

"All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt." – Charles M. Schulz

# 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

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

February 8, 2024 | Vol. 45, No. 42 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

## HUNTINGTON

# Brothers share Bigfoot encounters

Correspondent  
Wendy Long

About 20 people gathered at the Huntington Public Library on Jan. 30 to consider the possible existence of Bigfoot or Sasquatch—large, hairy animals who walk on two feet.

Brothers Eric and Tim Vogel gave a "Bigfoot 413" presentation, where they shared their investigations and encounters with the shy and elusive creatures.

Encounters often include loud whoops, "wood knocks" and objects such as pebbles, sticks or rocks being thrown at them.

Their interest harkens back to 1976, when the teenage brothers found themselves talking with Bigfoot investigators from around the country, who had come to Western Massachusetts to examine tracks found in Agawam. While the incident was eventually discovered to be a hoax, perpetrated by a child, who fashioned plywood "feet" to create them, the stories shared by the investigators sparked an interest that would be renewed years later.

In the 1990s and again in 2004 the outdoor enthusiasts were leading camping tours with their business,



Tim and Eric Vogel are investigators, who lead excursions to areas where Bigfoot has been spotted or encountered. Turley photo by Wendy Long

**BROTHERS**, page 2

## NORTH CHESTER

# From farm to Nuremberg

PART 1

Harriet Kelso Gilman, 102, recalls life on the farm

*Editor's note: This is the first part of a two part story. The second part will appear in the Feb. 15 edition.*

By Kathryn  
Koegel  
Correspondent



Harriet Gilman

To speak with Harriet Kelso Gilman is to wonder at a life well and complexly lived.

She will be 103 this year, but places, dates and people trip off her tongue. She lived through extraordinary times in world history – the Great Depression, WWII, the Cold War – yet her touchstone was always a farm on Bromley Road in North Chester.

Every year her descendants, two sons, now nearing their 80s and assorted grandchildren come back to help prune, mulch and fertilize the blueberries that burst forth juicy and sweetly tart in the summer sun. The Gilman family were pioneers in both taming the wilderness of the Hilltowns of

**GILMAN**, page 9

## BLANDFORD

# Highway to apply for MassWorks grants

By Mary Kronholm  
Correspondent

Highway Superintendent David Waldron Waldron told the board he had spoken with Water Superintendent Gordon Avery about MassWorks grants and that Water is able to apply for funding the 4,800 feet on Russell Stage Road to replace the existing water line.

Replacement will go down as far as the last fire hydrant on the left. Such a grant, according to Waldron, would cover everything except replacing the asphalt.

Waldron also said he is

applying for grants for Beech Hill, Russell Stage and Gore Roads. "We can apply for as many grants as we want," he told the board adding that it doesn't mean "we'll get them all."

Waldron presented a third candidate for one of his two open positions. No decision was made at Monday's meeting because a fourth candidate's application is yet to be reviewed. The board hopes to have a confirmed decision in the next week or two according to Chair Cara Letendre.

### Mini excavator

Waldron also presented the board with five quotes

from mini excavator vendors all under state contract. They were: MB Tractor, West Springfield quoted \$87,900; Bobcat of West Springfield base was for \$84,917 but came in at \$114,346 with additional equipment; John Deere in Pittsfield was \$108,775 and Quality Fleet Service of South Hadley was \$79,838. Before any decision is made, according to Letendre, a funding source needs to be identified.

Board member Jeff Allen said he thought the town should vote on a warrant article and he suggested

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## EAGLE EYES



These bald eagles perched in a pine tree at Forest Lake in Palmer.

Photo by Kyle Tourville



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## HUNTINGTON

# Board appoints Fieldstad-Booth as Interim Town Clerk

By Wendy Long  
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – At their Jan. 31 meeting, the Huntington Select Board interviewed candidate Michelle Fieldstad-Booth, offering her the position of Interim Town Clerk afterwards.

Select Board Member Roger Booth left the room due to conflict of interest, as her spouse and refrained from voting. Fieldstad-Booth is a former Gateway teacher, who spent much of her career in, and recently retired from, Chicopee Public Schools. Most recently, she was a science teacher at Bellamy Middle School. Select Board Member Bill Hathaway also noted for the record that they are friends, but remained in the interview to achieve a quorum.

The current Town Clerk Linda Hamlin is retiring at the end of March. The town is in the process of trying to move it from an elected position to one appointed by the Select Board. This passed the first step at town meeting last year and either needs a vote to confirm on the annual town election ballot or a home rule petition by State Representative Nicholas Boldyga, who represents Huntington. In the meantime, Fieldstad-Booth will train with Hamlin and the Assistant Town Clerk and serve as Interim Town Clerk through June 30.

In her interview, Fieldstad-Booth reported that she had done some preliminary research on the election process. Chairman Ed Renauld said that there are four elections this year and it is very important to get elections right. The Town Clerk is also the Freedom of Information Act officer for the town, among the many other tasks listed in the job description.

Also discussed was whether or not Fieldstad-Booth should take out nomination papers in case voters failed to approve the ballot measure final step in allowing the Select Board to appoint



Michelle Fieldstad-Booth was interviewed and appointed as the Interim Town Clerk at the Jan. 31 Select Board meeting. She will serve in this position through June 30.

Photo by Wendy Long

or in case Boldyga did not fulfill the home rule petition. It was agreed that this might be worth doing.

Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin will work with Hamlin and Fieldstad-Booth to determine a start date. Hamlin will be on vacation for part of February, but Fieldstad-Booth could use that time to complete mandated training. Renauld confirmed there are a lot of state trainings and classes and he believed there was also a mentor program, which would match someone from a similar-sized town with her.

“This is a very important position and it’s vital that you are up and running by April 1,” Renauld said.

Also discussed were Fieldstad-Booth’s work schedule, which is to include Wednesday night hours when the town hall is open to the public. “I under-

stand that I would be maintaining contact with the public, town officials and staff and the state,” she responded.

The Interim Town Clerk will be paid at the same pay rate as Hamlin and will report to the Town Administrator. Fieldstad-Booth was the sole applicant for the position.

### Crescent Street Project

In other business, the town closed out the Crescent Street Project by approving the final expenditures. Under communications from Tighe & Bond engineer, Zach Chornyak and follow-up by Peloquin, the contractor agreed to credit the town \$1,500 to recoup the costs it incurred when a sewer pipe was hit by road construction equipment. This amount covers reimbursement the town paid to a homeowner to address a sub-

sequent sewer back-up in the home, to Down to Earth excavating, who helped with the road and pipe repair and to the town of Russell for asphalt they loaned to Huntington. Three final invoices for \$102,989.44, \$16,919 and \$37,507.58 after a \$1,500 credit were approved unanimously and all were covered by the remaining grant funding.

### New Ramp

The board also approved two invoices to Kenney Masonry for \$47,480.16 and \$44,761.58, the architect \$2,105 and Project Dog \$595 for work on the new ramp at Stanton and Town Halls. They also approved a contract amendment with Kenney Masonry to extend the time of completion to March 31, as they await the railings for the project.

Additional approvals were unanimously given to other community development block grant work that was completed.

Peloquin presented two proposals for gutters on Stanton Hall to prevent icing on the new ramp. The board unanimously approved a \$1,900 proposal by Mr. Gutter, which will include modifying the fascia to make a gutter system work properly.

### Westfield Wild and Scenic River Association

Westfield Wild and Scenic River Association requested holding an event at Stanton Hall on March 21 to celebrate 30 years of their organization. They asked that a Select Board member attend. This was approved with Booth volunteering to attend.

### Insurances

The town’s \$759 bill for insurance on the drone has come due. Renauld believed the drone was now in possession of the Department of Fire Services;

CLERK, page 3

## BROTHERS

Tekoa Mountain Outdoor Programs. Several times, they experienced odd noises on their trips that they could not explain.

But in 2013, Tim said, they “had an experience and it’s one we can’t un-have.” The two were on a wilderness canoe trip to a remote area in the Adirondacks near Saranac Lake. It was September, they had set up camp on an island and went out fishing for bass.

They had paddled up a stream that fed the lake when two trees on shore started shaking and they heard a scream that vibrated into their chests, described as “like being at a Ted Nugent concert.” They returned to their campsite but slept little that night.

“We didn’t talk about it for a while,” Tim said. Tim, who is a ranger at the Moses Scout Reservation in Blandford, said he’s had a number of bear encounters in his work. “Bears just run,” he said. “This thing yelled and screamed and threw sticks and rocks at them for 10-15 minutes.” And the footprint casts that they have since acquired after other encounters are clearly not bear tracks. They not only lack claws, but the big toes on bear prints are the reverse of ours, unlike Bigfoot tracks.

A few years later, they heard a recording that was purportedly of a Bigfoot scream and recognized the sound as the one they’d heard in 2013. While Bigfoot are usually thought to be a phenomenon in the Pacific Northwest, the Vogels report that there have been numerous encounters in the Northeast. The first recorded sighting in Massachusetts dates back to 1765, when a hunter in Great Barrington reported seeing one sleeping by a stream. In 1895, a North Adams newspaper printed

a town selectman’s account of seeing one.

And in 1958, the term “Bigfoot” was crafted when Jerry Crew of Humboldt County, California made a plaster cast of 16” footprints. Journalist Andrew Genzoli reported on the finding and coined the term “Bigfoot.” Native Americans have a number of different terms for the creatures, but the most commonly known is Sasquatch.

The Vogels have since added Bigfoot investigations or “going Squatching” to their expedition business. There are three types of encounters: Class A, which are actual sightings; Class B, which are sounds and physical things like rocks being thrown or footprints being discovered and Class C, which are third party stories.

They say there have been 64 such reports in Western Massachusetts since 2000, including 14 Class A sightings in Hampden, Hampshire and Berkshire Counties. Encounters have also been reported in the Worcester and Boston areas, on Cape Cod, and in the “Bridgewater Triangle,” a 200 square mile area in Eastern Massachusetts with numerous reports of paranormal phenomena including Bigfoot sightings. And, of course, many of us have seen the 15 second video footage taken by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin in 1967 of a Sasquatch walking; according to the Vogels, still the best proof of a Bigfoot to date as no one has been able to debunk the footage. The Vogels report that there are more sightings in the spring and fall, when the creatures might be foraging and fewer in winter, suggesting that they might even hibernate. Sightings, when they happen, are often very brief and despite loud wood

knocks and screams, the creatures can move very quietly through the woods.

The Vogels have become part of Bigfoot Field Research Organization, a network of believers who share data, experiences and connect evidence with experts. There is a linguist, for example, who believes that the vocalizations such as whoops, screams and whistles are a form of communication; that person also rules out recordings of things like owls. There are others who can examine the footprint casts of tracks and determine an estimated height and weight of the creature.

During one rainy encounter, the brothers discovered two solid tracks and covered them with bark to protect them. The next day, they returned with a guy, who had casting equipment. As they approached the track they heard a scream from the top of the mountain. The tracks showed a heel depth of 4 inches prints that are 9 inches wide and 17-½ inches in length and about seven feet between the prints.

According to a BFRO investigator, the Bigfoot that made those tracks would have weighed about 900 pounds. The presenters also played a recording made by a local couple from an encounter in Blandford that was reviewed by the linguist and found to be “in the range.” Although the Vogels admit that the recording was nothing like the scream they heard in the Adirondacks, which they felt was much more aggressive and threatening.

For two hours, participants were spellbound as the Vogels described their additional experiences with Bigfoots. They’ve joined BFRO investigators on seven trips, all of which resulted in Class A or Class B encounters. “We’ve

had multiple experiences because we go where they’ve been seen,” Eric said.

One of the odder things reported by witnesses including the Vogels is seeing a blue or white orb, about the size of a softball, hovering near a Bigfoot sighting. “We’ve been told that it’s just energy,” said Eric.

“Weather people call it ball lightning.”

