

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

School committee looks at budget

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Gateway Regional School Committee had their first look at the Fiscal Year 2027 budget during their February monthly meeting.

Originally on the calendar for Wednesday, Feb. 11, the meeting was postponed to Wednesday, Feb. 25 when the committee was unable to reach a quorum. Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo said that the first run at the budget for the next school year came in with an 11% increase, well over their goal of a 2.44% assessment increase to the towns.

She explained that many numbers are still preliminary and that three items are especially impacting the budget: \$845,000 for outgoing school choice, high vocational interest and staff health insurance. Gateway has long been a member of the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, which has been struggling financially and has dipped into its reserves to cover increasing pharmaceutical costs and increasing member claims. Eight member

organizations left HCGIT in December, which is now working with a consultant to rebuild its financial base and bring the organization back to a sustainable future. In December news coverage, a newspaper reported that member organizations saw their health insurance premiums rise by 20% last October.

Matarazzo said that Gateway's preliminary health insurance information from HCGIT for the coming fiscal year shows an increase of 12.48%. While certainly challenging, it was down from earlier projections of 16% and 20%, she said. Health plans, however, will have higher deductibles and copays and the district will soon be negotiating with all bargaining units on this issue. HCGIT has also secured reduced prescription drug pricing from CVS and has eliminated GLPI's (weight loss medications) from its benefits.

Matarazzo's presentation showed that 35 of 66 eighth graders have expressed interest in attending vocational school next year. It is not yet known

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BLANDFORD

COA hosts luncheon

Stepping out of a vehicle in the Town Hall parking lot, the subtle aroma of homemade meatballs and spaghetti sauce waft the fragrance. Enter the building and it's so much stronger and the mouthwatering begins.

Joann Martin has truly mastered the Town Hall kitchen and it succumbs to her bidding every meal.

Sculpted meatballs with the sauce and pasta grace the plate along with Brussels sprouts and mushrooms.

Some folks just do not care for Brussels Sprouts, but it's not because they are

not cabbage fans and the Brussel sprout is a member of the cabbage family. It turns out it's a genetic trait. People either like a Brussel sprout or you don't. Food and Wine says, "some people have a genetic variant that causes them to have more taste receptors and sensitive to phenylthiocarbamide in Brussels sprouts which makes them "Supertasters" or unusually aware of bitter tastes.

There was fresh garlic bread accompanying the meal. Dessert was a raspberry ice-cream sun-

COA, page 6

OTIS

Lenny Alexander celebrates 100th

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Leonard "Lenny" Alexander was honored by his family, friends and the town of Otis for turning 100 this year, with a luncheon held Wednesday, Feb. 25 at Town Hall.

The event was hosted by Otis Council on Aging staff Karen Yvon, director and Kendra Rybacki, chairman and outreach coordinator. Well-known area musician Larry Southard, also an Otis Selectman, provided music and the event was catered by Richard's Grinders in Westfield.

Early life

Lenny's life in Western Mass began with his father's remarkable story of being sponsored to come to America after working on the Panama Canal for two years. His father landed in Chester to work on the railroad and raise a family. Leonard, who was three when his mother died, grew up in the woods and near the West Branch of the Westfield River, where he and a buddy decided to "learn to swim" by swimming across the river. At a time when more people still drove horse-drawn carriages than cars,

Lenny's children said they'd heard stories of the



Otis resident Lenny Alexander was celebrated with a luncheon on Feb. 25 for reaching his 100th birthday. He is shown here just after blowing out the candles on his cake. His daughter, Rita Butler, sits to his left.

roads being rolled, not plowed, in winter to compact the snow for winter sleighs. Most of the hills in Chester also had water troughs for the horses.

Lenny served his country as a signal man aboard a U. S. Navy Destroyer Escort for 2-1/2 years between 1943 and 1946. This ship's job, he explained, was to protect a fleet of ships moving war supplies. It was equipped with sonar to detect enemy submarines and sent depth charges to destroy them. "We saved many, many American lives by doing this," Lenny recalled.

