

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."
- Helen Keller

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington,
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CHESTERFIELD

Winter shows its beauty



This photo was taken of Chesterfield Gorge on Jan. 11.

Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel

Coming next week
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NEW LOOK**
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Same Local News.
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CHESTER

Elementary school officials explain boiler issue

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Gateway Superintendent Kristen Smidy's horribly, bad day on Monday, Jan. 27 started with a 6:30 a.m. phone call from Facilities Director Edward Quinn, notifying her that the heat had gone down over the weekend at Chester Elementary School.

Quinn was on site, the boilers were back on and he expected things to be good for the day. That could have and should have, been the end of it. At 8:30 a.m., Smidy was contacted by Substitute Secretary Donna Morrissey, who reported that the temperature was 45 degrees inside the school. Quinn returned and assessed the building. His temperature laser gun showed that the coldest space was the library and classrooms were registering at 55-60 degrees; the heat was still cranking.

BOILER, page 2

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Gateway Supt. updates Select Board

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Gateway Regional School Superintendent Kristen Smidy brought the Select Board up to date on school affairs and grant awards at Monday night's meeting.

The district has received a grant that will help anyone in the district's towns open a child care facility. Right now, there are only two existing facilities and the grant will provide resources for anyone interested in pursuing a daycare facility.

The district is also the only rural school district to receive a Partnership for Reading Success in Massachusetts grant. This is an early literacy grant and there were 15 school districts across the state that are funded through the Literacy Launch. Another Western Mass school system to receive the literacy grant is Holyoke. The awards were announced Jan. 27 by Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll through the Executive Office of Education. Smidy said these are state grants, not federal.

Smidy told the board that the high school is trying to incorporate drivers' education into the program as an elective to help alleviate the \$700 to \$900 cost for students, who take the course outside of school. She said they are working with Mass Hire and Berkshire Driving.

The district's budget process is underway and there will be a meeting with Blandford's finance team soon. She expects the budget to be ready by mid-March.

There will be two openings in the Central Office due to retirements and those positions will be posted shortly. She gave a shout-out to the

town's Highway Department for the all-clear notification in the wee hours of the morning regarding snow clearing so school could go on as usual.

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrara told the board that the town's budget hearings start this week and the Highway Department will have its meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 11.

Water Department

The contract for the engineering work for the Water Department was reviewed successfully by Town Counsel and the board signed it. This is a

reimbursement grant, state funds, through the One Stop Community Growth program.

Water Department Superintendent Gordon Avery told the board he will bring in Jasmine Ortega for an interview with them next week. She will be the new administrative assistant for Water should the board go forward with the hiring process. Avery said the work will be only 14 to 16 hours a week. The One Stop grant award will be used to erect a 52-foot tall new water tank for the town to be located on North Street abutting the east-bound service plaza.



Gateway Regional School District Superintendent Kristen Smidy met with Select Board Monday night. Shown from left are, Theodore Cousineau, Chair Cara Letendre and Jeff Allen.

Turley photo by Mary Kronholm

BLANDFORD

Town clerk to mail census forms

Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo announced Monday that the town's annual census forms will be mailed to every residence shortly.

Jemiolo said that it is important for everyone to complete the form because this helps keep accurate voter registration, ensures representation in the state and federal legislatures, helps the Gateway Regional School District plan resources based on school population predictions as children must be included on the listing as well as all adults.

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BLANDFORD

Library announces events

BLANDFORD – This month at the Porter Memorial Library Sleepy Story time is every Tuesday from 5:30-6 p.m. for a story and playtime.

The Book Squirms for the younger preschoolers and their caregivers is Wednesday from 10:30-11:30 a.m. for stories, songs and sensory play.

Saturday Feb. 8 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. is drop-in all day to create a heart frame craft for Valentine's Day.

Communi-Tea Reads for this month is Saturday, Feb. 15 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. The adult book club will read "Smoke Season" and author Amy Hagstrom will be there to speak

about her writing process.

The library will be closed Monday, Feb. 17 in honor of President's Day. That is the beginning of school vacation. Events in addition to the aforementioned include Thursday, Feb. 20 from 2-6 p.m. a Drop-in Slime Time. All ages are welcome to participate in making their own slime.

Friday Feb. 21 from 3-4 p.m. the Pokemon Club is set for trading cards, trivia, games and crafts.

Saturday, Feb. 22 is an all-day drop-in for Lego play. All ages welcome for all building projects.

Town Clerk lists election info

BLANDFORD – Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo reminds all registered voters that the annual town caucus is Monday, March 3, the first Monday in March as proscribed by town bylaws.

Nominations from the floor can be made for the following offices: Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Fence Viewer (2), Field Driver, Municipal Light Plant Board, Select Board, Water Commissioner, Library Trustee and Cemetery Commissioner. Two candi-

dates may be nominated from the floor that night. If there are additional candidates proposed, there will be a run-off vote to decided two names that will be on the ballot for the office.

Anyone may conduct a write-in campaign if not successful at the caucus or see Jemiolo about taking out nomination papers to be included on the town's local election ballot.

The election is the second Saturday in June.

CENSUS

from page 1

Also, keeping accurate local population records helps the town with state funding opportunities. Many grants are population based, and can provide funds for schools, public safety and as Blandford has seen, infrastructure.

The census form also maintains accurate veteran status, dog population and even cat population.

"If residents fail to return the annual census, they risk being marked as inactive voters," said Jemiolo, "and that can mean extra paperwork to vote."

She urges residents to complete and return the census form as soon as possible to help the town be accurately represented, funding eligible and well prepared for future needs.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

CHESTER

BOILER

from page 1

In the absence of previous principal Vanna Maffuccio, Pupil Services Director Kurt Garivaltis and Curriculum Director Deanna LeBlanc were temporarily based at the school until an interim principal was found. They affirmed to Smidy that it was 65 degrees in the school.

At 10:30 a.m., Smidy heard from teacher Heather Cabral, who reported her classroom had still not gone above 55 degrees. At that point, Garivaltis sent out a communication to families notifying them that the heater was on and temperature was rising. Instead of using the autodialer, which sends messages and calls to parent/guardian phones, it went out via email and was not received by all families.

"We messed up big time, and I will own it all," Smidy acknowledged. "I, too, am also frustrated by the communications." She reports that the temperature in most rooms was 60-68 degrees by the end of the day. but that most students and staff had spent the day wearing their coats, hats and mittens indoors.

Quinn, who's been at Gateway for 17 years, said that both boilers had gone into flame fail, which can happen for multiple reasons. "One boiler was able to be reset and fired back up," he said. "The other boiler had to have an electronic part replaced, which senses that a flame is present." He added that the system is really no different from those in a regular house. They are larger, but work in the same fashion.

It was a perfect storm of atypical factors. For example, the boilers went down at some unknown point over the weekend, rather than on a weeknight, leaving the building additional time to cool down. According to the website LocalConditions.com, temperatures had been very cold over the weekend, stating high/low temps at 23/13 degrees on Saturday, 31/20 degrees on Sunday and a high at 32 degrees on Monday.

Chester's custodian, who usually

arrives between 5 and 6 a.m., was out sick. The substitute custodian had been the first to contact Quinn, who went right up. Smidy, herself, was out of the district in the morning. While two administrators were on site, they were also juggling their day-to-day responsibilities along with the school, which Smidy said was not optimal.

Quinn said that his department is talking with their energy management provider and the Gateway Technology Department, to look at a system that would notify him directly whenever a boiler went down.

In hindsight, Smidy said, they should have cancelled or done an early dismissal and communicated at the onset of the problem being identified. Families would have had the option of picking their children up while the school waited for the heat to reach acceptable temperatures.

An outcry of parents on social media was very critical of the handling and communications. Many of them called Smidy directly. "People should be mad about it," Smidy said. "I am not downplaying it. They're not wrong that it was unacceptable and it was poorly handled. It will not happen again."

Smidy reached out to parents later that day. Her message read, "I am writing to apologize for the poor communication and extremely cold conditions in the building today. With the early discovery of the issue, the temperature in the building was expected to increase faster than what actually transpired. If the temperature shift was predicted more accurately, a delay or cancellation should have been called and parents should have been notified upon discovery of the issue. I am sorry for how the chain of events unfolded today."

Smidy said she also reported the matter to the Chester Board of Health, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state health agent.

FLORENCE

Florence Bank support food pantries with Ice Out Hunger campaign

FLORENCE – For the second consecutive year, Florence Bank partnered with UMass Sports Properties and the University of Massachusetts hockey team to Ice Out Hunger in the region at a time when food insecurity is at a record high.

Since October 2024, the bank has awarded \$500 grants to food pantries from Springfield to Greenfield at each UMass home game, and before the season ends, 19 nonprofits will have received gifts.

A different food pantry is highlighted during the first intermission of each home game and a fan is chosen to ride on the Mullins Center's Zamboni, which has been wrapped with Florence Bank's branding. Riders are selected randomly after submitting an entry form at umasathletics.com/Ride.