And some of the attendees have had their own encounters with Bigfoot. Lisa Haramut of Westfield said that both she and her father have had run-ins. “When they scream, they can interrupt your internal organs and cause vomiting or blood in your urine,” she said, adding that her father had experienced this. The Vogels had also heard similar reports, but had not experienced it themselves. Haramut also reported being chased by an orb while driving in an area where she believes she had also encountered one or more juvenile Bigfoots and was subjected to them throwing small rocks at her and whooping.

Shared stories had some common denominators. Many happened in steep, rugged terrain and often when it was raining. In addition to screams, wood knocks and thrown objects, sightings can sometimes be accompanied by a terrible “musk” smell.

The brothers feel it is important not to assign human characteristics to Bigfoot. “I try not to humanize Bigfoot because it’s in the animal world,” Tim said. His brother concurred.

If people had a similar experience, the Vogels invite then to contact them by emailing wildguide1@yahoo.com or calling 413-454-1296 or Tim or emailing wildguide2@yahoo.com or calling 413-207-1154 for Eric.

from page 1



# HUNTINGTON

## Rec Committee offers trip

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Recreation Committee is sponsoring a trip to the Springfield Museums on Wednesday, Feb. 21 from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Admission is offered at a discounted rate: \$15 for adults (regularly \$25) and \$10 for youth (regularly \$13), with free admission for children under 3. Huntington families will receive an additional \$10 discount per family.

Attendees will provide their own transportation and meet in the museum lobby at 10 a.m. They must sign up by Friday, Feb. 16 with Kayla K. by calling 413-329-5474 or by emailing recreation@huntingtonma.us. They should leave their name, address, phone number

and the number of adults and children attending.

Under the theme “Get Animated,” the museum is offering a number of exciting activities during the day, including Spark!Lab – use of an early form of robotic toy to create moving pictures; optical illusions through animation; the science of sound; designing a comic strip or flip book and creating an origami jumping frog.

Most of these activities will take place throughout the day, but a special exhibit on the Tanglewood Marionettes is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. The hand-crafted marionettes will dance, play and fly to the music of favorite composers.

## Domestic Violence Task Force announces upcoming meetings

HUNTINGTON – Southern Hilltown Domestic Violence Task Force will hold an in person meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 14 from 1-2:30 p.m. at Gateway Regional High School, Career Center, second floor, 12 Littleville Road.

Upcoming Task Force Meeting are Wednesdays, March 13, April 10, May 8 and June 12 from 1-2:30 p.m. at Gateway High School, Career Center, second floor, 12 Littleville Road.

## Business assoc. to hold Zoom meeting

HUNTINGTON – Jacob’s Ladder Business Association, 14 Russell Road, will hold their Thursday, Feb. 8 at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

They will discuss map printing and distribution for 2024. They also will dis-

cuss expanding their presence at local public events such as at the Huntington Music series for example. There are still open positions for secretary and membership director. A Zoom link will be sent before the meeting.

### CLERK

from page 2

if that’s true, they should be covering the insurance. Pelloquin will look into this.

Pelloquin reported that the town’s buildings were re-evaluated last summer and values on four buildings are up significantly: Stanton Hall, the Sewage Treatment Plant, the highway garage and Town Hall. This has resulted in an increase in property insurance of nearly \$14,000. They need to cover the increase for a half-year January to June now and budget the full increase for FY25. Once calculated, the Water and Sewer Department will have to pay their share of the increase. This was unanimously approved.

### Drug and Alcohol Free Policy

Pelloquin also affirmed, after conferring with the town’s attorney, that the Drug and Alcohol Free Policy approved earlier this month has to be signed by all town employees, officials and committee members. She has sent the new policy out to all involved, who are to sign and return the acknowledgement page by Feb. 9. Everyone was also notified yesterday that it is again time to complete the state’s online ethics training and test.

### Other Business

Pelloquin has received word that

the town was awarded a Cyber Security Grant; once the forms are emailed, Renauld will have to sign them.

The Council on Aging is offering training on how to administer Narcan. They have asked that the town install Narcan boxes at Town Hall and Stanton Hall. Select Board members discussed concerns over liability, concerns over administration of the drug being done correctly and the fact that the ambulance and fire department are both in possession of Narcan. The Select Board determined that this was not necessary nor advisable, but the COA is welcome to come back and make a case for it at a future meeting.

Booth said he is not happy that the Board approved using opioid settlement money for sharps containers and they have not been purchased nor installed at this point. Pelloquin will ask the Board of Health to look into this.

Also, it was noted that the electronic signs that tell motorists when they are going over the speed limit have not been put out yet. Pelloquin will also look into this.

The Select Board’s next meeting will be Wednesday, Feb. 14; a public hearing will be held from 5-5:30 p.m. for input on the upcoming Community Development Block Grant application.

## Town officials honor Police Chief Garriepy for 30 years service

By Wendy Long  
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – On Thursday, Feb. 1, Huntington town officials surprised Robert F. Garriepy with a luncheon to celebrate 30 years as the town’s police chief.

Garriepy was appointed to the post on Feb. 1, 1994 by Select Board members Richard Jordan, Miriam Watkins and George Webb. At age 22, Garriepy



Huntington Police Chief Robert F. Garriepy was surprised with a luncheon at Stanton Hall, honoring his 30 years as police chief.

Turley photo by Wendy Long

was the youngest police chief in Massachusetts at that time—a record that he believes still holds.

Garriepy had been lured to the event on a pretext cooked up by Town Administrator Jennifer Pelloquin. Upon his arrival, Select Board Chair Ed Renauld gave remarks thanking the chief for his years of service to the town. “Thirty years is pretty amazing,” Renauld said. “Bob is a huge asset to our town. He grew up here and knows almost everybody in town. He’s an amazing public servant.”

Garriepy said the best part of his job is that you never live the same day twice. The most rewarding part, he said, was interacting with the townspeople.

Upon his appointment in 1994, Garriepy replaced outgoing Police Chief Ray Redfern, who took the same position in Ashfield. Garriepy had already been on the force for three years by then and could still rattle off the names of his fellow officers at that time.

Present were the Select Board, Town Administrator and members of numerous departments and committees in town. Grinders, chips and beverages were served, along with a cake to honor the Chief.

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The Annual Meeting of Corporators of Country Bank for Savings will be held on Monday, March 11, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. at 420 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA for the election of Corporators, Trustees and any other business as required by law or the Bylaws of Country Bank for Savings.  
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# OPINION

## GUEST COLUMN



### Will my WEP reduction go away if I continue working?

Dear Rusty

I'm 63 years old and have not yet started my Social Security.

I now work for the State of Illinois and will draw a pension from that state's university system. I don't pay into Social Security from this position and, as a result, my Social Security payment will be reduced. But I have also worked elsewhere and contributed to Social Security for 26 years.

If I retire from the state university and begin drawing my reduced Social Security payment and then work in a different job, which does contribute to SS, will the reduction to my Social Security payment ever be eliminated? Or will I be permanently stuck with the smaller Social Security payment?

Signed Curious Educator

Dear Curious

A rule called the Windfall Elimination Provision will apply to your Social Security benefit because your Illinois state pension was earned without paying into the Social Security program. The basic rule is that anyone with a pension earned without contributing to Social Security and who is also entitled to Social Security benefits, is subject to WEP, which reduces that person's Social Security retirement benefit. It's a law enacted many years ago to equalize how SS benefits are paid to all Social Security beneficiaries.

However, the WEP rules also provide relief for those who have only a small non-covered pension and for those who have separately contributed to Social Security for a lot of years. For example:

The WEP reduction to your SS benefit cannot be more than 50% of your non-covered (IL) pension

The WEP reduction is smaller for each year over 20 years contributing to Social Security from substantial earnings

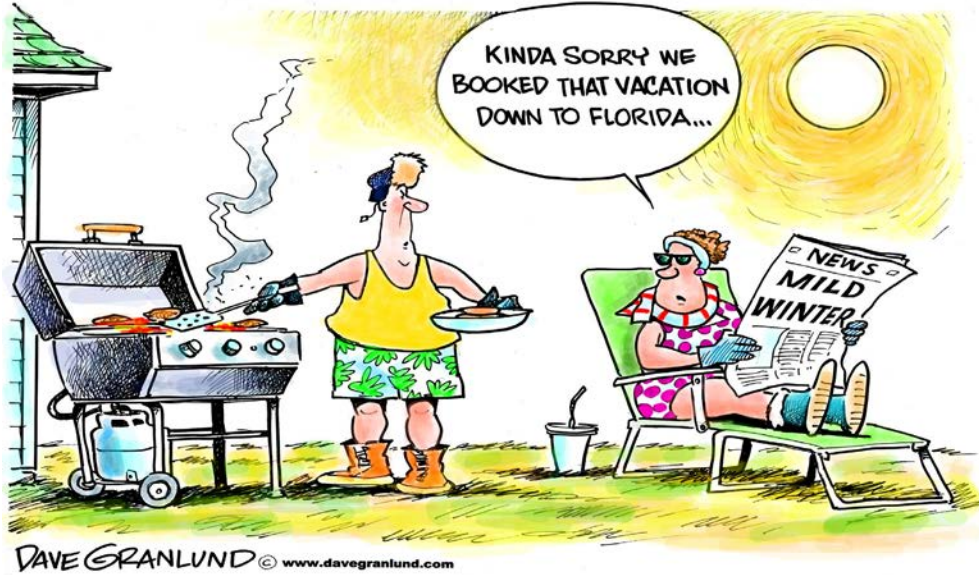
WEP does not apply to those who have at least 30 years contributing to SS from substantial earnings

Although you could retire at 63 and collect your pension from the university and also collect your WEP-reduced Social Security, you have something else to consider if you take another job, which pays into Social Security.

Social Security has an annual "earnings test" for those who collect benefits before their Full Retirement Age. The earnings test limits how much you can earn while collecting early SS before they take away some of your benefits. The earnings limit for 2024 is \$22,320 and, if that is exceeded, you will lose \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit.

If your work earnings substantially exceed the earnings limit, you would likely be temporarily ineligible to receive Social Security benefits. FYI, the earnings test no longer applies once you reach your full retirement age, which for you is 67.

SECURITY, page 5



## GUEST COLUMN

### Spare the vase this Valentine's Day



My husband gave me a bouquet of roses on the first Valentine's Day we spent together. They were beautiful in the vase, but I felt bad that he had spent the money he did for the gift. Being in the business, I told him how much roses are marked up because of the holiday.

It's a supply and demand thing mostly, and tradition to give them of course, but wouldn't it be nice if we received a gift that kept on giving? One solution would be to preorder your sweetheart a rose bush through a mail-order nursery.

What excitement it will bring when it arrives in springtime, and then imagine the delight when it blooms year after year. If your interest is piqued, then read on to learn about proper planting techniques and basic rose cul-

ture, so that you (or your sweetheart!) will be a successful rose grower.

Rose bushes will be shipped once it is deemed safe from freezing temperatures. In my experience, mail-order roses can arrive anywhere from the end of April through the end of May.

First off, unpack the rose and soak its roots in room temperature water for at least one hour (and up to twelve). This is necessary to rehydrate roots that may have dried out in the shipping process.

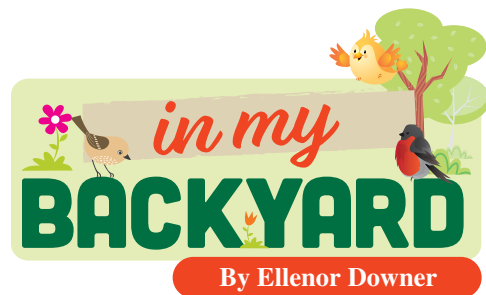
Once rehydrated, the rose is ready for a quick pruning. Carefully snip back any broken or crossing canes.

A rose bush 8-12" tall at planting will start out nice and bushy. If you need to trim back canes that are longer than that, prune back to an out-facing bud, that way growth will be directed out and not towards the plant's center.

Consider placement carefully. To bloom their best, roses need, at the very least, six hours of sunshine.

Morning sun is preferred, so that dewy foliage will dry quickly, diminishing the chances of foliar disease such as black spot or

GARDEN, page 5



I received an email from a birder in Brimfield, who sends bird updates on a regular basis. He reported an acquaintance in Hardwick have five fox sparrows visiting their yard this winter. He said, "Lucky them, I only see one or two fox sparrows in the yard during migration and didn't see any this year."