In 1948, he married his wife Winifred. Together, they would live in Chester and Pittsfield, before permanently moving in 1979 to a

ALEXANDER, page 10



Turley Publications photos by Wendy Long

Oldest son Glenn, left and his wife Kim sat with youngest son Kurt, right and his partner Susan Heath.

HUNTINGTON

Town announces timeframe in place for removal of unregistered vehicles

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

At their Wednesday, Feb. 25 Select Board meeting, Chairman Roger Booth, member William Hathaway, and Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin heard the results of an energy audit on its six biggest buildings and to discuss a plan to move forward on removing unregistered vehicles at 32 Russell

Road, in violation of a town zoning bylaw.

John McVeigh was unable to attend. Huntington resident Rob Drabiuk attended the meeting, to learn more about the town's needs and with a possible eye to joining a town committee. In opening a meeting with Police Chief Brian Kowal and Frank Pero concerning the unregistered vehicles, Booth said, "The zoning bylaws are pret-

ty clear. We know you've been working with Brian (Kowal). We wondered if there is anything we can do and where we might go from here?"

Pero said he is the person in charge of the property and pays the taxes on it. "It wasn't a debris field until Huntington's heroin problem took away my five-bedroom home," Pero said, referencing a house fire some years

ago. Pero confirmed that there are still two campers, one jeep and one Volkswagen bus on the property, explaining that no one was willing to take them as junk because their bills of sale went up in flames with the house.

Booth acknowledged this, adding "We are extremely happy with what you've done with the lot. It is a vast improvement over what it was. We need to get it

down to one vehicle. We are able to help you as you've shown due diligence. When can you get it down to one vehicle?"

After a back and forth discussion, everyone agreed to a deadline of Friday, April 3, which would be revisited if we incur a big, late snowstorm. Booth asked Pero to communicate with the police chief if there's an unforeseen delay.

Energy audits

Peter Malloy from NV5 discussed the energy audits he conducted on the town's six largest buildings: the two fire stations, highway garage, Stanton Hall, Town Hall and the library. In his report, Malloy discussed several easy, low-cost fixes insulating boiler pipes and installing programmable

