-time graduate degree. Students must maintain at least a B average to renew.

Recipients are selected on a variety of criteria including academic records, merit and financial need. Of great importance is a personal written account of why the student feels deserving of financial assistance. Applicants must submit their transcripts and, if applicable, college entrance exam scores or graduate degree specific

tests, and three letters of recommendation.

Completed applications must be received either electronically or be mailed to The Horace Smith Fund at 16 Union Avenue, Suite 2K, Westfield, MA 01085 no later than March 15. Applications are available at local high school guidance offices, college financial aid office and on-line at www.HoraceSmithFund.org or by phoning 413-739-4222.

Families sought for foreign exchange students

ASSE International Student Exchange Programs, a non-profit, public benefit organization, seeks local families to discover the many rewards of hosting a foreign exchange student.

ASSE students come from more than 50 countries worldwide: France, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, Japan, Australia, to name a few. They are between the ages of 15 and 18 years and they are enthusiastic and excited to experi-

ence American culture, family life, school, sports, etc. They also love to share their own culture and language with their host families, who welcome the students into their home, not as a guest, but as a family member, giving everyone involved a rich cultural experience. Host families may be single parents, couples and single persons.

The exchange students have pocket money for personal expenses and full

health, accident and liability insurance. ASSE students are carefully selected based upon academics and personality and host families choose their student from a wide variety of backgrounds, countries and personal interests.

ASSE also offers qualified American students the opportunity to learn another language and culture by spending a school year, semester or a summer with a host family in another country.

Those interested in host-

ing an exchange student or becoming an exchange student abroad should call Holly at 1-800-677-2773, visit www.asse.com or send an email to asseusouth@asse.com to request more information or start the application process. Students are eager to learn about their American host family, so begin the process of welcoming a new son or daughter today. The memories and the friendship will stay with you forever.

HCC Foundation scholarship deadline ends March 13

HOLYOKE — The Holyoke Community College Foundation is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The application deadline is Friday, March 13. Last year, the HCC Foundation awarded 410 scholarships worth about \$364,000 to 379 incoming, current and transferring HCC students. Some students received multiple scholarship awards. The average scholarship award is typically around \$900.

"The scholarship program is the flagship initiative of the HCC Foundation, and it reflects the incredible generosity of our donor community," said Amanda Sbriscia, vice president of Institutional

Advancement and executive director of the HCC Foundation. "Every scholarship tells two stories – one of a donor who believes in the power of education, and one of a student whose path forward is made possible by that belief."

Students must be currently enrolled at HCC or have been accepted for the upcoming academic year to be eligible for scholarships.

Applicants only need to fill out a single online form to be automatically matched with the scholarships they are most qualified to receive. There are scholarships for new students, current students and students transferring to other institutions, scholarships based on finan-

cial need, scholarships for students in specific majors, scholarships for residents of certain communities, and scholarships that recognize academic achievement.

"Last year's 410 scholarship awards represent 410 opportunities for students to focus on their studies rather than financial stress," said Sbriscia. "We're proud to continue this tradition of supporting HCC students as they work toward their goals."

To view scholarship opportunities and apply, people may www.hcc.edu/scholarships. The HCC Scholarship Resource Center, on the first floor of the Donahue Building (Room 158), is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-

5 p.m., to help current and incoming students navigate the process of applying for scholarships.

The HCC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that works to advance the college's mission, vision, and values. Founded in 1968 as the Friends of Holyoke Community College, in response to a devastating fire that forced the college to rebuild on a new campus, the Foundation now manages assets of more than \$20 million, the largest community college foundation endowment in Massachusetts. Questions should be directed to the HCC Foundation office by calling 413-552-2182, or emailing scholarships@hcc.edu.

Start with Art program offered for preschoolers

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Saturday, Feb. 14 from 10 a.m.-noon, the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., offers a free morning of art, play and exploration for preschoolers.

Start with Art, a program designed for three to six-year-olds and their caregivers, features fun art-making activities and interactive artwork talks. February's

theme is "Shape and Color." Parents may pick up a Start with Art gallery guide for children and explore the museum to discover paintings, sculptures and more.