The fox sparrow is a large sparrow about 7 inches in length. It has rufous streaking and a gray head and back. The tail and rump are reddish brown and the underparts whitish with brown streaking. There is a central, irregular shaped dot on the breast

Like many sparrows, it feeds on the ground eating seeds, fruits and insects. It jumps forward and back pulling up ground debris to uncover food beneath. It may come

to feeders where seed is scattered on the ground.

Fox sparrows inhabit deciduous or coniferous woods, brushy areas and wood edges. Their song is a short series of clear, melodious whistles.

The female lays four to six light blue green eggs in a cup like nest of grasses, lichens and leaves lined with hair fur and rootlets. The nest is placed on the ground under a small tree or shrub.

#### Brimfield birds

I received an email from a Brimfield resident. He said, "[I] wanted to pass on some of my backyard action this winter. I was surprised to see five or six cowbirds along with a solitary red wing blackbird last week." He has a lot more juncos around with the white throated sparrows. He said chickadees and nuthatches and the titmice population is down a bit He had a few starlings that stop by now and then along with cedar waxwings. He has not seen as many wild turkeys this year.

#### Golden crowned kinglet

A Brookfield resident emailed two photos of a golden crowned kinglet he took on Saturday, Jan. 27. He said, "Walking into my home, I spotted this tiny bird at the door." Tiny is an apt description of this bird as it is only 3 1/2 inches long.

#### More Brimfield birds

A frequent emailer said he read about the sighting of bluebirds and grackles in this column. He wrote, "Coincidentally we had a lone grackle in the yard last week. It showed up for a couple of days. I thought it



Fox sparrow

BACKYARD, page 5

## 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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ISSN NO. 0747-2471

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The Country Journal (USPS 483-550) is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069.



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## OPINION

### Habitat for Humanity embraces energy-savings initiatives

By Brandice J. O'Brien

Marketing and Communications Manager,  
Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

Energy savings and green products are all the rage right now. Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity, or GSHFH, is working tirelessly to provide their homeowners and prospective partner families with environmentally-friendly products that help them save on utility costs, while keeping expenses low. That's not an easy feat considering inflation and limited resources. Yet, the nonprofit organization is able to accomplish this achievement through fundraisers, donations and grants.

Sometimes, it's the small changes that make the biggest difference. GSHFH is now incorporating electric mini split heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to avoid using fossil fuels. In some instances, based on location and home design, tankless water heaters or air-source water heaters are installed.

"Our goal is to provide our partner families with an energy-friendly home that will allow them to save money, while protecting their investment for many years to come," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "We want them to pass their home to the next generation of family members and provide them with a solid foundation for a better, more stable future."

Energy-friendly products range from solar panel installation, the use of Low-E glass windows, to a plant-based fiber insulation called HempWool; light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures, and the affiliate's first-ever insulated concrete form (ICF) home.

Solar panel installation can help a family significantly cut their electric bill

and the use of Low-E glass windows lets in natural light while reflecting inside heat back into the home during the winter months. During the summer, outside heat is reflected away from the home.

LED fixtures reduce energy usage and programmable thermostats provide heating and cooling only during the times it was most needed. Plus, Energy-Star appliances, which are rated for maximum energy efficiency and cost savings, are used.

HempWool is a US Department of Agriculture-certified bio-based insulation that is naturally mold and pest resistant. It's also resistant of volatile organic compounds and toxins. It's easy to install, doesn't sag, and like the Low-E glass, lowers the energy bills for heat in the winter, cooling in the summer, and general comfort.

"It's a lot less itchy to handle," said Tom Eisenman, GSHFH volunteer.

Additionally, new construction projects are built to meet the Specialized Opt-in Energy Code of Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code. The code sets significantly higher requirements for heating and cooling loads, which can be responsible for 60% of a building's energy use.

In November 2022, GSHFH began its most notable energy-efficient project yet: an ICF home. A dedication ceremony celebrating the completion of construction will be held at 11am on Wednesday, Feb. 14, at 360 Chestnut St. in Holyoke. The project is a collaboration between the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association and Habitat for Humanity International to build 50 ICF homes across the country.

The insulated concrete forms are hollow foam blocks that are stacked into the shape of exterior walls of a building, reinforced with steel rebar, and filled



Dean student working with rebar.

with concrete.

"Doing something different in construction is not easy," said Gregg Lewis, chief communications officer at NRMCA. "Construction is hard enough when you're doing the same thing day in and day out. Try to take on a new way of building and it's really a huge deal."

ICF combines one of the finest insulating materials – expanded polystyrene (EPS) with one of the strongest structural building materials – steel reinforced concrete. The result is a wall system of unmatched comfort, energy efficiency and noise reduction.

"The house will be quiet, even when it's windy and stormy outside and it'll stay nice and toasty inside," said Steve Bogle, an Integraspec local distributor.

Integraspec is the brand name of the foam blocks. Steve and his wife Cheryl, also an Integraspec distributor, worked



WNEU Pharm Club putting in HempWool.

with GSHFH in the early stages.

Unlike a traditional wood frame house with sheathing, an ICF home offers several additional benefits to the builder and homeowner. The foam panels are made from recycled material. ICF walls do not off-gas, whereas conventional walls sheathed with oriented strand board (OSB) off-gas through glues and resin. ICF walls are resistant to mold and rot, which provides a better living environment for those suffering from allergies or asthma. Also, due to the rising cost of lumber, this method significantly reduces the need for wood for framing and sheathing the exterior and less trees are cut down.

"We're excited to have built a more energy-efficient, affordable home for one of our Habitat families," Aimee said.

To see pictures from the construction phase of the ICF build, visit [habitatspringfield.org/Holyoke](http://habitatspringfield.org/Holyoke).

## SECURITY

from page 4

Without knowing your expected income from a new job, I can't say how much of your SS you would be able to receive, but you can use this as a guide: Social Security will take away benefits equal to half of what you exceed the annual earnings limit by and they typically recover by withholding future benefits.

If 12 months or more of benefits are withheld, you will be temporarily ineligible to receive benefits until your earnings are less or you reach your full retirement age, the earnings test no longer applies once you reach your FRA. So, depending on your expected annual work earnings, you may wish to defer claiming your Social Security until you either earn less or reach 67 years of age.

If you already have 26 years contributing to Social Security from "substantial earnings," your WEP reduction will already be mitigated and any additional years of substantial earnings from which SS payroll taxes are deducted will result in an even smaller WEP reduction.

If you can achieve 30 years of SS

contributions from substantial work earnings, WEP will no longer apply. So, you may not be "stuck with" the WEP reduction permanently, but you will need to contact Social Security to request that your WEP reduction amount be reviewed in light of any additional years of SS-covered earnings. This should be done after you submit your income taxes each year you have additional SS-covered earnings.

*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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.*

## BACKYARD

from page 4

was unusual to see just one grackle, they are most often seen in a group especially this time of year."

The Brimfield resident said, "When I mentioned to a friend from Belchertown that I had seen a grackle at the feeders he mentioned that he had a group of about 30 grackles visit his feeder briefly one day last week."

He said three days ago "I noticed a male bluebird at the feeders. It has visited daily since first being seen. The bird is feeding on suet cakes and a 'log' that is made of seeds, fruit and meal worms."

He counted over 70 juncos and four white-throated sparrows in the yard. He recently had three starlings, who seemed to like a feeder containing suet pellets. He said he rarely sees starlings at his feeders. He removed the feeder to deter the voracious eating starlings.

### Bluebirds

This seems to be the year for flocks of bluebirds showing up at feeders. On Friday, Jan. 26 six or eight male and female bluebirds were at my suet cake, which contained fruits. I removed the ice from a small dish like feeder, I use for

mealworms, grape jelly or orange halves. The bluebirds ate all the mealworms and I filled it again. They have been hanging around daily and I put out mealworms twice a day.

Tuesday, I looked out the window and saw several bluebirds perched on my car. One occupied a side mirror, another was on the roof and two on the hood by the windshield wipers. I think they may have been drinking the water from the melting snow on the car.

Later, when I looked to see if they were still there, a mourning dove was perched by the wiper blade.

### Large flock of robins

A North Brookfield resident, who lives on Lake Lashaway, emailed on Friday, Jan. 17 she had a flock of 30 or more robins zoom in to the neighborhood.

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

## GARDEN

from page 4

powdery mildew. Soil should drain well and be rich in nutrients or amended to that end.

The planting hole should be prepared while the rose bush is soaking. Dig a hole about twice the diameter of the plant's roots, roughly one and a half feet by one and a half feet.

As long as the soil removed from the hole is decent, in other words, not all sand or clay, 50% of it can be mixed with well-rotted manure (fresh will burn!) or cured compost, and used as back fill. First, take a small amount of the mixture and make a mound in the hole for the plant to sit on and the roots to spread down.

In our locale, and anywhere that temperatures dip below 0°F, the graft union (the bump at the plants base), if there is

one, should be planted two inches below the soil surface. With that in mind, position the rose on the mound at the proper depth and begin to refill the hole with soil, a third of the hole at a time, firming as you go.

Once the rose bush has been planted, water it well at the base of the plant (a couple gallons at least). If you find that the water isn't sinking in, but running away, dam up a couple inches of soil about a foot away from the base of the plant to act like a basin.

Water is crucial at this stage; never let a newly planted rose dry out. A three inch layer of bark mulch or cocoa bean hulls can be applied around the rose to reduce moisture loss and discourage weed competition.

Avoid fertilizing until the rose has

broken dormancy and is growing vigorously. Use half strength fertilizer and only do so until mid-July so that succulent growth will have a chance to harden before cold weather hits.

This way your rose will be less prone to winter kill. I do not provide any winter cover for my roses.

There will likely be a few branch tips that suffer winter kill regardless. Those I prune back in springtime when the roses start to leaf out.

I prune just past the damage, at a leaf bud. Besides that, and general shaping, the only other pruning I do is deadheading.

Spent blooms should be removed from rose bushes to direct energy away from seed production and back to flower production. Where the cut is made depends on the type of rose that you have.

Over the last decade, tremendous gains have been made in rose breeding, resulting rose bushes that blend well into landscape plantings and require less maintenance for the homeowner. I still enjoy my heirlooms, and grow the Rugosa to remind me of the beach.

Still others prefer climbers or hybrid teas. Whatever your sweetheart may fancy, indulge this Valentine's Day in a gift that will keep on giving!

*Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 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](mailto:pouimette@turley.com) with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.*



## EASTHAMPTON

# bankESB raises \$35,000 for local food pantries

EASTHAMPTON – Matthew S. Sosik, president and CEO of bankESB, announced that the bank's third annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraising drive raised \$35,000 for local food pantries.

This brings the program's three-year total to nearly \$110,000. The appeal is part of bankESB's charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, which reflects the bank's commitment to making a difference in the neighborhoods it serves.

Throughout November, the bank invited customers, employees and members of the community to donate at bankESB branches. All donations received were matched, dollar for dollar, by bankESB and the total divided among food pantries in Western Massachusetts communities the bank serves.

Each of these participating food pantries received \$2,500: The



bankESB's Sargeant Street, Holyoke office Assistant Branch Manager Tenaya Reade presents a \$2,500 check to Pantry Manager Brenda Lamagdeleine of Margaret's Pantry in Holyoke, one of 14 participating food pantries receiving donations from the bank's Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraising campaign to help fight food insecurity. *Submitted photo*

Best Life Food Ministry in Agawam, BUCC Helping Hands Cupboard Food Pantry in Belchertown, The Chicopee Cupboard, Easthampton Community Center Food Pantry, Easthampton Congregational Church Food Cupboard and Oasis Kitchen, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Hatfield, The Hadley Food Pantry, Hilltown Food Pantry in Goshen, Margaret's Pantry in Holyoke, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Inc. in South Hadley, Northampton Survival Center, Not Bread Alone in Amherst, Southampton Community Cupboard and Westfield Food Pantry.