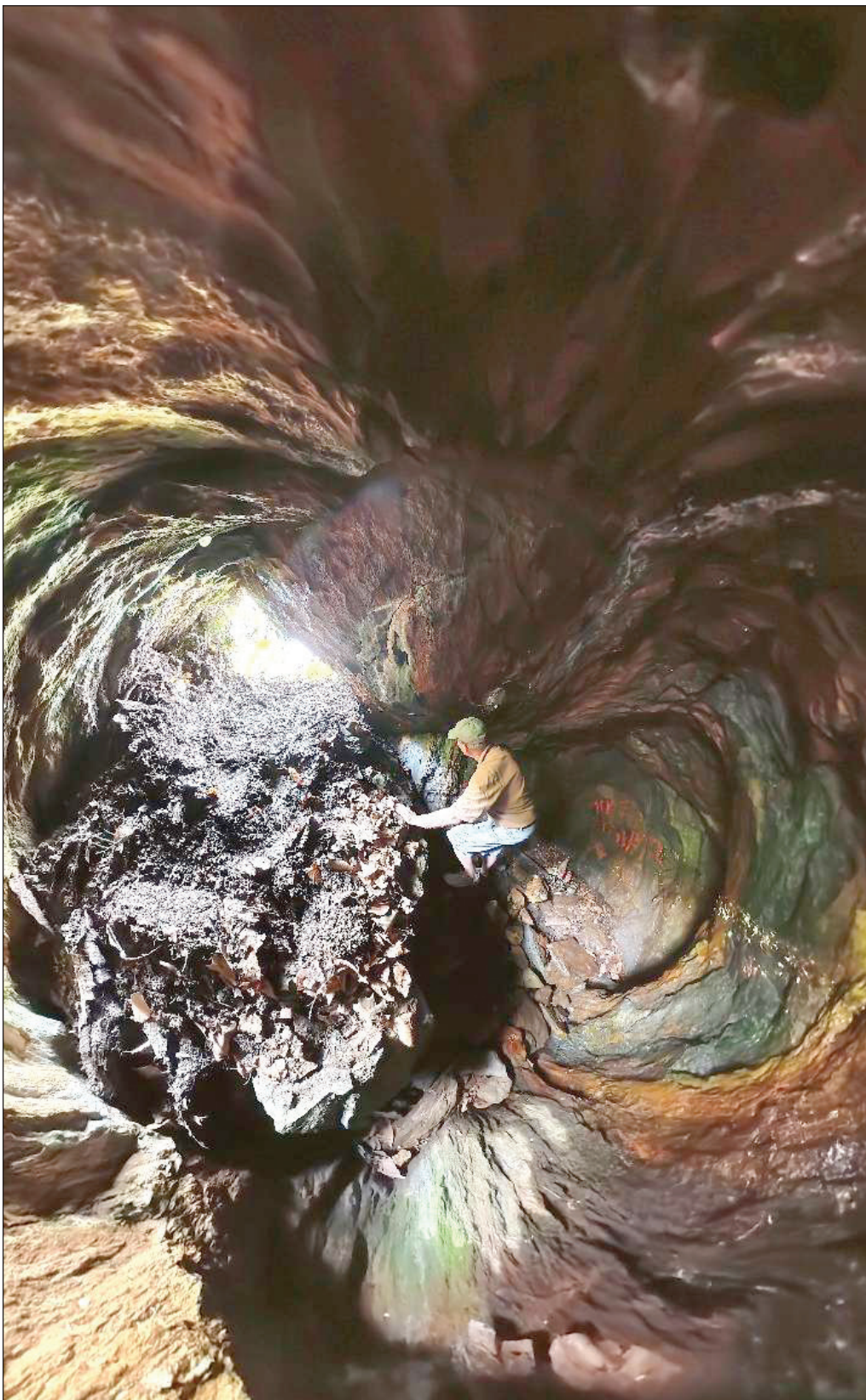
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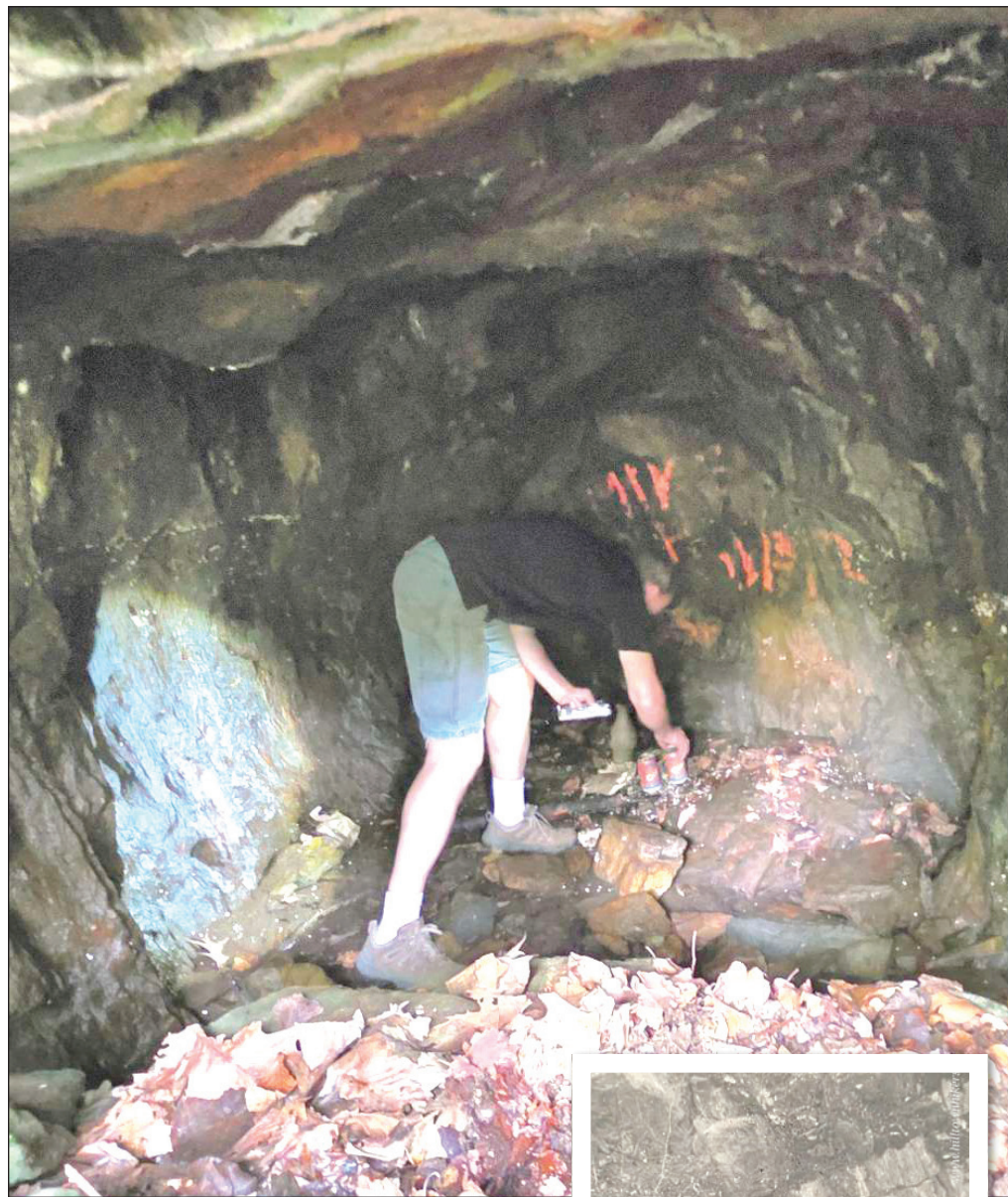
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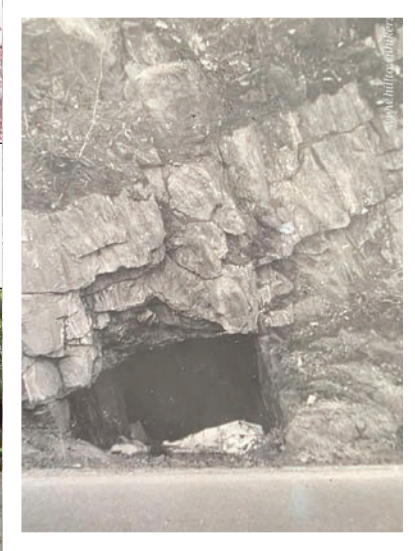
HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Jim Moore feels right at home sitting in this old lead mine.