These organizations will receive

funds from the bank: Amherst Survival Center; Center for Self Reliance/Community Action Pioneer Valley, Greenfield; CHD Not Bread Alone, Amherst; Chesterfield Community Food Cupboard; Easthampton Community Center; Easthampton Congregational Church Food Cupboard; Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Individuals, Northampton; Gray House, Springfield; Helping Hands Cupboard/Belchertown United Church of Christ, Belchertown; Lorraine's Soup Kitchen, Chicopee; Manna Soup Kitchen, Northampton; Margaret's Pantry and Kate's Kitchen at Providence Ministries, Holyoke; Most Holy Redeemer Church, Hadley; Neighbors Helping Neighbors, South Hadley; Northampton Survival Center; Open Pantry Community Services,

Springfield; Southampton Community Cupboard; Springfield Rescue Mission and The Parish Cupboard, West Springfield/Agawam/Feeding Hills.

Andrew Stuebner, general manager for UMass Sports Properties, the multi-media rights holder for Massachusetts Athletics, is pleased to partner with the bank to help Ice Out Hunger. "It's a great promotion because nonprofits and those they serve benefit, and people at the games enjoy the fun," Stuebner said. "We very much enjoy taking part in this program with Florence Bank."

Florence Bank President and CEO Matt Garrity said, "Food insecurity continues to be an issue in the communities we serve. Ice Out Hunger helps raise awareness and provides much-needed support for local organizations committed to mak-

ing a difference. We value the work of area nonprofits, and we're proud to support the local food pantries in their ongoing efforts to fight against hunger."

The funds will cover the cost of tens of thousands of meals for people in need in the Valley.

The Massachusetts Minutemen Hockey season is in full swing with the team currently ranked #20 nationally. People may visit umasathletics.com/tickets to attend a game.

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.

GREAT BARRINGTON

Nominations sought for upcoming Berkshire Nonprofit Awards

GREAT BARRINGTON – The Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, in partnership with The Berkshire Eagle, will host the 8eighth annual Berkshire Nonprofit Awards on Tuesday, May 20 at Country Club of Pittsfield.

The awards recognize exceptional work being done by individuals in the nonprofit sector.

"We're excited to add a new awards category this year," said NPC executive director, Liana Toscanini. "The First-

Class Fundraiser" award recognizes a senior development staff person whose creativity, dedication, interpersonal and storytelling skills motivate donors and board members, positively impacting the organization's mission and bottom line.

Nominations are being solicited from across the Berkshires in eight categories: Executive Leadership, Board Leadership, First-Class Fundraiser, Rock Star, Unsung Hero, Volunteer, Youth Leadership and Lifetime Achievement.

One honoree in each category will be chosen by a panel of judges and profiled in The Berkshire Eagle. Nominations are due Wednesday, March 12.

Those seeking tips on how to create a good nomination can find suggestions online, as well as samples of winning nominations. Additionally, one-on-one writing assistance with creating a nomination is available. These tools were designed to encourage more and diverse nominations.

The Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires is currently seeking sponsors for this celebratory event which is made possible by local businesses and foundations.

Founded in 2016, the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires is an infrastructure and support organization for hundreds of Berkshire nonprofits. For more information including nomination forms, people may visit npcberkshires.org or call 413-441-9542.

OTIS

CHP Mobile Health scheduled to take place at Town Hall

OTIS – CHP Mobile Health will be at the Otis Town Hall on Thursday, Feb. 20 from 9 a.m.-noon. There will be same day care, flu vaccines, back to school physicals, non-emergency sick visits, STI, UTI and other screenings. There will be reproductive care and counseling, SNAP and Food Security Assistance and referrals.

HUNTINGTON

Spaghetti dinner set for Feb. 15

HUNTINGTON – The Pioneer Valley Assembly of God, 63 Old Chester Road, will hold a free spaghetti dinner with all the fixings on Saturday, Feb. 15 at 5:30 p.m. There will be a prize for most festive Valentine apparel. There will also be auctioning of delicious homemade desserts with all proceeds benefitting the church Youth Group. People may visit www.pioneervalleyag.org/love to register for the dinner or call 413-667-3196, Pioneer Valley Assembly of God.

PITTSFIELD

Downtown Pittsfield announces brand-new photography exhibition

PITTSFIELD – Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. and Framework will feature a brand-new photography exhibition entitled Focus on Downtown now through Wednesday, March 26 at Framework by Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 437 North St.

The exhibit features three Berkshires-based photographers who will show Downtown Pittsfield through their lens. Brian Beckett, Shaun Harmon and Autumn Phoenix will take over the Framework gallery space with vibrant and artistic shots of downtown. There will be a reception with the photographers on Sunday, Feb. 23 from 10 a.m.-midnight as part of the 10x10

Upstreet Arts Festival. The reception will be in collaboration with the art exhibit and Domingo Brunch at Dottie's Coffee Lounge for a morning entitled "Art and Music Sunday on Upper North."

Focus on Downtown will be on view Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. through Wednesday, March 26, by visiting the Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. offices at 431 North St. The offices will be closed on Monday, Feb. 17 for Presidents' Day.

Domingo Brunch will feature live music from Amy Attias and Dave Christopolis from 10 a.m.-noon. Amy Attias is a classically trained violinist and vocalist and Dave Christopolis is a

bass and guitar player who writes Tom Waits-like originals. The pair will be playing Christopolis' original songs along with cover tunes.

The Dot Gallery at Dottie's Coffee Lounge will be showcasing the work of three area artists: Edward Acker (photographs), Jesse Tobin McCauley (paintings) and Tina Van De Water (paintings).

For more information, people may visit downtownpittsfield.com or call Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. at 413-443-6501. The mission of Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. is to strengthen and promote Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.'s membership through advocacy, collaboration

and celebration.

Since 1983, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. has been the recognized leader, facilitator, and principal advocate for downtown. DPI is a membership organization consisting of property owners, businesses, residents, cultural and entertainment venues, restaurants and non-profit organizations who have joined forces to increase economic activity by promoting downtown as a great place to live, work and play.

These events are a part of Pittsfield's 10x10 Upstreet Arts Festival featuring dozens of events from Feb. 13-23, 2025. People should visit LovePittsfield.com for more information.

WORTHINGTON

COA lists grab and go lunch

WORTHINGTON – On Thursday, Feb. 20 from noon-1 p.m. the Council on Aging will hold a grab and go lunch at Town Hall.

The menu will be a choice of breaded fish and tartar sauce or butternut squash soup, Brussel sprouts, French bread, dessert and milk. To reserve a meal, people should call or text 413-238-1999 by Sunday, Feb. 16 and tell name, number of meals and the name of the person also receiving the meal and their meal choice.

New enrollee forms can be down-

loaded by visiting <https://worthington-ma.us> and are also available at the Town Hall bulletin board and the COA bulletin board at Corners Grocery. People can also fill one out when they come to pick up.

They should bring a bag with them to carry their meals to the car.

If they have any questions, they may call Phyllis Dassatti 413-238-5962 of the Worthington COA.

Meals are sponsored by the Worthington Council On Aging and Highland Valley Elder Services.

PTO to hold pancake breakfast

WORTHINGTON – The Parent Teachers Organization at R.H. Conwell Elementary, 147 Huntington Road, will hold a pancake breakfast on Saturday, Feb. 8 from 9-11 a.m. in the school cafeteria.

The menu includes pancakes, sausage,

fruit, drink and local maple syrup. The cost is \$10 for two pancakes and sausage and \$7 for one pancake and sausage. The breakfast support the fifth and sixth grade natures classroom trip. There will be a bake sale and raffle as well.

WESTFIELD

St. Joseph's hosts winter picnic

WESTFIELD – St. Joseph's National Catholic Church at 73 Main St. is again hosting their community Winter Picnic on Sunday, Feb. 2 at noon.

This winter picnic will feature outdoor grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, baked beans, potato salad, potato chips and dessert. Beverages include lemonade, iced tea, Frosty Orange Cooler Punch and hot coffee. The picnic will be held inside our Social Center. Everyone is welcome.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7 for children 12 and under. To purchase tickets and reserve a place, people should text or telephone Cliff at 413-977-2007. If leaving a message, they should provide their 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. The deadline for purchasing tickets is Thursday, Feb. 20. There will also be a fun raffle.

Alzheimer's support group meets Feb. 26

WESTFIELD – Alzheimer's Association Support Group meets at Armbrook Village Senior Living and Memory Support Community, 551 North Road, on Wednesday, Feb. 26 at 6 p.m.

Caregivers and family members are invited to enjoy a light dinner and

to share their personal experiences and strategies for communicating with their loved ones. The public is welcome. To join this group, people should call 413-568-0000 or email reception@armbrookvillage.com. Groups are held on the last Wednesday of the month.