"On behalf of bankESB, I'd like to thank all those who generously donated to our Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraiser to help fight food insecurity in our communities," said Sosik. "We're pleased to host this annual appeal and that so much was raised to help families in need this past holiday season and into this new year."

## BLANDFORD



Participants will learn how to replicate these limes in a water color painting class with award winning local artist Susan Racine. *Submitted photo*

### Artist to hold water color class

BLANDFORD – Local artist Susan Racine will conduct another water color painting class on Wednesday, Feb. 14 at 10 a.m. in the Council on Aging room at Town Hall.

There is a \$10 fee for all supplies,

paints, paper, brushes, etc. The subject for this class in limes.

Registration is required. People should let Racine know they will participate by emailing her at stheresa811@live.com.

### Town Clerk mails out annual street list forms

BLANDFORD – Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo mailed out the town's annual street list forms on Tuesday, Feb. 6.

Residents must complete the form, sign it and return it to the Town Clerk's office in the pre-addressed envelope accompanying the form within ten days. Failure to respond to this mailing will result in removal from the active voting list and may result in the removal from the voter registration rolls.

The form does not register people to vote, they can not change a political party affiliation on this form; any such changes must be done with the Town Clerk in that office.

Everyone in every household must be included on the form, including children.

Residents can change some information on the form, such as adding the birth of a child or the number of cats and/or dogs in the home.

Information on the form can help the town apply for grants. The state requires all households to respond to the street list within ten days, even if there are no changes.

If anyone has not received the form to update information or has any questions, they should call Jemiolo at 413-848-4279, extension 203.

### Council on Aging to hold breakfast on Feb. 23

BLANDFORD – Plans are set for the monthly Council on Aging breakfast for Friday, Feb. 23 at 10 a.m. in the Council on Aging room at Town Hall.

Breakfast fare is blueberry baked

French Toast, sliced fruit and maple breakfast sausage. People should call the COA at 413-848-4279 extension 400 to sign up. They should leave name and number of people attending.

## GRANTS

consideration be given for the necessary roof repairs.

"At this point," said Szlosek, "it's (free cash) an undesignated fund balance," and he is researching records to see the amount of available funds.

Board member Theodore Cousineau agreed and said that before making any decision, "We should find out..."

The equipment will be listed for sale so there will be some funding forthcoming. There is no trade-in value according to Waldron.

Town Administrator Mike Szlosek presented a draft for severe weather police for their perusal, and suggestions. He has so far received one quote for the proposed new municipal financial software, Vadar, and three are required.

### MIIA

He told the board that Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) sent an adjuster out to review the damage and repair for the roof repair. He expects a report soon.

MIIA has also informed the town that the increase for medical insurance is 9.94 percent, with "no increase for dental," according to Szlosek. If medical is bundled with vision coverage, the town could save a percent on the medical.

In other business, the board reviewed a letter to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities regarding a budget amendment by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

### Board of Health

Szlosek said that the state is looking closely at Blandford's funds because there is a question on how the grants are administered by PVPC. Board of Health member Jennifer Girard told the board she had been in touch with PVPC regarding \$59,000 remaining in grant funds available that was not going to be accessible and she wanted to know what is the bottom line. According to Girard, on Monday,

PVPC granted the town between \$34-\$40,000 for an emergency septic repair. She believes PVPC may come back for additional funding for administration.

Some people have backed out of the process because on close inspection of homes other issues have been discovered such as lead paint. She pointed out that there was no need for such inspection in this case.

### Expenditure report

The board reviewed the departmental expenditure report. Expenditures should be at 50%. Most expenditures are in line. Szlosek will follow up on the treasurer/collector tax title expense.

Tree canopy work needs to continue and Tree Warden Mark Boomsma has been asked what the plans are for his tree removal budget. Bills have just been turned in, but no plan. "We would really like from Mark a plan ahead of time for that money so that when we vote, we know exactly what that money is going for" and can we use some for

the Highway Department canopy work. Szlosek will reach out to him.

### Other Business

There were questions about building and maintenance funds for the Board of Health.

A reclassification of a misapplied charge was noted. As a result, the board told Szlosek he could approve reclassification for up to \$2,000.

A complaint was received from a veteran regarding a same-day delivery fee charged by a fuel company which the veteran believed should not have been charged. The veteran addressed the complaint to Veterans' Agent Joe Henning and apparently felt it was not well handled. The charge is a universal fee according to Allen, when calls for fuel are not made at least three days in advance. Szlosek will draft a letter to Henning regarding representing the town.

Plumbing Inspector issues have been resolved.

*from page 1*



## SCHOOLS & YOUTH

# Hampshire Regional High School announces honor roll

WESTHAMPTON – The Hampshire Regional High School, 19 Stage Road, announces the honor roll

### Grade 9 First Honors

Alyssa Barcomb, Kathleen Barry, Emmett Bastek, Elan Bonham, Kai Calabretta Rek, Elyse Campbell, Julia Caputo, Emma Chateaufeuf, Lily Connor, Alexa Cortis, Owen Cubi, Cameron Dextraze, Raegan Dubai, Ryanne Dubai, Nadia Easton, Harrison Farrar, Kason Fellows, Riley Florek, Amelia Gilman, Xavier Greenberg, Astrid Jensen, Nicholas Johnson, Leo Ketcherside, Holly Kowalczyk, Katelyn Krause, Krystian Lech, Addison Miklasiewicz, Shayne Moynahan, Austin Mullaly, Grayson Noel, Catalina Ocampo, Hailey Paszko, Caroline Payson, Nicholas Roy, Aria Simonelli, Allison St. Pierre, Finch Stahl, Brielle Stine, Eleri Tomsovic, Sophia Tremblay and Benjamin Zajac

### Grade 9 Second Honors

Madeline Bresnahan, Jack Cameron, Travis Carpenter, Ryen Delisle, Natalie

Dunlap, Francis Dunn, Eli Fern, Leo Florek, Bella Paige Foster, Rachael Hickox, Isaiah Isa, Magdeline Lashway, Kyle LeBeau, Hayden Miller, Thomas Moore, Clare Norris, Theodore Overtree, Vanessa Reese, Frederickos Rizos, Emmett Schatz, William Schmidt and Tobias Stearns

### Grade 10 First Honors

Phoebe Bowser, Keegan Butler, Colin Cahill, Abigail Fiset, Carmen Laflam, Jake Laurin, Layce Mancuso, Carlea Manley, Kiersten McKay, Lucy McVey, Joseph Moro, Augustus Niswonger, Rachel O'Connell, Caitlyn Packey, Evelyn Palmer, Andrea Paszko, Lillian Popham, Abigail Provost, Samuel Robbins, Oscar Schiff, Corinne Somes, Elisabeth Sturtevant, Rachael Theroux, Lila Watkins and Lucia Winter

### Grade 10 Second Honors

Cody Bean, Joseph Breguet, Elliette Cerone, Parker Christy, Eleanor Cleary, Gabriel Couture, Laney Cunningham, Jayden Hamel, Amelia Hanke, Eamonn Hilnbrand, Braylon Jarrett, Ethan

Kudelka, Lacy Kuehner, Makayla Labrie, Madelyn Layman, Kinnon McColgan, Lauren Pellegrini, Logan Rourke, Kiera Shea-Smith, Tristan Somes, Bridget Sullivan, Bethany Tobiasz, Avery Tudryn and Paige Walsh

### Grade 11 First Honors

Fadhil Al Baghdadli, Sabah Alshmlh, Grace Brouillard, Matthew Cesare, Cassidy Clark, Breanna Dale, Georgiana Frazier, Beatrice Hamilton, Emma Kelly, Olivia Manganelli, Benji Marconi, Riley Marney, Isabelle Mondschein, Philip Morin, Julianne Moro, Madeline Oravec, Zachary Phakos, Elijah Picard, Emmett Quinn, Ava Senecal, Anna Shadrick, Jacob Sicard, Julia Sicard, Katherine Simmons, Zola Simonelli and Ash Skow

### Grade 11 Second Honors

Sophia Bernier, Hope Brodeur, Ryan Brooks, Delaney Cantwell, Teagan Charles, Miguel Delgado, Layla Gauger, Ava Gougeon, Robert Herman, Camden Jarosz, Robin Ketcherside, Jack Laliberte, Ashton Lashway, Isabella LeBarron, Kayla LeBeau, Daniel Martin,

Chloe Moynihan, Angelena Osiecki, Colman Radowicz, Kailee Roncone, Ayden St. Martin, Mary Thibault, David Thibodeau, Kayla Velez and Dana Warren

### Grade 12 First Honors

Megan Adams, Timothea Antonio, Matthew Brouillard, Timothy Cahill, Brandon Couture, Anjou Edwards, Nicholas Elias-Gillette, Ava Gaida, Jonah Graves, Devin Lemay, Kaylee McConnell, Aidan Moynahan, Anna Puttick, Zachary Roy, Ambria Stine, Josephine Taylor and Nicholas Tudryn

### Grade 12 Second Honors

Nickolas Brisson, Maura Campbell, Owen Connor, Chase Corbeil, Ashley Cortis, Lydia Donatelli, Abby Hennessy, Alice Jenkins, Olivia Jones, Emma Kraus, Evan O'Malley, Diana Perez, Aoife Reynolds, Brennan Stortz, Olivia Urbanek, Sedona Williams, Elena Wojcik and Olivia Young

### Grade 13 First Honors

Caleb O'Malley

## ASSE seeks host families for foreign exchange students

ASSE International Student Exchange Programs, a non-profit, public benefit organization, invites 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 experience 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 hosting an exchange student or becoming an exchange student abroad, should call Alina at 1-800-677-2773, visit [www.asse.com](http://www.asse.com) or send an email to [asseusa-south@asse.com](mailto:asseusa-south@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 host families create with their exchange student will stay with them forever.

## HCC receives grant to build nursing workforce training program

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College and its partners have been awarded a state grant worth nearly \$1.46 million to create a Certified Nursing Assistant to Licensed Practical Nurse training program to help area hospitals meet their workforce needs.

Earlier this month, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced a total of \$3.9 million in Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success grants for six initiatives representing employers and collaborative organizations across the Commonwealth. The lion's share of that money, \$1,457,143, will go to an HCC-led training program to assist 86 unemployed or underemployed individuals transition from jobs as nursing aides to positions as licensed practical nurses.

The grants, funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and distributed by the Commonwealth Corporation, aim to increase sustainable wage career pathways for Massachusetts residents facing employment barriers and improve the competitiveness of Massachusetts businesses by enhancing worker skills and productivity.

HCC's partners in the grant include

Baystate Medical Center, Baystate Wing Hospital, MassHire Hampden County, Springfield Works and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.

The multi-stage program will first train individuals as nursing aides, then help them obtain jobs at area hospitals while they continue their training in HCC's LPN program, all the while providing them with wrap-around support services. HCC already has an existing framework for CNA training through its Jump Start program, which is designed for individuals receiving public assistance.

To help leverage the state grant for the HCC-led project, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions invested \$200,000 to incorporate the voices and lived experiences of participants in the design of the program to advance equitable employment outcomes.

According to the Healey-Driscoll Administration, the grants are part of a strategic investment in the Massachusetts workforce to develop programs that support individuals facing barriers to employment, such as lack of formal schooling, language literacy, or past involvement with the criminal justice system.

## R.H. Conwell Elementary School announces events

WORTHINGTON – A Valentine's Dance will be held on Friday, Feb. 9 from 6-8 p.m. in the R.H. Conwell Elementary School, 147 Huntington Road.