Above, Russ checks out the drill holes and 1970s era trash. Right, This photo found at Chester historical gave the Hilltown Hikers the clues they needed.



Hilltown Hikers visit old lead mine

State highway workmen in 1929 while widening a road in Chester made a discovery of mine abandoned in 1865. In Chester, on Nov.17, employees of the Lane Construction corporation of Meriden,

Connecticut, who are engaged in the task of widening and filling the road in preparation for the building of a new state highway, uncovered the entrance to an old black lead mine near Red Bridge, two miles east of the town. The mine was at first believed to be for copper and a part of the prospecting activity of the late Dr Harmon S. Lucas, who discovered emery ore in these hills.

H. L. Pomeroy, one of Chester's oldest residents, says that is is a lead mine, operated by a Mr. Truesdell on property owned by Enos Smith. The mine was soon abandoned in 1865 because of the poor quality of the product. The entrance was blocked by timbers and later completely obliterated by a landslide.

The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers adventure this fall was to seek and find this mine. Hidden out of plain sight on busy Route 20 in Chester by brush and some dirt, we followed the vertical rock smeared with iron stains to what might be an entrance.

Digging out a few loads of dirt from the edge of the road an opening appeared. The cave like entrance of course welcomed them and they went right in for a peek at the chamber. The main room was a mere 15 feet wide with another smaller chamber to the left. Drill holes were apparent.

A few old remnants from the 1970s were found, soda cans and an old lantern looks like that was the last time anyone ventured in here. It is rumored that there are even more tunnels in this mountainside with an entrance at the top.



Jim crawls out of the mine entrance on Route 20 in Chester.



The entrance is just a mere three feet from the road.