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor



Reader asks about Social Security benefits for someone with multiple ex-spouses

Dear Rusty

If a financially well-off individual had multiple ex-spouses, could it happen that the multiple ex-spouses could each be collecting Social Security based on their own financial situation as compared to their rich ex-spouses?

Thus, multiple payouts by SS? Just curious, because there are probably many people in this situation as a result of the ever-increasing number of people involved in multiple marriages that each lasted more than ten years.

Signed: Curious Ex-Spouse

Dear Curious Ex-Spouse:

A former spouse can only collect one SS benefit either their own SS retirement amount, or an amount as an ex-spouse if the marriage lasted 10 years or more. And it is possible for multiple ex-spouses of a marriage to the same person to qualify for benefits from those unions, if each marriage lasted at least 10 years. But each ex-spouse can only qualify for one benefit payment either their own earned SS benefit, or their benefit as an ex-spouse.

In other words, someone with two or more ex-spouses might have their ex's collecting full benefits on their record, provided that each marriage lasted at least 10 years. But an ex-spouse can only get one benefit—their own SS retirement amount or an ex-spouse amount, whichever is higher.

It's possible, also, that an ex-spouse can collect benefits from a former spouse at the same time as a current spouse is also collecting spouse benefits on the same record. And there is no detriment to either's amount because multiple spouses or ex-spouses are collecting on a one person's SS record (Social Security is, after all, a means for spouses, or ex-spouses, to avoid poverty). However, an ex-spouse's own SS retirement benefit from their personal lifetime work record must be less than any ex-spouse benefit they are entitled to from a former spouse. Essentially, if the "10-years-married" rule is satisfied, ex-spouses are subject to the same benefit rules as a current spouse.

You are correct that we see some cases like this these days, but each eligible

SECURITY, page 5

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.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reader disagrees with 'live' parking only

I first apologize for my delay in writing my letter regarding two articles in the Jan. 2, 2025 *Country Journal*.

The first article by Kathryn Koegel, Future of the Hilltowns, Look to the River, caught my interest since I totally agree with her message. Specifically, the article states... "But there is something that gives me great pain about the river. Many local people think it's own-able and want access confined to the people who live here or even more restrictive, to the people who own land on it." I think this is ridiculous, as does the author, Kathryn. As a side note, I'm also from NYC, as she is and love the peacefulness of the Hilltowns.

I also agree with Kathryn about the decision of the town to place signs in the pull off parking areas that you need to stay with the vehicle, using "live" parking only.

The article states that 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."

Then I read the second article in the paper that caught my attention was about the Westfield River Wildwater Races and the fundraising campaign.

The first article by Kathryn states the reasons why people can't enjoy the river and this second article gives the contradictory message to "...come and enjoy the river and "celebrate our past as we build our future" and "celebrate the river as the defining feature of the Hilltowns."

The leadership of the town of Huntington needs to support the "building of the future" of the Westfield river by enabling people who are residents and visitors who can bring potential revenue to the few businesses in the area to park along Route 20 and stay parked while they enjoy the river and not have it "live" parking only.

Walter Houlihan
Becket

Operation Christmas Child thanks residents

The overwhelming generosity of the people of Huntington, helped provide joy to children in need through Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts this season.

Across the U.S., the Samaritan's Purse project collected 10.5 million shoebox gifts in 2024. Combined with those collected from partnering countries in 2024, the ministry is now sending over 11.9 million shoebox gifts to children worldwide.

Shoebox packers brought joy and hope to children around the world through fun, full, personalized gifts. For many children, this is the first gift they have ever received. Each shoebox gift is a tangible expression of God's love, given to children in need around the world. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 232 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories.

Across the region, shoebox packers often shop for deals on shoebox items throughout the year, and many serve at a deeper level by becoming a year-round volunteer. Information about ways area participants can get involved year-round can also be found at samaritanaspurse.org/occ.

Although local Huntington dropoff locations for shoebox gifts are closed until Nov. 17 - 24, 2025, anyone can still be a part of this life-changing project by conveniently packing a shoebox gift online in just a few simple clicks at samaritanaspurse.org/buil-donline.

These simple gifts, packed with love, remind children around the world that they are loved and not forgotten.

GreenLee Smith
Samaritan's Purse
Operation Christmas Child

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*.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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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Country Journal TEAM



EDITOR
Ellenor Downer
countryjournal@turley.com



ADVERTISING SALES
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

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PATRICK H. TURLEY
CEO

KEITH TURLEY
President

DEANNA SLOAT
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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



The groundhog determined we would have six more weeks of winter. Is that really a surprise to anyone?

I mean, as I write, it is only Feb. 2. But we gardeners are an impatient lot, and we so want to get our hands back into the soft earth.

There are many tasks, albeit those that are behind the scenes, that can be done now, so that when warmer weather does arrive, we can “spring” into action.

Take inventory

Last month I talked a lot about preparing for indoor seed starting, first by taking inventory of our seeds and then gathering the necessary supplies that go along with that task. But what about our outdoor ventures?

‘Spring’ into action with these tasks

I have been busy shopping around for new IRT mulch, greenhouse supplies and amendments. How are you set on lime, grass seed, and fertilizers?

Plan to take advantage of preseason sales by knowing what you need ahead of time. Also, assess the condition of your tools. Is your rototiller working its best? Mine needs to be serviced.

By taking it to the repairman now, I’ll beat the spring rush and avoid having to turn the garden over by hand! The same goes for lawn mower blades. Have these sharpened yearly for the healthiest possible turf.

Practice good garden hygiene

Regularly inspect summer bulbs that have been stored away for the winter. Throw away any that are rotten or moldy.

If you find a lot of these, consider moving what is left to a drier location. On the other hand, dahlia tubers will shrivel when conditions get too dry, mist them with clean water to rehydrate.

It is also a good idea to take a close look at vegetables in storage. Squash with signs of rot can be cooked and the flesh

frozen for later use. Sprouts that appear on potatoes should be rubbed off and used before they soften.

Experiment with onions that have sprouted by planting them outside once the ground thaws. This vegetable is a biennial and will produce seed during its second season.

If the sprouts come from an heirloom or open pollinated variety, save a few seeds come July and start them this time next year! In the seedling stage, onions thrive on ample nitrogen to develop thick tops that will feed what we hope are big bulbs.

Perform appropriate garden chores

I am usually negligent in cutting down asparagus foliage in the fall. Weather permitting I will get out there and cut it back to its base soon, then haul off the branches to prevent any bugs that overwintered there from infesting this year’s spears.

It is also time to prune blueberries, apples and grapes. Pruning can vary depending on the age and health of your specimens. If you are not experienced at

it, consult any number of good books on the subject before you head outdoors with your pruning shears and loppers.

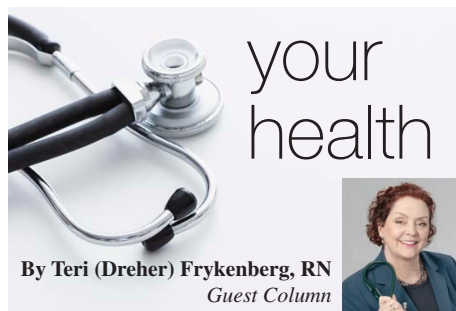
Do make sure your tools are sharp, and if there is any hint of disease, be sure to disinfect in between cuts or at least in between specimens. If any of your fruit trees have old fruit, called “mummies” hanging from the branches, be sure to get rid of them for fear of overwintering pests.

Hang tight

Winter will be gone soon enough. Come out of hibernation and accomplish preseason gardening tasks now, before the spring rush but also remember that this is a season of rest and taking care of yourself is a good thing too.

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.

Blood donors are everyday heroes



Earlier this year, a 77-year-old Massachusetts grandfather was celebrated for his 550th blood platelet donation. Ralph “Rocco” Russo was inspired to begin donating when his best friend’s then-14-year-old daughter was diagnosed with cancer in 1996.

And he just kept giving.

We could use more everyday heroes like Rocco. Although the country seems to have weathered the severe blood shortage seen in January of this year, when the Red Cross declared a national crisis, hospitals can’t have enough blood. A single trauma patient can require 20 units of blood – or more.

Regular blood donation by a sufficient number of healthy people is needed to ensure that blood will always be available whenever and wherever it is needed. With World Blood Donor Day celebrating its 20th anniversary on June 14, it’s a good time to thank donors and encourage new ones.

Who can give blood?

Even though roughly 7 million Americans donate blood each year, that’s only 3 percent of the eligible population. The qualifications are simple: Be 17 or older (there’s no upper age limit as long as you’re in good health); feel well; and weigh 110 pounds or more. Many people are disqualified because of various infections, low iron, travel, pregnancy and

other factors, so if you are eligible, give it some consideration.

At the donation site, after a brief health assessment (temperature, blood pressure, iron level), you’ll be able to give the gift of life to a fellow human being.

Isn’t there artificial blood?

Researchers are racing to develop artificial red blood cells that could stand in for whole blood, but we’re probably a decade or more away from that becoming reality. For now, there’s no substitute for the real McCoy.