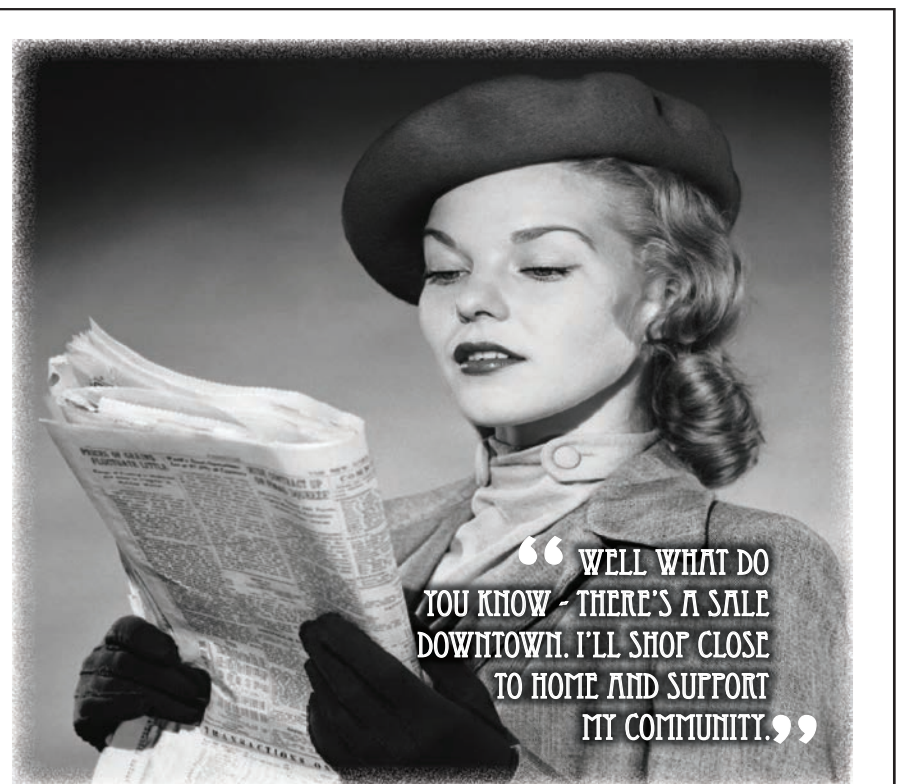
Volunteers are needed to help with set up and clean up. Those interested in helping should contact the office at [louellet@hr-k12.org](mailto:louellet@hr-k12.org).

The new last day of school, due to the snow day on Jan. 24, is Preschool June 6 and for K – 6 June 13.

Girls On The Run program will be held during session three. The

spring season will begin March 11 and the 5K will be sometime during the first weekend in June. Participants will practice on Mondays and Wednesdays.

They should register by Friday, Feb. 16 so staff will know if they have enough students to have a team this spring. Registration is now open and the link to register is available by visiting [www.girlsontherunwesternma.org](http://www.girlsontherunwesternma.org). They should use the discount code "Conwell" to have the registration fee waived.



## SOME THINGS NEVER GET OLD

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## SCHOOLS & YOUTH

# Gateway announces new middle/high school principal

By Wendy Long  
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – William D. Sullivan, Ed. D. has been named Principal for Gateway Regional Middle and High Schools.

Sullivan was hired as the Assistant Principal in the fall of 2022. He served as Interim Principal starting Jan. 2, 2024 and was officially named to the post later that month following a candidate search.

Last fall, former middle/high school Principal Jason Finnie informed Superintendent Kristen Smidy that he was leaving public education after his contract expired in June. “He respects Gateway and the work ahead with the Barr Foundation so he wanted to give me as much notice as possible, which I really appreciate,” Smidy said.

Because other fields might not follow an academic schedule, meaning Finnie might leave for a new position before June, Smidy informed Sullivan that he would be named Interim Principal after the December break. At that time, Finnie would move into a Central Office role to fulfill some of the obligatory grant work that was no longer completed by Martha Clark, who had returned to teaching.

“There was a lot of thought and coordination that went into this,” Smidy acknowledged. “Filling the principal position at the midyear point ensured that the high school could continue to grow, particularly with the opportunity through the Barr Foundation.”

Before coming to Gateway, Sullivan taught social studies at Williams Middle School in Longmeadow. He earned a Bachelor’s Degree at Rivier University, where he double-majored in history and psychology. He started law school, but realized early on that it was not for him.

A friend invited him to visit a school for a day and he knew immediately that education was the right fit. Sullivan completed two Master’s programs: the first in Secondary Education and Social Studies at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire; the second in Curriculum and Teaching from Fitchburg State University. He completed his doctorate in education through an online school in Virginia.

Sullivan said he had finished his doctoral program and was looking at jobs when he noticed an Assistant Principal post for Gateway and read through Superintendent Kristen Smidy’s “Entry Plan,” where she stated her educational priorities were differentiated instruction, supporting the whole child, and community engagement. “The post caught my attention because my dissertation had been on all three topics,” Sullivan said, which prompted him to submit an application.

“I didn’t know much about Gateway when I applied, but when I came here for the interview and tour, I fell in love with the school, the staff and the students.” In short, Sullivan felt that Gateway was perfect for him and he has, in fact, been very happy in the district.

In his second year at Gateway, the district won a planning grant through the Barr Foundation. This one year grant is dedicated to transforming education in American High Schools. This planning year has involved data collection and visits from outside experts to assess what’s working well and what could work better, for its students.

After reporting back to the Gateway team on their findings, the Barr Foundation matched Gateway with schools around the country that are doing exemplary and innovative work in these areas. Teams of Gateway staff and parents have formed to visit schools and Sullivan himself just returned from school tours in San Diego, California and Yuma, Arizona.

“We are focusing on supporting students in ways that have real purpose behind them to prepare kids for life after high school,” Sullivan said. “I think the Barr Foundation has given us really meaningful feedback and data about our students, staff and schools. There’s this really genuine and meaningful momentum around improving things for our students.”

This planning year with the Barr

Foundation is for “visioning,” dreaming of what Gateway can become. At the end of the year, Gateway will submit a proposal to the Barr Foundation for items they’ve chosen to implement to improve the school. At that point, they will be considered for ongoing funding from Barr to move forward. “It is really cool to have this idea of what school could be for kids. It’s a really cool process to undertake.”

When asked what he thinks the best part of working here is, he immediately responds, “Everything – students are involved in everything. They’re just awesome and willing to help. They are engaged and willing to advocate for themselves and lead.”

The staff, Sullivan said, are committed to supporting the students. “They care. They have true empathy for the students. He also feels that the community rallies around the school. “It is a great place to come to work every day. I try to give 100% every day because I know the staff and students do, as well.” He added that his colleagues across the district, including other administrators and the superintendent, are very supportive.

The job is not without its challenges. Sullivan says there is always the unknown on the state budget and especially how it affects rural schools. “The \$15 million, statewide for rural school aid, last year was a great step forward, but there could be a lot more.” The commission that studied the fiscal shortfalls of rural schools called for \$64 million in Rural School Aid to level the playing field.

Other challenges on the horizon are things like a need for a new roof, a substantial investment and, in general, being at a point where there are still a lot of unknowns about the Barr Foundation work. “With that comes a lot of excitement, but also unease about what is next,” Sullivan acknowledged. “It can cause some anxiety, but people should also be excited about the future.”

Sullivan is married to his wife Laura and they have two children: a 3-year old daughter named Kennedy and a one-year old son named Jacob. He said his family



William D. Sullivan, Ed. D. has become the Principal of Gateway Regional Middle and High Schools. Turley photo by Wendy Long

loves coming up here for games and plays and events. “Even though we don’t live here, they feel really welcome,” Sullivan said, adding that Kennedy is still talking about last spring’s play at Gateway.

The Assistant Principal vacancy that Sullivan’s promotion left has been filled on an interim basis by Middle School Adjustment Counselor Kylie-blu Crawford. Sullivan said that they will conduct a search in the spring to fill the position.

In the meantime, Sullivan is grateful to be an educator and to have found his way to Gateway Regional Middle/High School.

“We’re small but we’re like a mighty school. I’m glad to be a part of it.”

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## CHESTER



Tammy Merenda, a local falconer, will be at the Hamilton Memorial Library in Chester with her red-shouldered hawk, Ptolemy. *Submitted photo*

## Bird of prey to visit library

CHESTER – Acting Director and local falconer, Tammy Merenda will be at the Hamilton Memorial Library, 195 West Main St., on Thursdays from noon-3 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. for the month of February.

Ptolemy, a red shouldered hawk will be visiting the library to help raise awareness of birds of prey and talk about

the challenges they face. More in depth program on the sport of falconry will be held after the falconry season ends.

All are invited to come to the library on Thursdays from noon-3 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. during February for a close-up view of this majestic bird. Dates are Feb. 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24 and 29.

## Western Mass Hilltown Hikers announces event

CHESTER – Snow Day in Chester will take place Saturday, Feb. 24 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Participants should park along Ingell Road and Abbott Hill Road. Signs will direct them where to park.

The hike rating is fun. People are invited to join the Western Mass Hilltown Hikers and the Chester Hill Association for a fun, family snow day on the beautiful mountain top location of Chester Hill.

People may tube or sled on the large sledding hill. People should bring their own, but a few will be available to borrow.

There are cross country ski trails and snowshoeing in open fields and through wooded paths. People should bring their equipment. There will be a large bonfire all day, hot chocolate and cookies. This is an outside event so dress for the cold.

Donations are appreciated to support both non-profits. People should register per car load by vis-

iting <https://westernmasshilltownhikers.ticketleap.com>. Maps and bottled water are provided. Well behaved dogs on leashes are allowed. Suggestion donation is \$10; event is volunteer lead.

More details are available by visiting [www.hilltownhikers.com](http://www.hilltownhikers.com). People may email [westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com](mailto:westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com) or call/text 413-302-0312 if they have any questions. For more hike information email [westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com](mailto:westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com) or call/text 413-302-0312. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Meetup, YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest, Threads and Twitter (X).

Tees, hoodies, hats, patches and photos will be for sale at the event. The free catalog of printed hiking maps will be there too.

People may see events, maps, blog and photos by visiting [www.hilltownhikers.com](http://www.hilltownhikers.com). Participants are reminded to keep beautiful places clean and carry in and carry out.

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## GILMAN

from page 1

Western Massachusetts and participants in one of the most pivotal reckonings in human history: the Nuremberg Trials.

I met Mrs. Gilman at the encouragement of her son, Lee. I had happened upon the Kelso farm in North Chester on a hot July day when blueberries seem as if they are already half jam. Lee Gilman offered me the unsaleable blueberry seconds as he discerned that anyone, who had picked 20 pounds of them must have a very specific task in mind. I sat and had tea with Mrs. Gilman and found her utterly present and positive about her life both past and present.

As Mrs. Kelso Gilman recounts it, the first Kelsos were Scottish Presbyterians, seekers of religious freedom who came to the US in 1780 by way of Ireland. They landed in Boston, and her first U.S. ancestor, Hugh, went to Worcester and then came to North Chester in search of cheap land. This was by no means easy farming as anyone can see from the boulders and rock walls everywhere that attest to Colonial era persistence.

“There was land available,” she says. “He cleared it and hoped to have lots of sons. Oxen were the only way to use land and get rid of rocks.” The family grew potatoes and apples but still it was hard. “This was not even subsistence farming. The family always did something else for cash money.”

That something else also tied into the history of work in the region. Her mother’s family, the aptly named Millers, ran a mill on one of the branches of the Westfield River. “There’s a little bit of the dam left,” she says. “My great grandfather made rolling pins and potato mashers out of local wood. He even made buggy whip handles and delivered them to Westfield, which at that point had twelve whip making factories.”

Back at the farm on Bromley Road, her parents grew potatoes, apples and made maple syrup and regularly brought eggs to the store. Her parents made the three mile trip to the general store in Huntington, which was where the Comfort Kitchen restaurant now operates. She remembers a shoe store, drug store and a butcher with sawdust on the floor. You had to ask for everything in the general store and even cornflakes did not yet come in a box, but were mea-



This is a recent photo of the Kelso farm, which has been in the same family since 1780.

Photos by Kathryn Koegel

sured out by the grocer.

Her parents got their first car in 1925 and her father became Chester’s superintendent of streets in the 1930s and oversaw the conversion of dirt roads to paved ones. She learned to drive on the earlier incarnation of Bromley Road which was even steeper than the present one. “Oh, to have to shift in the middle of the hill to get up that road.”