Submitted photos

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Country Journal
OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries. One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place. The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice (with a word limit of up to 500 words) and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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

WILLIAMSBURG

Meekins hosts paintings and collages exhibit

WILLIAMSBURG – The Meekins Library, 2 Williams St., during the month of March will host paintings and collages by Joy Kinigstein in the Neil Hammer Gallery at the library.

Inspired by an art exhibit of paired portraits, originally intended as diptychs, though separated sometimes for centuries. When they were reunited later, a more complex, complete narrative was observed than when they were viewed independently. Haydenville artist, Joy Kinigstein was moved by the exhibit to create this show. There will be an artist's reception on Saturday, March 21 from 2-4:30 p.m.

Submitted photo

This painting is by Joy Kinigstein and will be on display at the Meekins Library during the month of March. An artist's reception will be held on Saturday, March 21.



HILLTOWNS

John Velis named 2025 Senator of the Year by ADDP

BOSTON – During a virtual gathering hosted from the Massachusetts State House, the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers honored Senator John C. Velis with the association's 2025 Senator of the Year award.

The Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers represents more than 130 statewide organizations, their staff and the individuals and families they serve. Senator Velis was selected for this award by the association for his longtime commitment to strengthening disability services and supporting this essential human services workforce.

"Senator Velis' commitment to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been evident since his earliest days in public service," shared Stephanie

Costa, President and CEO of the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers. "ADDP and our provider members are deeply grateful for his steadfast leadership to championing policies that strengthen disability services and support the human services workforce that so many vulnerable residents rely on."

As Senator Velis is currently on an active-duty deployment with the Massachusetts National Guard, his Director of Communications and Community Engagement Caitlyn Letourneau-Jancsy accepted the award on his behalf, which was made locally by an artist from Riverside Industries in Easthampton.

"Senator Velis is truly so passionate about advancing policies that improve the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well

as the amazing professionals who work with them each day," shared Caitlyn Letourneau-Jancsy during the award ceremony. "The Senator often shares how proud he is that his first vote as an elected official was to strengthen protections for people with autism, minutes after being sworn into the House of Representatives. His commitment is evident not only through his backing of policies and funding but also in the ongoing relationships he has built with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout our communities."

The Office of Senator Velis shared that the Senator is honored to be recognized in this way and looks forward to sharing his appreciation with the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers and the award's artist upon his return home.

Fiber artists to hold Numo fascinating, felting workshops

To celebrate World Fish Migration Day, The Nature Conservancy and Wild and Scenic Westfield

River Committee will offer, three separate Nuno Felting Workshops with fiber artist Marjolaine Arsenault

on Sunday, March 29 in Windsor, Saturday, April 25 in Becket and Saturday, May 2 in Chesterfield.

All workshops will be from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. People that live or work in one of the ten towns served by the Wild and Scenic Westfield River Committee – Becket, Chester, Washington, Middlefield, Huntington, Chesterfield, Cummington, Worthington, Savoy or Windsor should reserve their spot soon.

To reserve a spot, people should email westfieldriver@gmail.com and mail in their \$35 material fee. Waivers are available if this fee is prohibitive. Participants must be 18 or older and able to stand and wet felt for the 9-5 p.m. workshop.

The pieces they create together will be part of an Art Show at the Becket Art Center from Saturday, May 16 through Sunday, June 14 as well as photos of the work will be submitted to The World Fish Migration Art Show online by visiting <https://worldfishmigrationday.com/about> and then of course go home with them, the artist.



Submitted photo

This is an example of Numo felting, a felted salmon scarf.

BECKET

MassDOT announces I-90 bridge repairs

BECKET – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces bridge repairs will take place on I-90 eastbound and westbound.

All work is weather dependent and will take place at the following locations and times:

Bridge repairs in Becket will be conducted on I-90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 20.0 now through Friday, March 6 from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Appropriate signage, law enforcement details and advanced message boards will be in place to guide drivers through the work area. Drivers traveling through the affected areas should expect delays, reduce speed, and use caution. All scheduled work is weather dependent and subject to change without notice.

For more information on traffic conditions, travelers are encouraged to: Download the Mass511 mobile app or visit www.mass511.com to view live cameras, travel times, real time traffic conditions, and project information before setting out on the road. Users can subscribe to receive text and email alerts for traffic conditions. Dial 511 and select a route to hear realtime conditions. Follow @MassDOT on X, formerly known as Twitter, to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.