The parts can be greater than the whole

While you can donate whole blood six times a year, platelet donors (like Rocco) can give up to 24 times a year. This is because the donation process takes only part of your blood and returns the rest.

Platelets are tiny blood cells that form clots and stop bleeding. For millions of Americans, they are essential to surviving and fighting cancer, chronic diseases and traumatic injuries. Every 15 seconds, someone needs platelets.

You may even be able to sign up to donate platelets to help a friend with cancer. In platelet donation and transfusion, it’s generally not necessary to match blood types.

Why don’t more people donate?

The number of people who donate blood has dropped about 20 percent in the last few years. Fears about safety and needles keep some people from donating. There’s also the bystander effect: It’s common not to take action in a situation if you think someone else will.

Does giving blood actually hurt? It can, but it’s usually no worse than stubbing your toe. There’s that moment when you know the needle is com-

ing close to the vein in your arm; the best thing to do is look away or close your eyes and keep breathing until that moment passes.

There are also still myths about who and who can’t donate. In the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there were no tests to screen for HIV, so gay and bisexual men were prohibited from donating. The FDA rescinded that blanket ban in 2023 in favor of questions that assess the risk of HIV regardless of gender or gender expression.

Also, yes, you can donate if you have tattoos and piercings, as long as it was more than three months prior, you’re completely healed and you took care to be inked or poked at a state-regulated facility. (That also means you can’t use fear of needles as an excuse!)

Virtual reality comes to blood donation

For some people, giving blood is easy – and you get snacks when you’re finished. For others, though, it can be unpleasant, and they are unlikely to become first-time donors, let alone repeat donors.

Virtual reality to the rescue, or actually a subset of VR called “mixed real-

ity,” which mingles the real and virtual worlds.

In 2023, a blood collection center let donors take their minds off the process by focusing on planting a garden – with just their eyes. Donors used the Microsoft HoloLens 2 to play Paragon, a game created by Abbott Labs and Blood Centers of America. The thinking is that a positive emotional response to blood donation will encourage folks to become repeat customers.

A blood donation truly is a unique gift that transcends gender, age, ethnic and political lines. Find a collection center or blood donor event near you, and roll up your sleeve.

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of Northshore Patient Advocates LLC (NShore). She is also founder and CEO of Nurse Advocate Entrepreneur, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. Teri offers a free phone consultation to newspaper readers as well as to nurses interested in becoming advocates. Reach her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com.

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 Monday at NOON, on holidays it is Friday at 2 p.m.

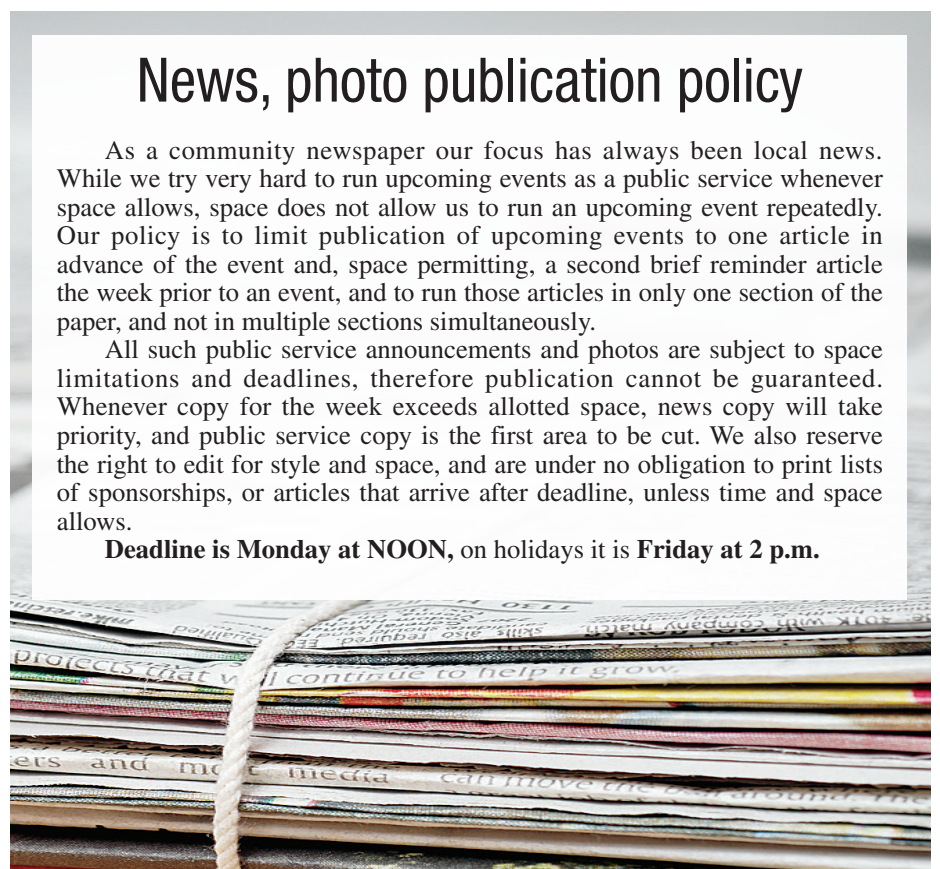
SECURITY

from page 4

ex-spouse can only get one benefit and their ex-spouse benefit is always offset by any personal SS retirement benefit the ex-spouse may also be entitled to on their own lifetime work record.

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.



PLAINFIELD

Town residents can learn about Fire Department

PLAINFIELD – Last October, the Plainfield Volunteer Fire Department responded to a “smoke investigation” on Summit Street during a midweek very windy early afternoon in the middle of a severe draught.

At the beginning of dispatch, the firefighters had no idea what they were responding to. But, as the first fire apparatus arrived on the scene, they encountered extremely dangerous forest fire conditions moving in multiple directions and directly impacting multiple structures. Due to limited available trained fire personnel, multiple mutual aid departments as well as the State District 10 fire personnel were called and worked this fire to bring it under control.

Approximately five -six acres of woodland were burned before it was brought under control. The fire was started, accidentally, after a tree limb fell on a power line pole in the woods well off the Summit Street. Though one residential home and barn were directly impacted by this fire, multiple homes in the area were threatened and only spared by the direction the wind pushed fire lines and aggressive firefighting work that eventually stopped the fires.

Little did the fire department know

next month they would see multiple fires throughout Western Massachusetts burn thousands of acres of land due to the existing draught conditions and weather (wind).

The PVFD is trying to prepare for similar conditions, moving forward, as climate conditions change. They ask town home and property owners to help them and themselves better protect their investments in the months to come. Walk the properties, see what they have. Overgrown brush growing near a structures, dead trees near structures, flammable items next to structures; all these can be corrected and put the home in a much safer position if a fire starts in the area.

Lastly, understand the town’s fire department is volunteer. They still must, and do, train and maintain a fleet of apparatus, equipment and tools to allow them to respond and deal with the multiple types of calls they receive.. Most are a small group, most of which have a full-time job or two, family, property, etc. They meet every Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. at the Safety Complex at 38 North Central St. People are welcome to stop by and see what the Fire Department is all about.



Plainfield Fire Chief Rob Shearer leads a training session on the new fire pumper.

Submitted photo

NORTHAMPTON

Kevin Whitney named Cooley Dickinson Hospital President and CEO

NORTHAMPTON – After an extensive national search, Kevin Whitney, DNP, RN, has been selected as president and chief operating officer (PCOO) for Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH), effective March 15.

Whitney currently serves as the vice president of Community Operations for the MGB Community Division. In addition, since May of 2024, he has been serving as interim vice president, Patient Care Services and chief nursing officer for CDH, where he has helped advance quality and safety initiatives, enhanced nurse staffing, and accelerated recruitment and retention efforts.

“I am confident in Kevin’s ability to lead CDH in delivering the safest, highest-quality care and an exceptional experience for patients,” said CarolAnn Williams, president, Mass General Brigham Community Division and senior vice president, Operations, Mass General Brigham.

In his new role, Whitney will oversee hospital operations, inpatient and outpatient clinical care including the VNA and Hospice, budgeting and operating performance.

With more than 34 years’ experi-

ence in healthcare, Whitney is a seasoned clinician and an enthusiastic, strategic and innovative leader in both community and academic medical center settings, with proven quality, operational outcomes and financial performance. Prior to his current roles, Whitney served for two years as the chief operating officer for MGB Healthcare at Home.

From 2017 through 2022, Whitney served as the senior vice president, PCS and CNO for Newton-Wellesley Hospital, providing strategic and operational leadership for nursing and PCS. From 2011 through 2017, he served as the associate chief nurse for Surgical, Orthopedics and Neurosciences at Massachusetts General Hospital. Prior to joining MGB, Whitney worked at Emerson Hospital for 20 years serving in clinical and leadership roles, including vice president, PCS and CNO.