Though her father had only an eighth grade education from the one room schoolhouse that still stands in North Chester, her parents encouraged her educational pursuits. “A car would take those of us who lived up here to Chester Factory Village where the high school was. I was top of my class, but of course the class only had 20 people in it. The principal convinced my parents that I was smart and should go to college.”

College for her was in what was then the very far away Massachusetts State College in Amherst, the precursor to UMASS. She lived in the Chi Omega sorority house and studied what was considered suitable for young ladies, home economics. She started in 1939 and by December of 1941, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, “the men were gone. My graduating class had 300 people.”

Her goal pre-war was to do what her mother had done and become an Extension Service worker. The U.S. Department of Agriculture trained legions of women to go into homes or in her mother’s case, use her own to teach women about nutrition, managing a household and cooking economically. “We helped farm people come up to date on cooking and nutrition.” She doesn’t remember the Great Depression being all that bad in the Hilltowns as so many people raised their own food and knew how to preserve it.

While at college, she made a decision that would take her far from the Hilltowns and make her a part of the biggest event of the 20th century – W.W. II. She married James Gilman, who was in ROTC. “Jim was at the top of his class and got an honorary appointment to the Army. It was like he went to West Point and he started his military career as Second Lieutenant.” He would end his career working for the Pentagon where he had risen to the rank of Colonel.





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## PITTSFIELD

### Downtown Pittsfield presents Restaurant Week Feb. 16-25

PITTSFIELD – Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. will host Downtown Pittsfield Restaurant Week during and in conjunction with the City of Pittsfield's 13th Annual 10x10 Upstreet Arts Festival from Feb. 16-25. Seventeen restaurants and bars in downtown Pittsfield will be participating.

Events include the one-night only return of Trivia with Double Entendre, hosted by Kevin Pink and Steve Rogers,

on Tuesday, Feb. 20 at 7 p.m. at Thistle and Mirth. This event is free to attend. There will be prizes for top teams. Pizza and beer will be available for purchase.

Downtown Pittsfield Restaurant Week will feature a Dining Passport to encourage people to dine in as many restaurants as possible over the ten days. Patrons will receive a sticker on their passport for each unique place they dine, with each sticker being an

entry into a prize drawing for restaurant gift cards from all 17 participating restaurants. The passport will be available at participating locations the week of Feb. 16.

Participating restaurants include: 101 Restaurant & Bar, BB's Hot Spot at The Lantern, Brazzucas Market, Dottie's Coffee Lounge, Espetinho Carioca, Hot Harry's, Hot Plate Brewing Co., Jae's 7 Winter, LuLu's

Tiny Grocery, Marie's North Street Eatery and Gallery, Methuselah Bar and Lounge, Otto's Kitchen & Comfort, Patrick's Pub, South Street Pizza House, The Marketplace Cafe, Thistle and Mirth and Tito's Mexican Bar & Grill.

For additional information, people may visit downtownpittsfield.com or call Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. at 413-443-6501. Follow @downtownpittsfield on Facebook and Instagram for updates.

## OTIS

### Transfer Station closed Feb. 19

OTIS – The Transfer Station will be closed on Monday, Feb. 19 for President's Day.

The Transfer Station will be open on Tuesday, Feb. 20 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

## CHESTERFIELD

### Hilltown Market offers food giveaway

CHESTERFIELD – Hilltown Community Development Corporation, 387 Main Road, and their Hilltown Market have a grant, which must be used by May.

So they decided to make all produce, milk, eggs, and meat absolutely free. This offer is for everyone, but once the funds are exhausted, the free food will end.

They are on a mission to gather donations for the upcoming "Golden Ticket" program next summer. This initiative provides a \$150 gift card to community members facing food

insecurity. Thanks to last summer's grant, they distributed around \$30,000 worth of free food to neighbors. While there's no news on a new grant for next summer, HCDC is working to find an alternative funding source.

With the Local Food Purchasing Assistance grant, they aim to cover CSA shares for those in need through partnerships with farmers. Additionally, HCDC will be delivering around \$80,000 worth of locally grown products to Hilltown Food Pantries over the next 18 months.

## MIDDLEFIELD

### Blossom Center announces events

MIDDLEFIELD – The Community Center at 16 Bell Road, will offer two Singing-bowl Soundbath meditations this month: a special Valentine's Day one on Wednesday, Feb. 14 at 5:30 p.m. to focus on the heart chakra, as well as the usual last Saturday of the month, Feb. 24 at 5:30 p.m.

The usual schedule of activities are Second Sunday, Feb. 11 collaborative

cooking starting at 3 p.m. with meal at 5:30 p.m. Third Friday Crafts night on Feb. 16 at 5:30 p.m. might include other things, since the leading craft coordinator is away on vacation.

Third Monday Potluck Dinner, on Feb. 19 will be at 5:30 p.m. And the last-weekend Brunch on Sunday, Feb. 25 will be 11:30 a.m. People may view the calendar of events by visiting [www.blossomcenterma.org](http://www.blossomcenterma.org).

### Town Clerk list election information

MIDDLEFIELD – The Town Clerk announces the last day to register to vote for the Presidential Primary is Saturday, Feb. 24 from 9-11 a.m. and 3-5 p.m.

Early voting along with voter regis-

tration is on Saturday, Feb. 24 from 9 to 11 a.m. and 3-5 p.m. Early voting will also be held on Sunday, Feb. 25 from 9-11, a.m. and on Monday Feb. 26 from 1-6 p.m.

### Middlefield Fair holds fundraisers

MIDDLEFIELD – The Middlefield Fair fundraising pancake breakfast will be at Middlefield Town Hall on Sunday, Feb 11 from 8-11 a.m.

Also, the Fair is hosting a penny social on Saturday, Feb 24, at Huntington's Stanton Hall, from 6-9 p.m. Doors open at 4 p.m. For

early ticket orders or to drop off prize donations, people should visit [www.MiddlefieldFair.org](http://www.MiddlefieldFair.org). Snow date March 2.

Next month's pancake breakfast will be held on Sunday March 10. This is an opportunity to meet neighbors, eat tasty food and support the Fair.

### Council on Aging lists Valentine menu

MIDDLEFIELD – The Middlefield Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail, on Wednesday, Feb. 14 will serve lunch at noon.

The menu is eat in or take out. The choice is mushroom chive quiche

or turkey noodle soup, French bread, green bean casserole and sugar cookie.

reserve a meal the previous Monday, Feb. 12. Suggested donation is \$3.

## CUMMINGTON

### Friday Night Cafe presents pre-Valentine Day show Feb. 19

CUMMINGTON – A pre-Valentines Day show with Elric Walker will take place Friday, Feb. 19 from 7-9 p.m. at the Village Church, 32 Main St.

The show entitled "Songs of Romance and Adventure" features Walker, a multi-instrumentalist, fantastic songwriter and singer. His music is by turns direct and driving, dreamy and lyrical, sweet and warm, rough and ready. The man has substance and style. He also promises Valentines Day flowers and a door-prize drawing.

The Village Church is located in downtown Cummington in the heart of the Cummington Cultural District. The event is free and donations are appreciated. Snacks

are provided and people may bring their own drinks.

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

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

## MONTGOMERY

### Ed the Wizard to appear at library

MONTGOMERY – Ed the Wizard will appear at the Grace Hall Memorial Library, 160 Main Road, on Thursday, Feb. 22 starting at 6 p.m.

In this program, library patrons will

build their own glider as they learn basic aerodynamics and the forces that affect flight. They will then test their piloting skills with loops, banks and even straight and level flight paths

## NORTHAMPTON

### Forbes Library lists upcoming events

NORTHAMPTON – Forbes Memorial Library, 20 West St., announce February events.

Kids' Gaming Club will meet Friday, Feb. 9 from 4-5 p.m. in the Community Room. This is children ages 7 to 12. They can hang out with other gamers and play the library's Nintendo Switch.

Every Friday, kids ages 7-12 can join us in the Community Room to hang out with other young gamers. On Saturday, Feb. 10 the Hosmer Gallery will be open. Paintings by

Lori Lynn Hoffer; Mixed Media by Don Carter and Dora Dylanne Reyes are on exhibit.

The Ukulele Strum Group meets Saturday, Feb. 10 from 10 a.m.-noon in the Coolidge Museum.

Ukulele Strum Group is a community ukulele club, part of the larger Pioneer Valley Ukulele Community, who meet weekly at Forbes Library in Northampton to sing and play together.

Art and Craft Supply Swap meets Saturday, Feb. 10 from noon-2 p.m. in the Arts and Music Department.

## STOCKBRIDGE

### Grange to hold community dinner

STOCKBRIDGE – The Stockbridge Grange is having a community dinner on Sunday, Feb. 18 with take out only from noon-1:30 p.m.

The dinner features roast pork, mashed potato, vegetable and coleslaw with dessert choices of chocolate cream or lemon meringue pie. Dinner is \$15. per person and is take

out only with 12-1:30 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. Reservation deadline is Thursday, Feb. 15.

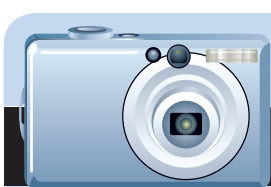
Grange Community Dinners are designed to raise money for non-profit projects and building maintenance.

## HAYDENVILLE

### Sen. Mark staff to hold office hours

HAYDENVILLE – State Senator Paul W. Mark announces his staff will host office hours in Williamsburg for one day on Tuesday, Feb. 13 from 1-3 p.m. in Town Offices, 141 Main St., Haydenville. Residents of any of the 57 municipal-

ities in the Senator's Berkshire, Hampden, Franklin, and Hampshire District are encouraged to share ideas on current or potential state legislation, or to ask for assistance with issues involving any state agency. Appointments are not required.



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## REGION

# RMV provides update on implementation of Work and Family Mobility Act

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles provides an update on the first six months of the Work and Family Mobility Act.

Since the law went into effect on July 1, the RMV has issued 91,961 new learner's permits and 54,952 new, first-time driver's licenses to Massachusetts residents.

"Since the Work and Family Mobility Act was implemented in July, thousands of Massachusetts residents have been able to get licenses helping provide access to friends, families, and their communities," said MassDOT Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt.

"We are especially proud of the language and interpreter assistance provided to applicants, underscoring our commitment to helping all eligible applicants. We'd also like to thank our non-profit and community partners for assisting the Registry with public education about the new law, which helped to enhanced customer service options," said Tibbits-Nutt.

The amount of new learner's permits represents an increase of 244% and new driver's licenses represents an increase of

120%, when compared to the same time period in 2022. In addition, 33,648 out of state conversions were processed.

To accommodate increased customer volumes, the RMV hired more than 250 front line staff and road test examiners. In addition, the RMV expanded service by extending hours Monday through Friday and offering appointments on Saturdays at many service center locations. The RMV opened additional road test locations in Holyoke, Revere, Cambridge, Franklin, Worcester and Brockton, contracted temporary third-party providers to handle increased volume for those newly eligible to obtain a license, and contracted with a driving school company to offer tests at their business locations in West Boylston, Avon and Framingham.

Over the past several months, the RMV has identified and created informational resources specifically to help guide new customers as they begin the process to secure a Standard License. To further support this effort, the RMV has also worked directly with immigration advocacy groups, non-profit organizations and

impacted communities to facilitate and coordinate public outreach and to solicit feedback on implementation efforts so that best practices can be adopted.

The RMV also offers a pre-registering system that establishes a proactive process for booking appointments. Rather than checking the RMV website for an appointment, customers will be able to request an appointment online and will receive an email with a unique link when an appointment is available for them to schedule.

The RMV remains committed to providing quality services to all communities and has been working diligently to develop informational resources, which include:

An informational website with helpful information on the WFMA, details identification requirements and outlines steps which must be undertaken by eligible individuals to get a Standard Class D or Class M driver's license, including successfully passing a vision screening, and scheduling separate appointments for a learner's permit and road test. This site was launched in 2023 because the

Registry is committed to supporting the needs of newly eligible applicants.

A special informational phone line, 857-368-WFMA (857-368-9362), to hear messaging in multiple languages.