For more information, people may visit events.clarkart.edu. For accessibility questions, they may call 413-458-0524. Admission to the Clark is free January through March 2026.

Clark Art Institute offers school vacation programs

WILLIAMSTOWN – The Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., offers children and families fun activities celebrating its permanent collection and the special exhibition Shadow Visionaries: French Artists Against the Current, 1840-70 from Tuesday, Feb. 17 through Thursday, Feb. 19 aspart of the Massachusetts public school system's February vacation week.

The Clark's vacation week free programming

explores themes of imagination, fantasy and ghostly realities.

From 10 a.m.-noon, children and families may drop in to sculpt their own gargoyle or otherworldly creature out of mixed media materials. At 1 p.m., they may join a Clark educator for an all-ages interactive tour of Shadow Visionaries that includes playful writing and storytelling activities.

Throughout the week,

they will use the "monster mash-up" activity card to explore Shadow Visionaries and draw their own fantastic being inspired by the skeletons, ghouls and creepy creatures in the exhibition. On Friday, activities conclude with an otherworldly marathon of Rod Serling's "The Twilight Zone." From 1-4 p.m., drop in to catch any or all of the seven episodes, including the iconic "To Serve Man" and "The Monsters Are

Due on Maple Street." screening in the Manton Research Center auditorium recommended for ages 10+.

Tour capacity is limited. Pick up a ticket at the Clark Center admissions desk, available on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, people may visit events.clarkart.edu. For accessibility questions, people may call 413-458-0524. Family programs are generously supported by Allen & Company.

COLLEGE NEWS

Colleges and universities announce President's and Dean's lists

PRESIDENT'S LIST

Champlain College
Burlington, Vermont

Heidi Pohoman of Cummington

Fitchburg State University

Fitchburg

Owen T. Bonney of Pittsfield

DEAN'S LIST

Champlain College
Burlington, Vermont

Henry Norton of Easthampton

Easton Connecticut State University

Willimantic, Connecticut

Margaret Barr of Easthampton, a senior majoring in health sciences

Sophie Redmond of Easthampton, a sophomore majoring in psychology

Braelyn Willett of Easthampton, a freshman majoring in elementary education and liberal studies

Elayna Carlson of Westfield, a freshman majoring in criminology

Sydney Goyette of Westfield, a senior majoring in business administration

Fitchburg State University

Fitchburg, MA

Ashley L. Healy of Northampton

Brianna L. Lynch of Pittsfield

Benjamin K. Adams of Southampton

Jaylis M. Lopez of Westfield

Roger Williams University

Bristol, Rhode Island

Nick Cernak of Easthampton

Ava Cieplinski of Westfield

Dominic Monti of Westfield

Cat Moriarty of Chesterfield

Logan Szenda of Westfield

University of New England

Biddeford and Portland, Maine

Jackson Harding of Chesterfield

Kelly Couch of East Otis

Vermont State University

Randolph Center, Vermont

Emma Bean of Montgomery

Rick Pitoniak of Westfield

PLEASE REMEMBER TO
RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

Annual Girl Scout cookie sale runs now through March 15, debuts new option

HOLYOKE – Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts officially launched the 2026 Girl Scout Cookie program.

This year brings a brand-new reason to celebrate: the debut of Exploremores™, a rocky-road-inspired sandwich cookie filled with the flavors of chocolate, marshmallow and almond-flavored crème. It joins beloved classics including Thin Mints®, Adventurefuls®, Samoas®, Tagalongs®, Do-si-dos®, Lemon-Ups®, Toffee-tastic® and Trefoils®. Girl Scout Cookies cost \$6 per package and will be available through Sunday, March 15.

Also launching today, the Great Exploremore Expedition, a Flat Stanley-style adventure featuring this year's newest Girl Scout Cookie. Girl Scouts and the community are invited to take a box of Exploremores or cookie box cut-out on the road and snap photos in fun,

unique, or meaningful places. Submit photos from now to Friday, Feb. 20 for a chance to be featured on GSCWM's social media channels and website and to compete for prizes and awards such as Most Creative Shot, Best Girl Scout Spirit and Exploring the Outdoors.