Whitney earned his Doctor of Nursing Practice, Executive Leadership from the MGH Institute of Health



Kevin Whitney

Professions, a Master of Arts, Health Care Administration, from Framingham State University, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and an Associate of Science in Paramedic Technology from Northeastern University. He is board certified as a Nurse Executive-Advanced, Certified Emergency Nurse and is a member of the American

Organization for Nursing Leadership and the American College of Healthcare Executives. In 2024, Whitney received the UMASS Lowell Solomont School of Nursing Alumni Award recognizing his significant contributions to the

nursing profession and epitomizing the University’s values of hard work, integrity, compassion and stewardship.

Whitney and his wife, Cynthia, live in Southamptton.

Cooley Dickinson Hospital (cool-eydickinson.org) is a not-for-profit, acute care hospital that offers community-based programs and services in Northampton. A member of the Mass General Brigham System, Cooley Dickinson has been advancing the health of people in the Pioneer Valley since 1886. The organization includes community-based primary care and specialty practices in Hampshire and Southern Franklin counties, and a VNA & Hospice program that provides home health and hospice nursing and rehabilitation visits.

Library hosts photography exhibit

NORTHAMPTON – The Forbes Library, 20 West St., holds an exhibit of seven photographers now through Friday, Feb. 28 in their Hosmer Gallery.

The exhibit features black and white and color works of photographers Anne Miller, Deb Lohmeyer, Jill Toler, Joyce Lak, Karen Browne-Courage, Mary Vazquez, and Nancy Lowry. The photos are of urban and rural landscapes, macros of nature, nar-

rative and street photography taken in New England with a focus on Western Massachusetts. An artists reception will be held Friday, Feb. 28 from 2-4 p.m.

The Hosmer Gallery, located on the second floor of Forbes Library is accessible by stairs and elevator. Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. They are closed Sundays and holidays.

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Hampshire Regional Middle School lists honor roll

WESTHAMPTON – Hampshire Regional High School, 19 Stage Road, announces the Middle School honor roll for the second quarter.

Students making Academic Achievement in seventh grade are: Mala Adams-Rivera, Emila Berrena, Valentina Breshnahan, Ryder Cefalo, Sawyer DaFonte, Ayva Eidred, Jonah Gumaer, Dylan-Joy Hocking, Jacoby Hodges, Declan Holmes, Reygan Horstmann, Megan Johnson, Sienna Kalmakis, Dorothy Li, Bory Malinowski, Luka Manley, Brigid, McArdle, Molly McColgan, Tyler Menard, Olivia Pignatare, Payson Quackenbush, Ashlyn Rose, Kazmir Wachtel and Bradley Woods.

Students making Academic Achievement in eighth grade are: Victoria Bond, Gabriel Carrasquillo, Hazel Chute, Raquelle Denoronha, Danny Diaz, Sabella Donatelli, Lelia Doolittle, Jacqueline DuCharme, Tayla Eisman, Joceyln Fasoli, Trinity Fellows, Isabella Fini, Savannah Fredette, Samantha Gay, Talia Goodard, Noah Haryasz, Thomas Janik, Margaret Kugler, Sophia Lashway, Elle Marcinek, Emma McDonald, Colton McVeigh, Matthew Nadolski, Ethan Neylon, Teagan Noel, Deryk Nuttelman, Mason Pederson, Benjamin Raymond, Caleb Riel, Karolina Robak, Holly Sampson, Joslyn Sexton, Sienna Steffenhagen, Emmett Stith, Balin Sullivan, Nicholas Theroux, Ava

Westcott, Jack White and Danielle Wolf.
Students making Academic Excellence in seventh grade are: Ava Boissonneault, Max Bonham, Quinn Bonham, Ivy Cardoza, James Clemeno, Sunali Driver, Charlotte Dunn, Stephen Estelle, Caleb Falkowski, Aoife Farrell, Joseph Gagne, Lorelei Gilman, Anna Huard, Aubrielle Jarrett, Camryn Jasinski, Abrahm Kellogg, Sofia Klopfer, Corbin Limatainen, Aurora Loud, Isabella Masi, Samantha Moreau, Bibi Nabut, Camilo Ocampo, Magnolia Overtree, Mariah Pacinella, Scarlet Parent, Gianluca Pica-Smith, Claire Pickard, Madison Rida, Lily Robak, Madeline Soares, Ashtyn St. Martin, Georgia Sugrue, Thomas Sullivan,

Phoebe Todd, Cyrus Tomsovic, Lucy Trombley, Addyson White and Eli Willard.

Students making Academic Excellence in eighth grade are: Elizabeth Barry, Elaina Bigda, Samantha Black, Gabriella Dybacki, Jackson Galenski, Ryan Garvey, Lexie Gauger, Jaymes Goddard, Willow Gutermuth, Hayden Johnson, Madison Johnson, Savannah Judd, Saoirse Keane, Natalie Labrie, Anna MacLachlan, Felicity Magnanelli, Noa Nabut, Damian Pasiut, Katelyn Perry, Abigail Phelan, Mackensie Provost, Shane Radon, Kacey Reed, Maeve Reynolds, Hazel Scully-Henry, Addison Thomas, Sadie Wasiuk and Tarlo Zerbach.

COLLEGE NOTES

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

PRESIDENT'S LIST

James Madison University
Harrisburg, Virginia

Erin Jachym of Westfield, writing rhetoric and tech communication

DEAN'S LIST

Assumption University
Worcester

Jessica Armstrong of Westfield, Class of 2028; Hannah Keeney of Westfield, Class of 2028 and Cameron Theriault of Westfield, Class of 2025

Endicott College

Beverly

Abigail McClafin of Easthampton, Lorri McClafin of Easthampton, Shane McClafin of Easthampton, Haley Routhier of Easthampton Brenda Routhier of Easthampton and Dennis Routhier of Easthampton

Quinnipiac University

Hampden, Connecticut

Chloe Govoni of Blandford, Daniel Dabek of Easthampton, Jake Redmond of Easthampton, Benjamin Shannon of Otis, Landon Richard of Russell and Jeffrey Fish of Williamsburg

Russell Sage College

Troy, New York

Aiden Van Oostveen of Westfield

Springfield College

Springfield

Jordan Bannish of Westfield, health science major semester; Liam Barrett from Westfield, recreation industries and therapy recreation; Conor Connally of Westfield, exercise science/applied exercise science; Chloe Derby of Easthampton, exercise science/applied exercise science major; Sydney Gessing of Westfield, human services major; Nicholas Lloyd of Easthampton, health science major; Chaeli Mackey of Westfield, health science major; Ryder Pieczarka of Westfield, health science/pre-physical therapy; Jillian Scott of Westhampton, health science/pre-occupational therapy and Meghan Sullivan of Easthampton, health science/pre-physician assistant

University of Maryland

Global Campus

Adelphi, Maryland

Arthur Labrie of Blandford

University of Rhode Island

Kingston, Rhode Island

Zachary Barouxis-Kroll of Westfield, Melanie Burek of Montgomery, Katie Burzynski of Westfield, Jack DeMarinis of Montgomery, Alana Guidette-Bocchino of Otis, Julia Langenheim of Cummington, Addie Lashway of Williamsburg, Brynja Miltimore of Russell, Larissa Riley of Chesterfield and Meghan Tobin of Westhampton

Vermont State University

Randolph Center, Vermont

Emma Bean of Montgomery and Megan Ward of Easthampton

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Worcester

Maxwell Dopp of Easthampton, class of 2028 majoring in computer science; John Doyle of Westfield, class of 2028 majoring in electrical and computer engineering; Michael Grinley of Goshen, class of 2027 majoring in environmental engineering; Benjamin Howes of Westfield, class of 2026, majoring in electrical and computer engineering; Christopher Jamieson

of Easthampton, class of 2026, majoring in mechanical engineering; Taylor Mason of Worthington, class of 2028 majoring in chemistry; Gabriel Rapoza of Easthampton, class of 2027 majoring in aerospace engineering and Marissa Whalley of Westfield, class of 2026, majoring in architectural engineering

College of Our Lady of the Elms lists local graduates

CHICOPEE – College of Our Lady of the Elms congratulates 79 students who graduated in December 2024.

Local students graduating are: Carson Brunt of Westfield, Bachelor of Arts; Alesya Danyuk of Westfield, Bachelor of Science in nursing; Leah Martin of Williamsburg, Bachelor of Science in nursing and Marie Montville of Easthampton, Master of Science in nursing.

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

We invite you to join us Friday afternoons from 1-2:30 pm to explore these topics and more.

This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

Please contact Pat James 413-726-8661.