The RMV has also worked on additional ways to support residents by:

Translating materials into 15 languages, permits available in 35 languages and interpreters (phone and in-person) available in 100 plus languages.

Expanding call center staffing by 50 percent and adding a temporary, dedicated WFMA inquiry line operated by a vendor with live customer service representatives.

Expanding staffing at customer service centers by 50 percent and expanding hours of operation at many locations to include Saturdays and some evening hours.

More than doubling the number of road test examiners, adding temporary road test sites, and expanding hours for road test operations at many locations.

For more information, people may visit [Mass.gov/WFMA](https://www.mass.gov/WFMA) or call 857-368-WFMA (857-368-9326).

## Girl Scouts has new CEO

HOLYOKE/WORCESTER – Following an extensive and thorough search process, Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts announces the appointment of Theresa Lynn as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Lynn brings with her a wealth of experience in non-profit leadership, having most recently served as Senior Vice President of the United Way of Central Massachusetts where she focused on fundraising, communications and some large grant making opportunities. Her dedication to community engagement is evident through her roles as the executive director for Back on My Feet, addressing homelessness and job insecurity in Boston, and as the executive director for ReadBoston for an impressive 14 years. She currently serves as a board member for the Worcester Education Collaborative and BioBuilder Education Foundation.

"I've long been a fan of Girl Scouts' legacy experiences from outdoor adventure to the iconic cookie program and an admirer of the cutting-edge STEM initiatives that create one-of-a-kind experiences," said Ms. Lynn. "I'm thrilled for the opportunity to join Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts and work alongside the staff, adult volunteers and community supporters who are deeply committed to serving today's members in exciting, future-focused ways because the need for female leadership has never been greater."

Theresa Lynn holds a Master in Public Administration from the Harvard

Kennedy School, a Master in Business Administration from Boston University and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the College of Holy Cross. Her contributions in the community have been recognized by the Boston Celtics, who presented her with a Heroes Among Us award, and by the Boston Business Journal, which acknowledged her as a Top 40 Under 40 leader in Boston.

Nicole Messier, Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts Board Chair, expressed the organization's excitement, stating, "We are so proud to welcome Theresa to the Girl Scouts family. Her proven leadership, innovative vision, and unwavering commitment to empowering young people align seamlessly with the values that define our organization. We are confident that under her guidance, GSCWM will continue to thrive and inspire the next generation of leaders. We're thankful to the search committee for their diligence in selecting a leader who shares our commitment to fostering a supportive and empowering environment for the members we serve. We look forward to the positive impact Theresa will undoubtedly make as she leads us in fulfilling our mission of developing girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place."

With Theresa Lynn at the helm, Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts is poised to embark on a new chapter of growth, innovation and positive influence in the 186 communities it serves.

## Berkshire communities receive awards

Berkshires communities received 19 awards totaling \$8,824,400.

These projects will support 103,108 square feet of commercial development and leverage \$92,676,989 of private development. Projects will also create 85 new permanent jobs. The projects will support 204 new units of housing in the Berkshires.

Berkshires award totals broken out by grant program: MassWorks Infrastructure Program – \$5,860,000, Housing Works Infrastructure Program – \$30,000, Underutilized Properties Program – \$900,000, Urban Agenda Grant Program – \$100,000, Community Planning Grants – \$140,000, Collaborative Workspace Program – \$50,000, Rural and Small Town Development Fund - \$1,669,400, Massachusetts Downtown Initiative – \$25,000 and Commonwealth Places – \$50,000.

Berkshires communities that received awards were: Greater Easthampton Chamber of Commerce \$50,000; The Sphere in Northampton \$100,000; Berkshire Innovative Center in Pittsfield \$50,000; Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. in Pittsfield \$50,000; City of Pittsfield \$50,000; Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in Pittsfield \$90,000; town of Williamstown \$25,000; town of Blandford \$100,000; town of Cheshire \$890,000 and \$472,600; town of Dalton \$1,000,000; town of Great Barrington \$1,000,000; town of Lee \$250,800; town of Monterey \$446,000; Alander Group in Great Barrington \$450,000; AM Management in Pittsfield \$200,000; Collaborative for Education Services in Northampton \$100,000 and Blackshires Community Empowerment Foundation Corp. in Pittsfield \$100,000.

## Grants announced for safe streets

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announced that nearly \$18 million in additional 2023 grant funding is being awarded to 11 communities and two planning agencies as part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program. The Program was established through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and includes approximately \$5 billion in appropriated funds to be awarded over the next five years. The additional grant awards will be going to planning and infrastructure initiatives to improve road safety in a number of locations, including over \$14 million for the City of Boston.

"We continue to be grateful to the U.S. Department of Transportation and our congressional delegation for their support through Safe Streets and Roads grant funding awards like these," said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. "MassDOT will continue to partner with communities throughout the Commonwealth support projects and programs for these grants. We are particularly proud that these awards align so well with MassDOT's multimodal safety and travel goals."

The SS4A program funding awards can be used to improve roadway safety by supporting communities in developing comprehensive safety action plans based on a Safe Systems Approach, conduct data analyses, and implement projects and strategies that seek to significantly reduce or eliminate transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries involving pedestrians, bicyclists, micromobility users, motorists, public transportation customers, users of

personal conveyance, and commercial vehicle operators. Additionally, awarded funding can also be used to support robust stakeholder engagement to ensure that all community members have a voice in developing plans, projects, and strategies.

The announcement made by the U.S. Department of Transportation and MassDOT awarded grants to the following communities and Regional Planning Agencies: Westfield – \$200,000, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – \$1million and Pittsfield – \$310,000.

Earlier this year, MassDOT announced that 21 municipalities and Regional Planning Agencies in Massachusetts received grant awards through the first two rounds of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program. The recipients of these first two rounds of funding awards included Berkshire Regional Planning Commission – \$198,593.

The Safe Streets and Roads for All Program projects are approved based on including specific timelines and projects for implementation, specific prioritization criteria, and incorporation of the Safe System Approach.

For more information about the award announcement, people may visit <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/ss4a/announcement>.

For the full list of Safe Streets and Roads for All Awards, people may visit <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/ss4a/2023-award>

For more information about the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program, people may visit <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A>.

## MassDOT expands shared use paths in 2023

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces approximately 20 miles of shared use paths opened in 2023 for the first time, expanding multimodal connectivity and opportunities for recreation across Massachusetts while enhancing pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Throughout the course of 2023, MassDOT completed dozens of roadway projects that added new bike lanes, sidewalks, shared use paths and crosswalks. Additionally, MassDOT continued to support improvements in school zones and the expansion of shared paths and trails through programs like Safe Routes to School, Shared Streets and Spaces, Complete Streets and MassTrails, which have all helped to prioritize investments in municipalities to create safer, multimodal travel.

"I want to commend our dedicated teams at MassDOT for the progress they made over the course of 2023 to give our communities more miles of multimodal connectivity," said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. "These projects are designed to make our transportation network safer, more practical and more inclusive for all users. We have many achievements to be proud of and great momentum for 2024."

The 20 miles of shared paths that opened in 2023 was the result of completed projects, either constructed by MassDOT or jointly funded through the MassTrails program, along 14 different trails across Massachusetts. Some notable projects include the following:

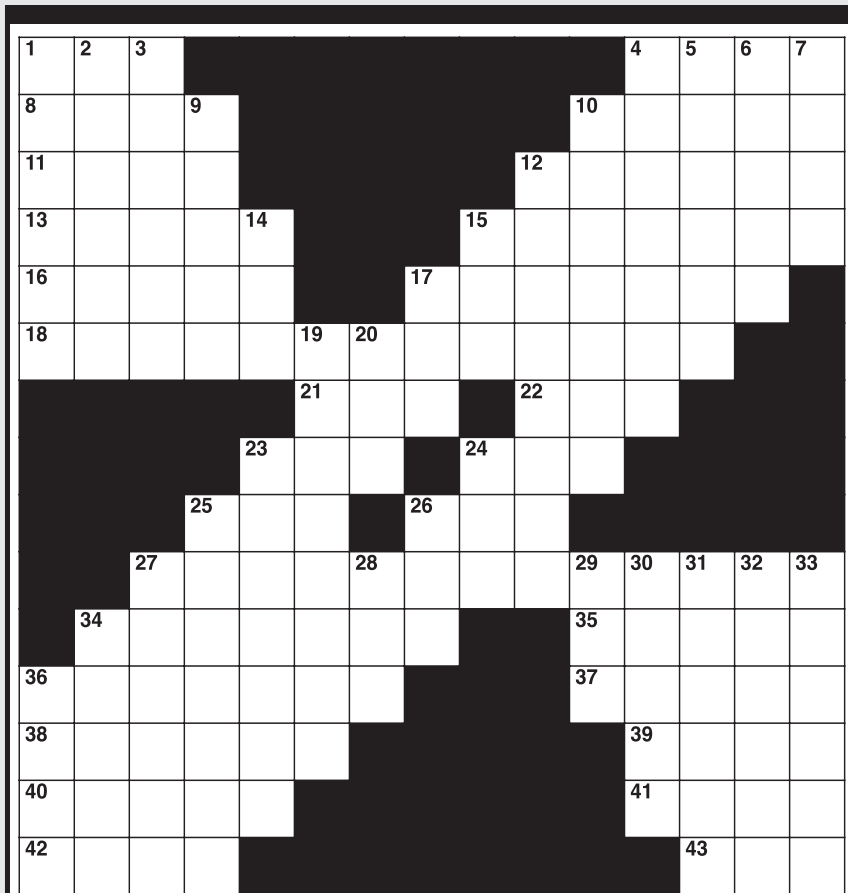
Local projects include Columbia Greenway Rail Trail extension in Westfield and Mohican Trail in Williamstown.



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www.turley.com



**CLUES ACROSS**

- 1. One point south of due east
- 4. Coagulated blood
- 8. Fortifying ditch
- 10. Devotee of Hinduism
- 11. Trunk of a tree
- 12. Bank note
- 13. Capital of Guam
- 15. Study again
- 16. Covered with hoarfrost
- 17. Opening
- 18. Legendary Rolling Stone
- 21. Stray
- 22. Computer storing system
- 23. Signal
- 24. Pitching

**CLUES DOWN**

- 25. Human being
- 26. Malaysian isthmus
- 27. The "Blonde Bombshell"
- 34. A gland
- 35. Bluish greens
- 36. Endangered
- 37. Three-dimensional
- 38. In a way, precipitated
- 39. God associated with dissolution
- 40. Blemished
- 41. Flow or leak slowly
- 42. Disco legends The Bee \_\_\_\_\_
- 43. Midway between south and southeast

**CLUES DOWN**

- 1. A way to board
- 2. Get down
- 3. Highly seasoned sausage
- 4. First day of month
- 5. Eurasian shrubs
- 6. The organ that bears the ovules of a flower
- 7. Small lake
- 9. Belief
- 10. Sunrooms
- 12. Metric weight unit
- 14. Vasopressin
- 15. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
- 17. One-time family room staple
- 19. Got back

**CLUES DOWN**

- 20. Anger
- 23. Sang merrily
- 24. Sea eagle
- 25. Military men
- 26. Kilo yard (abbr.)
- 27. Found in the sea
- 28. Protects from weather
- 29. Type of medicine
- 30. City along the Rhine
- 31. Animal disease
- 32. Martini ingredients
- 33. Get away
- 34. Lack of disunity
- 36. One-time European Commission officer

# THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

**ARIES**

Mar 21/Apr 20

There is a new person in your life who may become a source of inspiration. It's a new year and you are ready for all the novel experiences you can encounter.

**CANCER**

Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, you tend to be good about not letting work life bleed into your personal affairs. However, this week you may need to have some carryover to accomplish all that lies ahead.

**LIBRA**

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, use whatever opportunities you have to speak to older family members and jot down the memories they have. Time is fleeting and you want to learn all you can.

**CAPRICORN**

Dec 22/Jan 20

Dreams have been entertaining and awfully vivid lately. But you can't put too much stock in them. They may simply be your subconscious mind trying to work through things.