Buying Girl Scout Cookies does more than satisfy a sweet tooth, it creates meaningful opportunities for local girls to learn, grow and thrive. Through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, girls gain hands-on experience in goal setting, decision-making, money management, people skills and business ethics. These valuable life and real-world business skills benefit girls long after the cookie season ends.

"The launch of Exploremores™ adds a new layer of excitement to an already highly anticipated cookie season," said Theresa Lynn, CEO of GSCWM. "Beyond enjoying these deli-

cious treats, every purchase supports girls as they develop leadership, entrepreneurship, and real-world skills that will serve them for a lifetime."

Girl Scout councils, like Girl Scouts of Central and Western Mass., exist to maintain camp properties and provide local Girl Scouts with skill-building programs and resources to achieve anything they can dream up. Every purchase of cookies helps to fuel and empower these dreams by supporting Girl Scout troop activities, while also satisfying a timeless craving.

To support the Girl Scout Cookie Program this season, folks can participate in the following ways:

If they know a Girl Scout, ask how they can purchase Girl Scout Cookies from them to support their goals. If they don't know a Girl Scout, people may visit <https://go.gscwm.org/FindCookies> to find a local cookie booth location or to

connect with a local troop's online cookie shop to purchase cookies for shipment. They can also text COOKIES to 59618 to stay informed about how to purchase Girl Scout Cookies and other exciting Girl Scout news.

For more information on Girl Scouts of Central and

Western Massachusetts, people may visit <http://www.gscwm.org/> or follow their social media channels, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and LinkedIn, for the latest updates on the organization. Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts serves nearly 6,000 girls in

grades K through 12 with the strong support of 3,000 adult members in 186 towns and cities in central and western Massachusetts. Girl Scouts' mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.



PUBLIC NOTICES

Town of Blandford Conservation Commission Public Notice

On **Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 6:00 PM** at the Blandford Town Hall, 1 Russell Stage Road, the Blandford Conservation Commission will hold a Public Hearing in accordance with an Order of Conditions issued in September 2024 to consider a project list submitted by the Blandford Highway Department. The project list includes various maintenance and im-

provements to Town roads and related infrastructure.

Additional information is available in the Office of the Conservation Commission.

Richard Gates, Chair
Town of Blandford
Conservation Commission
02/05/2026

Chester Water Commission Notice of Public Hearing FY27 Water Rate

The Chester Water Commis-

sion will hold a public hearing on **March 11, 2026** at Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester at **6 p.m.** for an operational update & discussion of FY '27 Water Rate.
02/05/2026

SOUTHERN HILLTOWNS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

The Town of Chester, as lead community for the FY 2026

Southern Hilltowns Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, is seeking proposals from qualified social service organizations and agencies to include in the application. Activities eligible for funding include a range of social services that meet the needs of low and moderate-income residents in the Towns of Chester, Huntington, Middlefield, and Russell. Agencies providing the following services are encouraged to submit proposals; adult education/GED preparation, literacy programs, job training, domestic violence prevention, services for seniors, emergency food, family/youth activities and other social service programs.

The Town of Chester may choose to fund all, any or none of the proposals submitted. Agencies or organizations identified for inclusion in the Town's grant proposal will be required to submit additional information as part of the full CDBG application to be submitted to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). Programs funded by EOHLC will begin in the Fall of 2026. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)

is assisting the Towns in the coordination and administration of its community development programs. Please contact Joe Hagogian to receive a request form or with any questions regarding this program at (413) 781-6045 or jhagogian@pvpc.org.

All proposals must be submitted by mail, fax or e-mail to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 60 Congress Street – 1st Floor, Springfield, MA 01104, fax 413-732-2593, or jhagogian@pvpc.org by **2:00 p.m. Thursday, February 19, 2026.**
02/05/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampshire Division Docket No. HS25P0815EA Estate of: Mary Spaulding Date of Death: May 08, 2025 INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petitioner of **Lucy M. Cawthron of Peru, MA**

Petitioner **Patrick J.R. Spaulding of Huntington, MA.**
Lucy M. Cawthron of Peru, MA