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July 12Escape to Rockport..... \$110

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For further information call Randall at (413) 436-5357 or email adventuretours@att.net or go to www.adventuretoursofwarren.com

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USDA INSP. FRESH COUNTRY STYLE PORK RIBS \$1.94 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONE-IN BEEF RIB EYE STEAKS \$8.99 lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN TURKEY BREAST \$1.61 lb
USDA INSP. FRESH PORK SHOULDER PICNIC \$1.49 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS WHOLE OR HALF BEEF STRIP LOIN CUT FREE \$6.44 lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN MEATBALLS FULLY COOKED 5 LB BAG ... \$12.99 ea
USDA INSP. FRESH STORE MADE ITALIAN SAUSAGE ALL VARIETIES \$2.77 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS KAYEM BUDDABALL PIT HAM SMOKED \$3.69 lb	USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN PARTY CUT CHICKEN WINGS 3 LB BAG. \$5.99 ea
USDA GOVT ISNP FROZEN PORK SPARERIBS TWIN PACK (FREE SWEET BABY RAY'S BBQ SAUCE WITH PURCHASE) \$2.25 lb	USDA INSP. STORE MADE FROZEN 80% LEAN GROUND HAMBURG PATTIES 20 COUNT BOX \$15.69 \$19.99 lb	USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN COOKED SHRIMP 16/20 COUNT 2 LB BAG \$18.99 ea
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#1 SUPER GAME SAVINGS



OBITUARIES

Barbara (Palmer) Pease, 97

Barbara (Palmer) Pease, 97, peacefully passed away on Jan. 25, 2025 surrounded by her loving family.

Barbara was born on March 20, 1927, daughter of Kenneth and Mildred (Peebles) Palmer. She grew up in Blandford and graduated from Westfield High School in 1945. She was active in several sports and starred in tennis.

After high school, she worked as a receptionist and switchboard operator before becoming a homemaker. Barb was well known for her baking and cake decorating skills. She made many treasured multilayered wedding cakes for family and friends. After her children grew-up she enjoyed working in the cafeteria of Gateway Regional School District for several years.

Barbara was a woman of strong Christian faith. She was a member of the Worthington Congregational Church, a Sunday School Teacher, a member of the Friendship Guild and a member of the Women's Benevolent Society. She participated in Bible Study Groups and played in the Handbell Choir.

Barb was a Girl Scout Leader, served on the Worthington COA Board for 19 years and participated in the COA Knitting Group. She was a program leader for Retired Senior Volunteer Program Healthy Bones and Balance exercise program.

Barb was an avid UConn Women's Basketball Team fan and enjoyed watching the Red Sox play. Her favorite pastime was attending the athletic games of her grandchildren. After retirement, she enjoyed traveling throughout the United States including visiting her



grandchildren. One of her regular destinations was their camp in Windham, Vermont. The camp, better known as the Snuggle Inn, was where she would go to escape the "hustle and bustle" of Worthington.

Barbara is survived by her children, Gary Pease of Westfield, Gail Lucey and her husband Michael of Chesterfield and Marcia Estelle and her husband Stephen of Worthington. She leaves seven proud and admiring grandchildren, Mark Pease and his wife Marisa of Feeding Hills, Rebecca Freeman and husband John of Chicopee, Kristen Cuddy-Pease and her wife Natalie of Leeds, Stephen Estelle and wife Kristen of Goshen, Erin Borsari and husband Josh of Plympton, David Lucey and wife Carol of Cambridge and Thomas Lucey and wife Kate of Chicago, Illinois. Barbara also leaves 12 great grandchildren and four great-great grandchildren. Admiration and love for Aunt Barb extends to nieces, nephews and beyond.

Barbara was predeceased by her beloved husband, Kenneth Pease Jr. and her cherished daughter-in-law Nan Pease. She was also predeceased by her brothers, Leon and Herbert Palmer; her sisters, Bernice Cooley, Ellen Tatro and Leah Mollison.

A celebration of her life will be held at the Worthington Congregational Church on Saturday, March 22 at 11 a.m. with a reception at the Worthington Town Hall to follow. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Worthington Congregational Church, P.O. Box 536, Worthington, MA 01098. Williamsburg Funeral Home in Haydenville assisted the family with her cremation.

Thomas R. Stone, 76

1948-2025

Thomas R. Stone, 76, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025. Tom was a successful, hard working, self-made business owner, T. R. Stone Trucking, Inc. Tom Stone was a legend in the trucking industry. He will be best remembered for his "shiny" trucks and excellent service in the transportation industry.

Tom was a contractor with the United States Postal Service for many decades. The United States Postal Service awarded Tom the Eagle Spirit Award for Excellence. Tom and his drivers participated in truck shows, Make-A-Wish Convoys for Kids and Ronald McDonald Convoys for Kids. Nothing could touch his passion for trucking and "nice trucks."

Tom leaves his life partner of 40 years, Beth E. Smith of Palmer; daughters, Jennifer DeLorge of Pittsfield, Tina Laviolette of Peru (Massachusetts), Carol-Anne Ellinger of Holyoke and Michelle Dingmond of Chicopee and seven grandchildren. He also leaves his sisters, Shirley Stone, Francesca LaPierre and Marian Stone and brother, Michael Stone. He was predeceased by parents, Henry D. Stone and Frances Stone; brother, Donald and sister, Ellen.

All services are private and have been entrusted to Lombard Funeral Home of Monson. For online condolences please visit www.lombardfuneralhome.com.

DEATH NOTICES

PEASE, BARBARA (PALMER)

Died Jan. 25, 2025
Saturday, March 22 at 11 a.m. Celebration of Life
Worthington Congregational Church
Sunday, March 22 Reception to follow
in Worthington Town Hall

STONE, THOMAS R.

Died Jan. 28, 2025
All services are private.
Lombard Funeral Home, Munson

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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PUBLIC NOTICES

Public Notice
The Chester Water Commission
will hold a **Public Hearing** on **March 11, 2025** at **Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield St., Chester, MA** at **6:30 p.m.**, for discussion of a proposed **FY'26 Water Rate increase** 02/06/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampshire Probate and Family Court
15 Atwood Drive
Northampton, MA 01060
(413)586-8500
Docket No. HS25P0041EA
Estate of:
Patricia Mae Drewitz
Date of Death: 10/27/2024
CITATION ON PETITION

FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Keith Drewitz of Converse, TX** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Keith Drewitz of Converse, TX** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right

to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 03/05/2025**. This is **NOT** a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Represent-

tative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration

WITNESS, **Hon. Diana S. Velez Harris, First Justice of this Court.**
Date: January 28, 2025

Mark S Ames,
Register of Probate
02/06/2025

Senior Center Crawlspace Structural Repairs and Renovations
Invitation to Bid

The Town of Middlefield is accepting Bids from state certified general contractors to make repairs and renovations to the crawlspace area in the Town Senior Center located at 169 Skyline Trail in Middlefield, MA 01243. Work will include selective removal of existing debris, stones, rocks and insulation in the building crawlspace, repairs to beams, floor joists, and related work. Bid documents may be requested online at middlefield.assistant@gmail.com. Bids can also be picked up at the Select Board Office from the Middlefield Administrative Assistant on Mondays from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and Fridays from 9:00A.M. to 11:00AM. The Select Board Office is located in the Town Hall 188 Skyline

Trail Middlefield MA 01243. There is no cost for Bid Documents. A Pre-bid Site Visit will be held for all interested parties on February 12, 2025, at 10:00 A.M. at the front entrance to the Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail Middlefield, MA 01243. **The Bid deadline is March 3, 2025, at 2:00P.M.** The project will start immediately after award (approximately March 17, 2025) and shall be completed no later than November 21, 2025. Note: Massachusetts Prevailing Rates are required to be paid on this project. Questions can be directed to Curt Robie, Member, Select Board by calling 413-623-2079, 413-374-2082, or by email: middlefield.CDR@gmail.com 02/06, 02/13/2025



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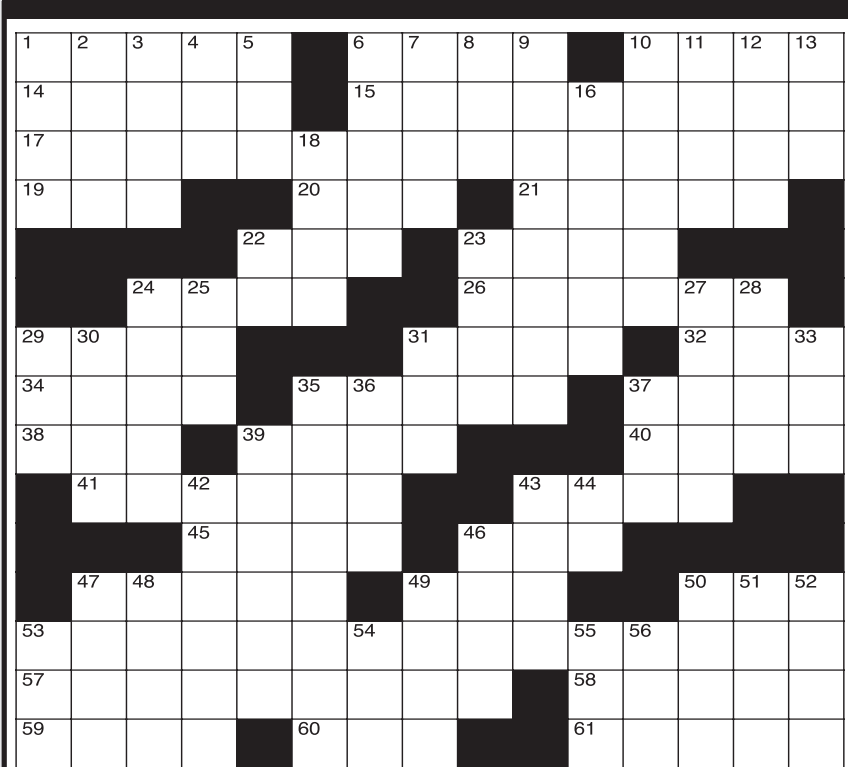
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STOCKBRIDGE