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RUSSELL

Hoogs holds program

RUSSELL – The Russell Public Library, 161 Main St., welcomes Robert Hoogs, for his presentation "Henry Knox on the Trail... The Dawn of a Nation" on Saturday, March 14 from 2-4 p.m.

Hoogs is a resident of Monterey and an amateur local historian. He is currently President of the Monterey Historical Society, Chair of the Monterey Historical Commission and a board member and past president of the Bidwell House Museum. He is also currently Chair of the Board of Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area – "Housatonic Heritage."

Hoogs will present Henry Knox's "Noble Train of Artillery," following the route that Knox and his teamsters traveled from Fort Ticonderoga through the "Greenwoods" from Monterey through Blandford and Russell to Westfield on their way to Boston. The story will continue with the cannons being placed on Dorchester Heights forcing the British to evacuate Boston on March 17 and the subsequent historical events of local and national significance. Knox's amazing military career following the success of this mission will also be discussed.

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GUEST COLUMN



I lost money as a widow and ex-spouse by not knowing the rules

Dear Rusty:

I just found out, as someone who was collecting widow's benefits on my second husband, a very small amount, for some time, that I was, all along, entitled to divorce benefits from my first husband, which are much more. I thought I had to wait until my first husband passed before I could collect anything from him. Now I learned I have the right to collect as a divorcee. All of these years I have been missing out on a bigger benefit because I didn't know this. Please make this clear and stress it for others in my position.

Signed: Lost Benefits

Dear Lost Benefits:

I am truly saddened that you lost out on benefits from your first husband for such a long time. Although you could not collect an ex-spouse benefit from Husband #1 while you were married to Husband #2, as soon as your current husband died you again became eligible for ex-spouse benefits from Husband #1.

Basically, the rules say you cannot collect benefits from an ex-spouse if you have remarried and remain married. In other words, you cannot be "currently married" to collect benefits from an ex-spouse. But the death of Husband #2 meant that you were now eligible to collect ex-spouse benefits from your first husband - husband #1. I hope when you later filed for your ex-spouse benefits you asked for six months of retroactive benefits.

In your situation, when your Husband #2 died, you actually had a choice - either collect your surviving spouse benefit from your recently deceased husband #2, or to collect a regular ex-spouse benefit from your first husband if that is more than your benefit as your second husband's widow. Regular ex-spouse benefits from your first husband are available even though he is still living (and, indeed, even if he remarried) because you are no longer married to husband #2.

This, however, is not always the way things work out for someone who has had multiple marriages. It all depends on the SS benefit each former spouse was entitled to. That's because your survivor benefit as

your 2nd husband's widow is based on the full (100%) amount he was receiving from Social Security when he died.

In contrast, your benefit as your first husband's ex-spouse while he is still living will be based upon half (50%) of his full retirement age SS entitlement. And often, 100% of a deceased person's SS benefit is more than 50% of another living person's amount. But not always.

It's important to also know that if you claim any SS benefit before reaching your personal Full Retirement Age, the monthly amount will be reduced. Benefits as a spouse (or a surviving spouse) do not reach maximum until the spouse reaches FRA, which is somewhere between age 66 and 67 depending on the spouse's year of birth.

It's also important to know that if a surviving spouse is working, any SS benefit received will be subject to Social Security's Annual Earnings Test, which limits how much can be earned before SS benefits are affected. For 2026, the earnings limit for those collecting early SS benefits is \$24,480 and, if that limit is exceeded, Social Security will take away some of your benefits. Note that the earnings test goes away when you reach your full retirement age.

Finally, be aware that if your first husband also predeceases you, you will then become eligible for a surviving ex-spouse benefit from him, even if he has remarried.

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Corrections policy

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

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

OPINION



GUEST COLUMN

Garden related chores to ease in the season

Last week I'm writing about a blizzard, while this week it looks as if the mercury is going to climb! How about our crazy New England weather?