Patrick J.R. Spaulding of Huntington, MA

has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
02/05/2026



FIVE ISLANDS

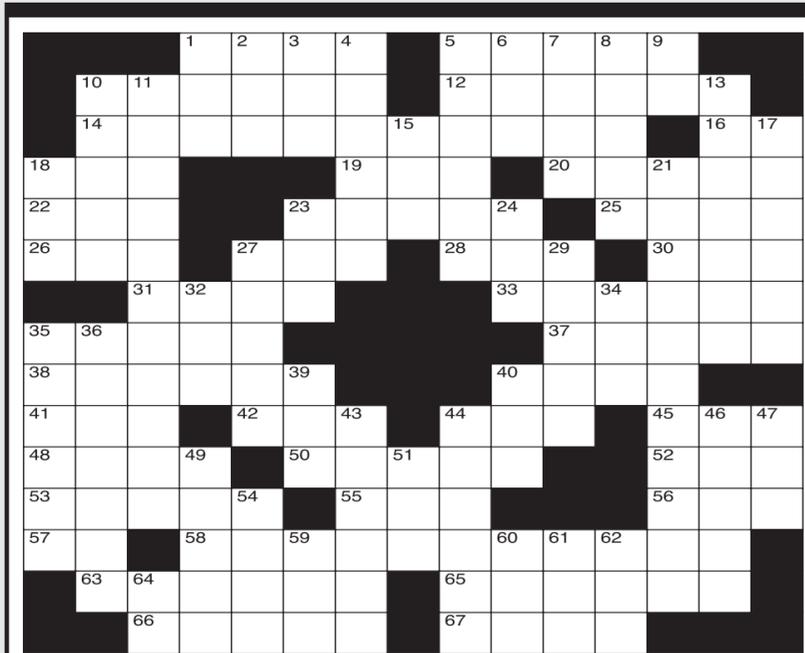
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CLUES ACROSS

- Native American group of N. California
- Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- Tool to remove
- Rods
- One who renews
- They precede C
- Chatter incessantly
- ___ King Cole, musician
- Insect parts
- One from Utah
- The world of the dead
- Singer Redding
- NBA legend Nelson
- Indicates wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown
- Some are in kitchens
- Made a mistake

- Damp
- Type of fuel
- Actor Damon
- What thespians do
- One's mother
- Disallow
- Swiss river
- A banana has one
- Philippines lake and volcano are two
- Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- Agave
- Journalist Tarbell
- One-time tech giant
- Indicates upon
- Intestinal bacteria
- Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- It goes with nook
- A fashion
- Very eager to hear or see

CLUES DOWN

- Witch
- Utilize
- Writing utensil
- Where rockers go to work
- Subsides
- Consume
- Greek mythological figures
- California mountain town
- Tin
- Muse of lyric and love poetry
- Animates anew
- Humorous criticisms
- Cool!
- Worst
- Wet dirt
- Designed to be useful
- Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- High schoolers' test
- Computer device
- Indian territory ___ and Diu
- A place to sleep
- AI tool
- Pass or go by
- Indicates a purchase
- A digital tape recording of sound
- More (Spanish)
- Disfigured
- White (Spanish)
- Church building
- Georgia rockers
- Type of surgery
- Much ___ about nothing
- Make by braiding
- Local area network
- Unit of work or energy
- Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- Liquefied natural gas
- Distance to top

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

This week brings a refreshing burst of motivation, Aries. You'll feel clarity around something that's been lingering on your mind. Small victories stack quickly — celebrate them.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Warmth surrounds you, Cancer. Emotional clarity and a renewed sense of balance help you move forward with plans. Home-related tasks go smoothly.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Harmony and connection take center stage this week, Libra. Expect positive interactions, pleasant exchanges and a sense of mutual understanding.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, steady progress and thoughtful planning bring satisfying results. You're setting foundations that support long-term success. Expect a moment of validation.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Comfort and progress go hand-in-hand. You're finding your rhythm and it shows. A financial or practical matter becomes easier than expected.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Your charm is magnetic right now. This week favors communication, leadership, and bold self-expression, Leo. You may receive recognition for something you've been quietly working on.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

Momentum builds, Scorpio. You're stepping into your power with calm confidence. A project or plan gains traction, and your intuition is especially sharp. Trust your instincts.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

Fresh ideas flow effortlessly, Aquarius. This is a strong week for innovation, problem-solving and collaboration. A new perspective may lead to a resolution.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, your natural curiosity lights up your week. Inspiration flows easily, especially through conversations or creative brainstorming. Seek inspiration through collaboration.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, your practical brilliance shines. You'll make great progress on tasks that once felt overwhelming. Health and self-care rituals feel especially rewarding.