Stockbridge Grange to hold community dinner on Sunday

STOCKBRIDGE – The Stockbridge Grange will have a community dinner Sunday, Feb. 9, featuring roast pork, mashed potatoes and vegetable with dessert choices of chocolate cream or lemon meringue. Dinner is \$15 per person, take out only with noon-1:30 p.m. pick up at the Stockbridge Grange Hall at 51 Church St. Orders may be made by calling 413-243-1298 or 413-443-4352. Grange dinners are held to raise money for non-profit projects and building maintenance.

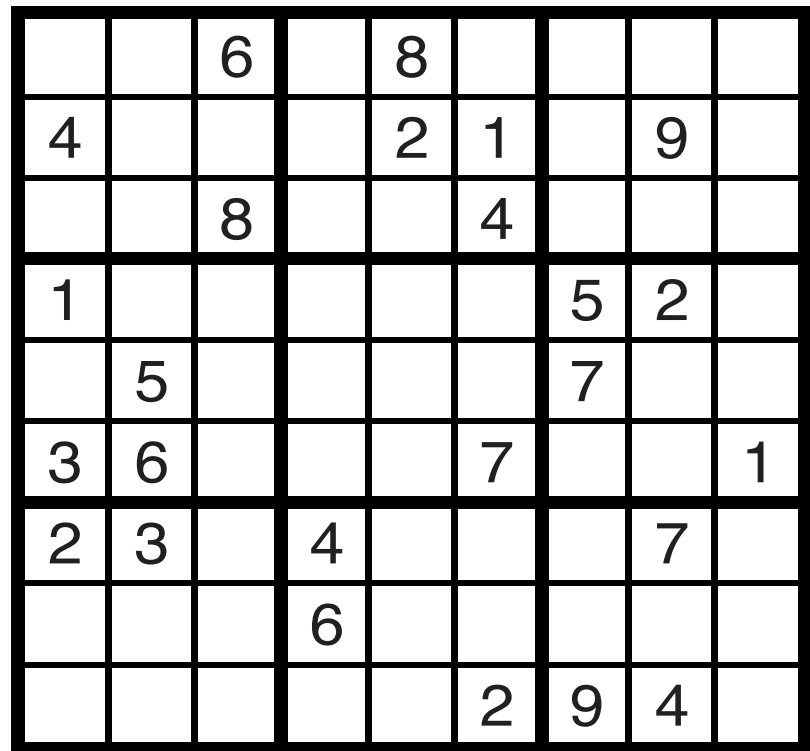


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. "The Las Vegas of the East"
- 6. Cook
- 10. Manning and Wallach are two
- 14. Chameleon
- 15. A way to fill up
- 17. What MLBers hope to play in
- 19. Unhappy
- 20. Indefinite period of time
- 21. Excites
- 22. Males
- 23. Mongol leader Genghis
- 24. Turfs
- 26. Soda comes in them
- 29. Not nice
- 31. Professional organization
- 32. Part of a play
- 34. Sea eagle
- 35. Emily Blunt's character in "Sicario"
- 37. Beige
- 38. Mental sharpness
- 39. Valley
- 40. Alcione's husband
- 41. A place to gamble
- 43. Flightless Australian birds
- 45. Call out somebody's name over a P.A. system
- 46. US spy group
- 47. Pancakes from buckwheat flour
- 49. Swiss river
- 50. Disfigure
- 53. Have surgery
- 57. Formal withdrawal
- 58. Early English council
- 59. Square measures
- 60. 2,000 lbs.
- 61. Siskel and __, critics
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Mouths
- 2. Buffalo
- 3. You plug it in
- 4. Each
- 5. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
- 6. King of Thebes
- 7. English name meaning "mythical hunter"
- 8. Indicates near
- 9. More herbaceous
- 10. Gas-powered cars need one
- 11. Dishonest individual
- 12. Systems, doctrines, theories
- 13. The woman
- 16. The whole of one's holdings
- 18. Witnesses
- 22. Doctor
- 23. Paul __, Swiss painter
- 24. Kids look for him on December 24
- 25. Single
- 27. Competitions
- 28. Predict the future
- 29. Cage for trained hawks
- 30. Musician Clapton
- 31. Frozen water
- 33. Semiformal men's evening attire
- 35. Most worn
- 36. Common soap ingredient
- 37. Former EU monetary unit
- 39. Provisions
- 42. Book parts
- 43. Republic of Ireland
- 44. Partner to "Pa"
- 46. Sammy __, songwriter
- 47. Dutch colonist
- 48. Clare Booth __, American writer
- 49. Solar disk in Egyptian mythology
- 50. Minute arachnid
- 51. From a distance
- 52. Monthly apartment cost
- 53. Young women's association
- 54. Tourist destination
- 55. "Woman" in Ojibwe language
- 56. Pointed end of a pen

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

- ARIES**
Mar 21/Apr 20
You're in the mood to get things done this week, Aries. Your ambition is fueled and it is the perfect time to take charge and tackle overdue projects. Be careful not to rush things.
- CANCER**
Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, you may find you're a bit more introspective than usual. Your emotions are running deep, and it is a key time for some self-reflection. Be mindful of insights coming your way.
- LIBRA**
Sept 23/Oct 23
Think big this week, Libra. Try to see how your efforts can have an effect in the future and not just right now. There is an opportunity to expand your horizons.
- CAPRICORN**
Dec 22/Jan 20
The quiet side of life takes over for the week, Capricorn. You might feel the need to reflect on recent experiences or recharge at home alone. Don't hesitate to take a step back.
- TAURUS**
Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, your focus shifts to personal growth and intellectual exploration this week. You might find yourself investigating travel plans or diving into new hobbies.
- LEO**
Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, it is a week of transitions for you. Something in your life may seem like it will come to an end soon, but this closing of one chapter is necessary for personal growth.
- GEMINI**
May 22/Jun 21
Money and other resources take center stage this week, Gemini. Whether you are reevaluating your investments or getting your finances in order, you may need to make a few tweaks.
- VIRGO**
Aug 24/Sept 22
Work and your career take center stage. Since you're in a productive phase, you will make great headway on projects that can really boost your resume.
- SAGITTARIUS**
Nov 23/Dec 21
The focus is on you this week, Sagittarius. If you have been feeling stuck or unsure, now is a great time to put new intentions into action. People will be drawn to your energy.
- AQUARIUS**
Jan 21/Feb 18
Your social life is booming right now. Networking events, group activities or spontaneous meet-ups are ways to connect with some like-minded individuals.
- PISCES**
Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, this week you are all about setting goals and following through with your plans. The universe is on your side right now, and you will find it is quite easy to succeed.



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!

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answers

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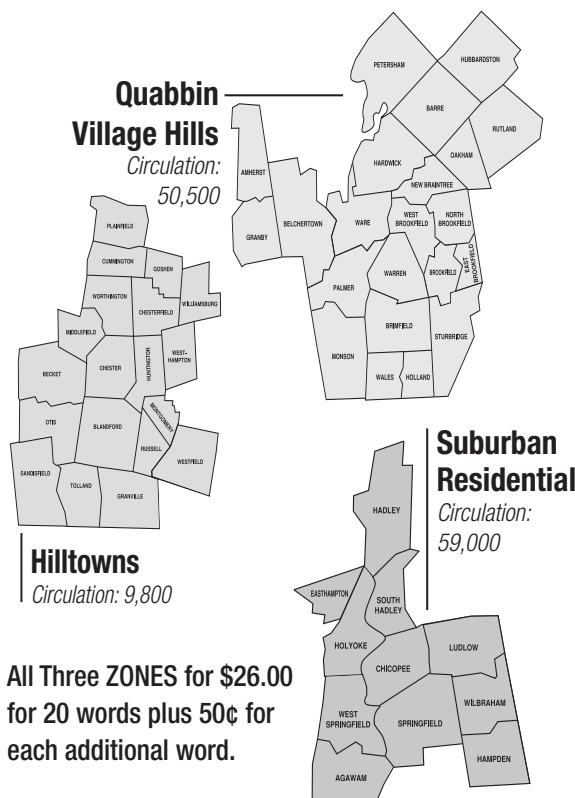
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REGION

Clark Art Institute screens 'Rocky'

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Thursday, Feb. 13 at 6 p.m., the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., screens the latest installment in its Hollywood Auteurs film series, "Rocky" (1976) in the Manton Research Center auditorium.