**TAURUS**

Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, you could be feeling more grounded in your personal life than you have in some time. The people you surround yourself with accept and love you unconditionally.

**LEO**

Jul 23/Aug 23

Some good news may arrive that will put you on cloud nine, Leo. Just don't let this enthusiasm distract you from getting all of your business wrapped up on time.

**SCORPIO**

Oct 24/Nov 22

Surround yourself with people who bring positivity into your life, Scorpio. It is alright to take inventory and distance yourself from others who do not generate positive vibes.

**AQUARIUS**

Jan 21/Feb 18

Express gratitude when you are gifted something both thoughtful and expensive. This is something you have had your eye on for some time but never purchased yourself.

**GEMINI**

May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, if a suggestion goes against your instincts, give it careful consideration nonetheless. This person may have some good ideas that you may not have thought of.

**VIRGO**

Aug 24/Sept 22

A charming person may come into your life this week, Virgo. At first he or she may be a whirlwind and confuse you for some time. Eventually, you may catch on and go with the flow.

**SAGITTARIUS**

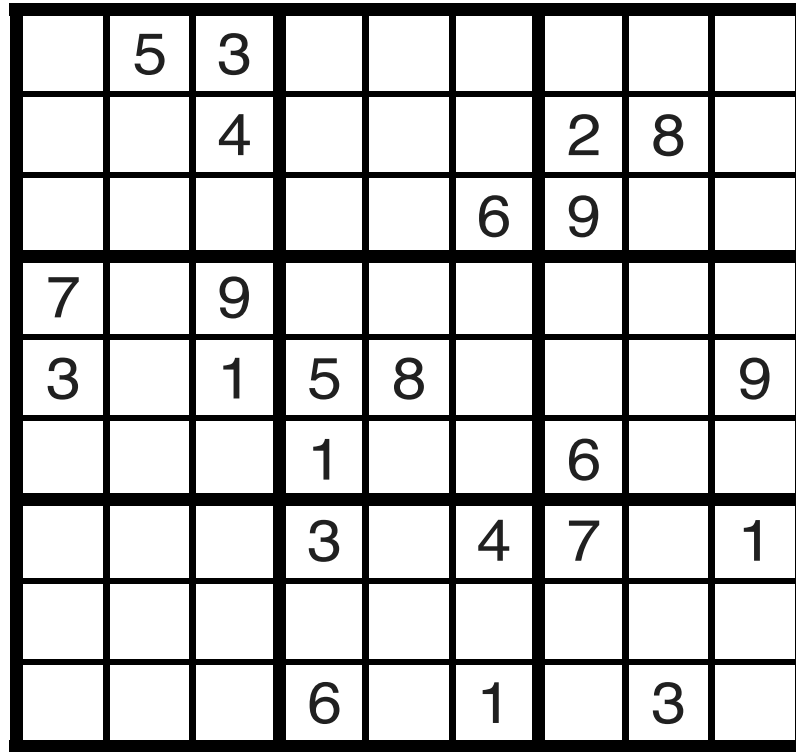
Nov 23/Dec 21

People who believe they have a lot of power are going to be all around you. Don't fall prey to any intimidation tactics. Continue to do your own thing.

**PISCES**

Feb 19/Mar 20

You're likely to be very busy soon enough. Some loud and busy people may come into your life. It may prove hard to find a quiet moment afterwards.



# 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**

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# OBITUARIES

## Robert A. Gauthier, 86

1937-2024

CHESTER – Robert A. Gauthier, 86, of Chester, passed away on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024 at Noble Hospital in Westfield.

He was born on June 10, 1937 in Chicopee. Bob was the son of the late Alfred and Bertha (Dombrowski) Gauthier. He worked at Cortland Grinding Wheels and later was the co-owner, with his wife, of Charlie's Garage and Carm's Restaurant in Chester.



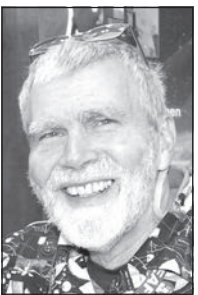
Bob was a U.S. Air Force veteran. He was pre-deceased by his wife, Mary (Leo) Gauthier, who died in 2022. He is survived by his sons, David and his wife, Donna and Donald, all of Chester. Services will be held at a later date. Visit: [cierpialmemorialfuneralhomes.com](http://cierpialmemorialfuneralhomes.com). Cierpial Memorial Funeral Homes 413-598-8573

## Ronald Woodland, 81

Ronald Woodland, 81, passed away on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024 surrounded by loved ones.

Born in 1942 to parents Olive and Victor Woodland, one of Ron's earliest passions was for astronomy. Olive often told stories about little Ronnie sneaking out of their house in Waltham to stare up at the stars through his new telescopes.

All this stargazing only fueled Ron's enthusiasm for the world and everything in it. From meticulously hand-crafting his own telescopes, to building his own houses, to flying sailplanes and skydiving, to singing in numerous musical groups, to playing perfect renditions of "Greensleeves" on one of his dozen recorders, to going on nature and birding hikes, to petitioning to have street lights dimmed so the nighttime stars shone brighter, to sharing his vast knowledge of astronomy in classrooms and planetari-



ums and beyond, Ron always demonstrated an immense capacity for life.

In his later years, faced with mounting health concerns, Ron never closed off from life and the people in it. Instead, he inspired many by continuing to open and to grow, showing that real growth has little to do with the condition of the body and everything to do with expanding your heart and mind to take in and embrace all that life has to offer.

Ron, predeceased by brother Lawrence Woodland, leaves behind three sons: Andrew, Matthew, and Nathaniel and three grandchildren, Emily, Harrison and River.

A celebration of Ron's life will be held Sunday, Feb. 11 at 2 p.m. at the Village Church in Cummington for people, who knew him. In lieu of flowers, we welcome donations in Ron's honor to the Mass Audubon.

## DEATH NOTICES

### GAUTHIER, ROBERT A.

Died Jan. 29, 2024  
Services at a later date

### WOODLAND, RONALD

Died Feb. 3, 2024  
Celebration of Life Feb. 11 at 2 p.m.  
Village Church of Cummington

## 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 \$225, 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](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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

## GOSHEN

### Town clerk list voter information

GOSHEN – The Monday, March 5 Presidential Primary is just a few weeks away.

The last day to register to vote for the Presidential Primary is Saturday, Feb. 24. There will be in person voter registration available in the Town Clerk's Office, 40 Main St., that day from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. and 3-5 p.m. People can also register to vote by visiting [www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/).

There are three options for casting a ballot for the primary. Vote in person, on election day, March 5 from 7 a.m.-8 p.m. in the John James Memorial Hall.

Vote early in person on Saturday, Feb. 24 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. or Monday, Feb. 26 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. in the John James Memorial Hall.

Vote by mail. Every registered voter should have received a prepaid post card from the Secretary of the State's office, asking if they'd like to vote by mail. If they'd prefer to vote in person, just discard the post card. No action needed. If they do want to vote by mail, the Town Clerk must receive their application by Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 5 p.m. in order to have their ballot mailed to them.

If people didn't receive the vote by mail post card, they can request a ballot using the State portal: Mail-In Ballot Registration Status : visit [state.ma.us](http://state.ma.us) or go to Massachusetts Vote by Mail Application ([state.ma.us](http://state.ma.us)) to print out an application. (Once filled out, it can be emailed, mailed or dropped off at my office. People may also request a vote by mail ballot by writing a letter to the Town Clerk, 40 Main St. Goshen, MA 01032. People should include their name and address, the election(s) for which they are requesting a ballot and their signature. If they need the ballot mailed somewhere other than their home, be sure to provide that address. Please allow ample mail-

ing time for this application and for the ballot. The ballot must be returned to the Town Clerk's Office by close of the polls on election day in order to be counted. Ballots that arrive after that time even if they are postmarked on or before Election Day will not be counted.

The Town Clerk reminds to return the 2024 Annual Street Listings that were mailed to each household in early January. If people haven't received one, they can find printable blank copies on the Town Clerk webpage by visiting [www.goshen-ma.us/annual-street-listing/](http://www.goshen-ma.us/annual-street-listing/) or email to receive another at [clerk@goshen-ma.us](mailto:clerk@goshen-ma.us). They should fill out information for everyone who lives in their house, sign and return to: 40 Main St. Goshen, MA 01032. Responding to the street listing will keep people on the active voting list if they are registered to vote.

Also, people should register their dog(s) before licenses expire Sunday, March 31. Neutered/ spayed dogs cost \$5 each to register; intact dogs are \$10. Dog licensing forms were mailed with the street listings and can also be found by visiting [www.goshen-ma.us/dog-licenses/](http://www.goshen-ma.us/dog-licenses/).

To register their dog(s), they can stop by during office hours Monday from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. and bring cash or check, valid rabies certificate, and spaying/neutering certificate, or mail the dog license form, fee(s) and certificate(s) along with a stamped self-addressed envelope for the return of the license(s) and tag(s) to: Goshen Town Clerk, 40 Main St., Goshen, MA 01032.

They may also drop the paperwork off in the town clerk drop box, located to the left of the door to the town offices.

People may email Town Clerk Kristen Estelle with any questions or concerns at [clerk@goshen-ma.us](mailto:clerk@goshen-ma.us) or call 413-268-8236, extension 107.

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The applicant should have a working knowledge of accounting theory and accrual concepts along with strong organizational, interpersonal, and analytical skills as well as experience with Microsoft Office. Previous experience using MUNIS accounting software is a plus. Complete job description can be found at <https://townofpalmer.com/jobs>. Please e-mail a cover letter and resume to [gpotter@townofpalmer.com](mailto:gpotter@townofpalmer.com) or via mail to the Town Accountant's Office at 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA 01069. This position will remain open until filled.  
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The Norcross Wildlife Foundation in Wales is looking for a part-time (16 hours/week) **Administrative Assistant** to assist with operations and office management duties. For a full job description, please visit [www.norcrosswildlife.org](http://www.norcrosswildlife.org) or email [dgugliotti@norcrosswildlife.org](mailto:dgugliotti@norcrosswildlife.org).

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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



Tom takes a look at one of the best fishing spots on the East Branch.



Hikers prepare to cross the overflow of Jackson Swamp.



Frankie and Cybill rest on a moss covered boulder. Submitted photos

## Hikers follow Snowmobile loop

CHESTERFIELD – Saturday’s Flash Hike took the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers on the Snowmobile Loop starting at the Chesterfield Gorge then taking the 2.5 mile loop up the mountain where we passed Jackson swamp, the climb was half a mile until the trail leveled.

On the descent, the trail follows an impressive stone wall and brook with views of the gorge valley. Total loop 6.5 is miles returning on the

East Branch Trail.

The East Branch Trail from the Chesterfield Gorge in Chesterfield just off Ireland Street offers great winter hiking, snowshoe and cross country skiing! Along the East Branch of the Westfield River, this long distance trail if followed the entire 9.5 miles ends at the Knightville Dam in Huntington. The trail closer to the dam is usually underwater until the spring melt is

over so it is best to start at the gorge in winter.

The Chesterfield Gorge was formed by glacial melt and carved the deep canyon in the bedrock. Potholes can be found in the river bottom. The old bridge remains, which can still be seen, was the old Post Road that ran from Boston to Albany. In 1835, floodwaters swept away the bridge along with some nearby grist and sawmills.



The Hilltown Hikers travel the East Branch Trail.



Liz and Frankie the Frenchie look over Chesterfield Gorge.

## WORTHINGTON

### HIGHLAND CATTLE DON'T SEEM TO MIND THE WINTER



These Scottish Highland cattle, prized by Queen Victoria, are living their best life at Kinne Farm in Worthington. Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel

## SOUTHAMPTON

### PATRICK BINNALL WINS SILVER IN SKI RACE



Patrick Binnall of Southampton won the Silver Medal at the Vertical Challenge Ski Race at Ski Butternut on Saturday, Jan 27. He raced in the U 6 boys division and qualified for the finals at Jay Peak in April. Pat also received a Chewy Award. This is awarded to the skier with the best attitude and sportsmanship and is selected by the Vertical Challenge staff. Submitted photo