SAGITTARIUS

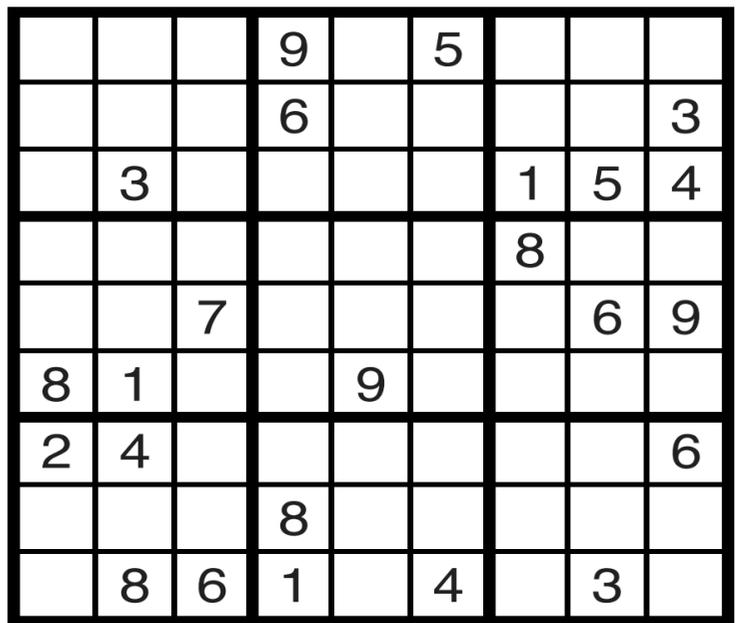
Nov 23/Dec 21

Adventure — big or small — calls your name, Sagittarius. You may feel a spark of optimism that carries you through the week. Opportunities abound to learn, explore or connect.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Gentle energy lifts your spirits this week, Pisces. Creativity, intuition and emotional ease all run strong. This is an excellent week for dreams or creative pursuits.



SUDOKU

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!

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!

answers



5	3	6	4	2	1	9	8	7
2	1	4	7	9	8	5	6	3
9	8	7	6	5	3	1	4	2
7	2	5	9	6	4	3	1	8
9	6	3	8	1	2	7	5	4
1	4	8	3	7	5	2	9	6
4	5	1	2	8	7	6	3	9
3	6	2	1	4	9	8	7	5
8	7	6	5	3	9	4	2	1

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The Town of Huntington is seeking a part-time Town Hall **Floater/Selectboard Administrative Assistant/ Assistant Town Clerk.** \$20-\$22 per hour based on experience. 15 hours per week. Application and complete job description are available online at www.huntingtonma.us or by emailing admin@huntingtonma.us. Position is open until filled. *Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.*

Wilbraham United Church is hiring a part-time, experienced **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/BOOKKEEPER.** Apply to **Wilbraham United Church, Attention: Alesia; 500 Main Street; Wilbraham, MA 01095.** More information at www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/about-us-2/

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This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development "HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



The hikers stopped at the Old Free Meeting House Cemetery.

Hilltown History trek historic route

Hilltown History is just under your nose or in this case under the tires of your truck.

The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers took a hike on Coldspring Road aka “ye trodden path” following in General Henry Knox’s footsteps in Otis and the Noble Train of Artillery to Sandisfield with Tom Ragusa on the weekend he passed through on this very route on Jan. 11. Knox traveled Easterly past the “west gate,” which is present day Coldspring/Route 23 corner then up the road past the new Allen Williams crafted 58 miles to Albany granite marker.

Here the trail is now a paved driving road but off to the side piles of boulders can be seen where the “hatchet me” cleared the way and made it wider for the animals to haul the mighty cannons. They passed the Free Meeting House Cemetery aka East Otis cemetery perched up on the hill when trees once did not obscure the view below.