Presented in partnership with Images Cinema, this series captures the explosion of creativity, critical acclaim and box office success that Hollywood directors found after the fall of the studio system.

Star Sylvester Stallone wrote the script for Rocky, eventually taking a deal that gave him the lead role in a film that played to his strengths and toned down the sentimentality and stereotypes just enough. This story of a no-hope boxer spawned a series that stretches all the way to 2015s Creed. (Run time: 1 hour, 59 minutes)

The event is free and accessible seats are available. For information, people may call 413-458-0524 or visit clarkart.edu/events. The next screening in this series is "Girlfriends" (1978) on Thursday, Feb. 20 at 6 p.m. in the Manton Research Center auditorium.

Check us out on the web www.turley.com

Fire Marshal offers prevention tips for Burn Awareness Week

Burn Awareness Week is underway, and State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine is reminding residents that more than two-thirds of severe burns happen at home.

"Burn injuries contribute to about 5,000 emergency room visits in Massachusetts each year, and many of the most serious burns involve young children," State Fire Marshal Davine said. "Burn Awareness Week is an opportunity to promote safety and prevention – especially at home, where the most severe injuries are likely to take place."

Coordinated by the American Burn Association, Burn Awareness Week is observed in the first full week of February. This year's theme is "Burn Prevention Starts Where You Live," a reminder that we can take simple but meaningful precautions to prevent burn injuries in the place where they most often occur.

According to Massachusetts Department of Public Health data, burn-related emergency room visits have declined from more than 6,000 to less than 4,650 in recent years, with children accounting for more than 20% of patients on average.

The Massachusetts Burn Injury

Reporting System, or MBIRS, tracks severe burns that cover 5% or more of the patient's body. These incidents are reported to the State Fire Marshal's office and have fallen from 369 in 2020 to 275 in 2023, the most recent year with complete data. Children are significantly overrepresented in these numbers, however, accounting for more than 38% of severe burn injuries.

Nearly 70% of MBIRS-reported burns took place at home and nearly 60% were scalds, making them by far the most common type of severe burn injury in Massachusetts. They are most often associated with cooking liquids such as boiling water, oil, or grease, followed by hot food and beverages such as coffee, tea or soup. Children under five were the most frequently injured.

State Fire Marshal Davine offered the following safety steps to reduce the risk of burn injuries:

Cooking safety

Keep children away from stoves, grills, and campfires: set a three-foot "No Kid Zone" around these hot spots.

Turn pot handles inward on the stovetop to prevent bumps and spills.

Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves

to keep clothing from coming in contact with burners.

Hot drink safety

Never hold a baby and a cup of hot liquid. A wiggling baby can cause a spill that hurts both of you.

Use a travel mug when drinking hot beverages around babies and young children. Keep it closed when not actively sipping to minimize or prevent scald burns.

Keep hot liquids away from babies and small children. Put drinks and soups in the center of the table away from curious fingers.

Consider placemats instead of tablecloths to reduce the risk that a child will pull a hot drink or plate of food onto themselves.

Tap water safety

It takes only one second for water at 155°F to cause a third-degree burn.

Set your hot water heater to 125°F or less (Massachusetts law requires a temperature between 110°F and 130°F).

Babies and toddlers can turn on hot water in the bath, so always supervise young children in the tub and face them away from faucets.

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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



Models like this one of a town in Pennsylvania are very realistic.



Lisa Massa and Steve Morrill man the Chester and Becket Railroad Survey.



Bob Madison, author of the New Haven and Northampton Canal Greenway is shown with Lisa Massa.

Hilltown Hikers participate in Railroad Hobby Show

It was a big weekend to close out January 2025 with 27,535 attendees. An all time record, at the Amherst Railway Society's Railroad Hobby Show.

The Railroad Hobby Show is the largest railroad-themed trade show in America. The event occupies 350,000 square feet in four buildings on the Eastern States Exposition fairgrounds. The show covers all facets of the railroad hobbies – model railroads, railroad art and photography, railroad history and preservation, tourist railroads, railroad artifacts, and railroad books and videos.

The Amherst Railway Society was formed in the 1950s on the campus of the University of Massachusetts. Today, the organization is based in Palmer, the historic home of seven railroads. The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers were invited to have a booth for the weekend showcasing Hilltown History of the Chester Granite and Polishing Works and The Chester and Becket Railroad, an honor and a pleasure at the largest Railroad Hobby Show in the country.

The Chester Railway Museum and the Friends of the Keystone Arches were also representing Chester at the

show. Visitors to the booth included Granite Quarry owners from Maine, Monterey Historical, author's Robert Madison and Christy Butler with his wife Jan.

The Railroad Hobby Show includes vendors with trains and trolleys, full operating set ups of all different scale rail models and Western Mass History including the Hoosac Tunnel and historic artifacts.

People can also learn how to build models at free clinics during the show. Meeting the conductors and engineers was a great experience too. I am a long time trolley fan and have researched the

Huckleberry Trolley Line for the last ten years so anything trolley related is spectacular since this is the only place you can get all of that history and over fifty trolley and railroad historical societies in one place.

A big thank you to our directors: Stephanie, Karen, Greg, Russ and volunteer Frank, who volunteered all weekend at our booth. Thank you also to John Sacerdote and all the volunteers, who make the Amherst Railroad Hobby Show at the Big E Fairgrounds possible. People may learn more about the Hobby Show by visiting <https://www.railroad-hobbyshow.com/> and see you in 2026.



Conductors from the Connecticut Trolley Museum oversee the display. Submitted photos



Gene and Matt O'Brien are shown at the hobby show. Gene was head of the signal department for CSX Box Line during the period when they went from lineside signals to cad signals.



Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers Directors are from left, Liz, Greg and Stephanie.

BECKET

Becket Athenaeum announces upcoming news, events

BECKET – The Becket Athenaeum, 3367 Main St., will host Mindful Making, an evening of crafting and connection with pizza and snacks for teens on Thursdays, Feb. 27 and March 13 from 5:30-7 p.m.

Teens may bring a craft or enjoy a craft provided by the library.

The Cookbook Club meets Monday, Feb. 10 at 6 p.m. People will prepare a recipe from the cook book,

“Roast Figs, Sugar Snow,” food to warm the soul, by Diana Henry to share. Participants should email info@bwlibrary.org to register and request a copy of the cookbook. Besides sampling the recipes, they will discuss their experiences with the cookbook.

Game Night meets Thursday, Feb. 20 from 6-8 p.m. at the library. Refreshments will be served.

RSVP is appreciated by visiting bit.ly/BA-Feb20-game.

On Sunday, March 9 at 1 p.m. there will be a film and book discussion of the film “The Road” and the book “The Bear.” The film showing is at 1 p.m. and the discussion at 3 p.m.

People should RSVP by visiting bit.ly/BA-road-bear. The program is by a grant from the Becket Cultural Council, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

On going events are on Saturdays Story Time from 10:30-11:30 a.m. with Stay and Play from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. RSVP is appreciated by visiting bit.ly/BA-storytime.

Tuesday Baby and Toddler Playgroup for birth through age 3 meets from 10-11 a.m. RSVP is appreciated by visiting BecketAthenaeum.org/ events.

Valentine's Cookie Day Sale Feb. 15

BECKET – The Yoked Parish of Becket will hold its annual Valentine's Day Cookie Sale on Saturday, Feb. 15 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Congregational Church Guild Hall, YMCA Road, in Becket. This event will be a fundraiser for the Yoked Parish of Becket Community Outreach Emergency Fund, which helps persons needing assistance. Homemade cookies will be offered for a donation to the fund. Lists of ingredients will be available.

MassDOT lists I-90 bridge painting

BECKET – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces bridge painting operations on I-90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 18.4.

The work will take place from now through Friday, Feb. 7 from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. each day. Drivers traveling through these areas should expect delays, reduce speed and use caution. Appropriate signage and messaging will be in place to guide drivers through the work areas. All scheduled work is weather dependent and subject

to change without notice.

For more information on traffic conditions, travelers are encouraged to: Dial 511 and select a route to hear real-time conditions. Visit www.mass511.com to view live cameras, travel times, real-time traffic conditions, and project information before setting out on the road. Users can subscribe to receive text and email alerts for traffic conditions. Follow @MassDOT on X, formerly known as Twitter, to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.

Becket Arts Center seeks artists

BECKET – Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, is accepting submissions of visual art to display in their galleries.

Application deadline is Friday, Feb. 28 and notification of acceptance will be Monday, March 31.

Artists can enter for a chance for a \$300 prize and a solo show Aug. 8 to Aug. 31.

They should apply by visiting beckettartscenter.org.