Off to the other side of the road, Tom pointed in the woods to let the group know that is “the cold spring.” They ventured into knee high snow to discover a stone lined rectangular water filled pit thought to have been built possible in pre-colonial times for a water source along this old path that was used by Native Americans as well as Knox.

The paved road turns left onto old Gibbs Road, the original road to Sandisfield. They passed several survey points, the Webb cellar hole and fourth division line ultimately to Upper Spectacle Pond.

A quarry here off Webb Road in the woods was used to build the dam between Upper and Lower Spectacle Ponds. We

They did not continue on the path this day past the pond as Knox did because they needed to get to the great 250th celebration in Blandford to learn more about this great journey that changed our country. Thank you to Tom and all who have contributed to the Mass250 celebration.



They hiked along Webb Road in Sandisfield. General Knox traveled this exact route.



The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers look at the cold spring located on Coldspring Road in Otis.



Tom Ragusa, historian from Otis, stands by the new 58 miles to Albany granite marker on Coldspring Road. This marker was crafted by Allen Williams.



The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers visited Upper Spectacle Pond and dam. It is a great place to paddle in the summer.

Submitted photos

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 Email: jamie@turley.com

Hilltown Hikers hosts talk by Bob Kidd

CHESTER – Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers will host a special event on Sunday Feb. 22 at 1 p.m. in the Chester Railway Museum, 10 Prospect St.

Special guest is Bob Kidd with 70+ years as a registered Scout wondering and working “Woronoak Heights,” author of four local histories including a biography of H. A. Moses. People will learn about the fascinating history of Moses’ early life in Ticonderoga, New York and the construction of the Mittineague West Springfield mill with expansion into Woronoak and Russell with his concerns for social welfare of his workers and their community needs.

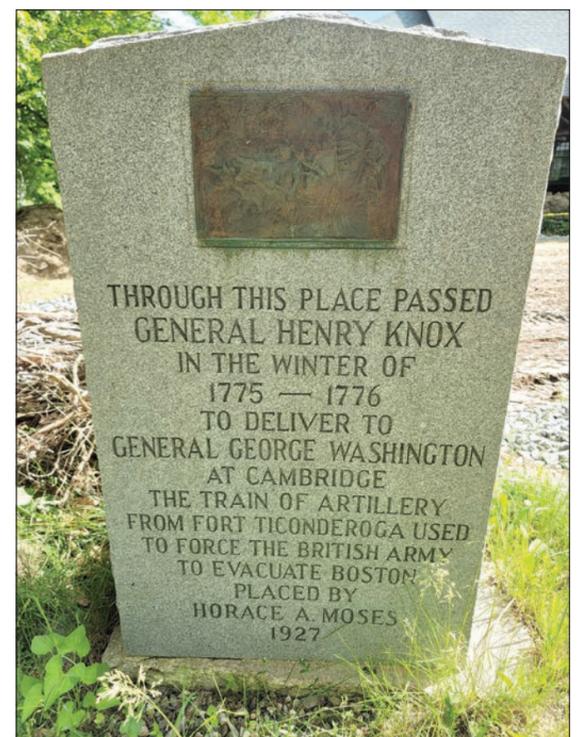
He was “The Gentleman Farmer” and host at Woronoak Heights, the community and youth organizer including: the Eastern States Movement, Hampden County Improvement League, Big E, Farmers’ Exchange, 4-H, YMCA, Jr. Achievement, and more. People will also learn about his philanthropic endeavors locally and in Ticonderoga, N.Y. And finally his passing, Testimonials and Tributes.

Shirts and Hiker swag will be for sale by donation at the event. Registration is not required. Suggested donation is \$15for the con-

served Chester Granite and Polishing Works are appreciated.

For more information, people may visit www.HilltownHikers.com. The

Hilltown Hikers have offered guided group hikes and tours since 2010. People may email westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com or call/text 413-302-0312.



Submitted photo

This marker locates a section of the trail General Henry Knox traveled with his train of artillery in 1775-1776 from Fort Ticonderoga, New York to Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was erected in 1927 by Horace A Moses.