If the sky-rocketing temps have you feeling the urge to get a jump on the gardening season, you are not alone! Here are a few tasks, straight from the archives that will get you outside, and a few more to get you back indoors, because inevitably, winter is here for awhile longer. I think.

Perform appropriate garden chores

I am usually negligent in cutting down asparagus foliage in the fall. Weather permitting, in other words, if the snow melts enough over the course of the next two weeks, I will get out there and cut it back to its base soon, then haul off the branches to prevent any bugs that overwintered there from infesting this year's spears.

It is also time to prune blueberries, apples, raspberries and grapes.

Pruning can vary depending on the age and health of your specimens. If you are not experienced at it, consult any number of good books on the subject before you head outdoors with your pruning shears and loppers.

Assess your tools

Was the rototiller running rough last fall? Perform or schedule a tune up for later this month and beat the rush. Same goes for the weed whacker and lawn mower.

Hoe and spade blades can be washed of dirt and debris then sharpened with a metal file. Medium grit sandpaper works wonders to smooth out the wooden handles of these and other garden tools.

After which, boiled linseed or tung oil can be applied to both the handle and the metal blade. It helps the wood resist moisture which leads to cracking and prevents rust on the blades.

I love my Dad's old spade. It has a great, hand-made wooden handle that is about to crack through; sure wish I had oiled it 20 years ago!



by Roberta McQuaid

If you find yourself short, you need not buy them. You can start seeds in repurposed fruit and vegetable boxes, the kind that mushrooms, strawberries and lettuce mixes come in.

They work great as long as you make a few drainage holes in the bottom.

Take inventory

Many of us have our seed orders in by now. If you don't, or if you plan to buy your seeds locally, it is a great idea to go through your leftovers.

Before you decide whether or not they are keepers, consider their age and how they were stored. My rule of thumb is that if any seed is over three years old it isn't worth the risk. Some seeds, such as those for parsley, hybrid onion, carrot and parsnip expire even sooner. These are discarded after only one year.

If seeds were stored in a moist or overly hot location, their viability can be cut short sooner than normal. If you have concerns that they might not germinate, sow a few seeds indoors in pots in a warm location and see what kind of results you get.

Nothing is more upsetting than planting seeds in the garden and having few or no seedlings come up. Time is wasted and the harvest is delayed by unknowingly utilizing dead seeds.

We can also take inventory of the various supplies we use during the growing season. How are you set on lime, grass seed, and fertilizers?

Plan to take advantage of preseason sales by knowing what you need ahead of time. Do you have enough containers, trays and labels?

Pint sized ice cream containers are perfect for a second transplanting of tomato or pepper plants. Seeds of squash or annual flowers can be sown in single serving ice cream cups. As a kid I always saved our Popsicle sticks for labeling seedlings or garden rows.

When I run out of labels, all it takes is a trip to the recycle bin to make some more.

Last year I cut them out of quart-sized yogurt containers; they were the perfect length.

Practice good garden hygiene

Disinfect any containers, labels, stakes etc. that you wish to reuse this gardening season by washing them in hot soapy water then a quick rinse of one part bleach to nine parts water. This mixture will kill any pathogens left behind from previous gardening endeavors.

Out with the old, and in with the new - all in due time!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



Country Journal welcomes Election letters to the editor

The Country Journal welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to The Country Journal, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to countryjournal@turley.com.

Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by **noon Friday** to be considered for the following Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the

newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspaper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's

Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

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

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

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HUNTINGTON

Correction on Huntington Public Library playgroups

HUNTINGTON – Information from last week's article about March events at the Huntington Public Library was incorrect.

The library will be offering two new playgroups this month. The first playgroup is

for children aged 5 and under and will be held on Monday, March 9 at 10:30 a.m. It is supported by the Friends of the Library. Each session will offer a blend of story time, engaging movement activities, hands-on experiences,

and self-care tips for parents and caregivers. Families are invited to come in to connect, play and grow together in a nurturing and supportive environment.

A second play group, in partnership with the Hilltown

Community Health Center's Family Center, will launch at the library on Friday, March 20 from 10 a.m.-noon. Also designed for children ages 5 and under, this free playgroup features engaging stories, creative arts and crafts

and plenty of opportunities for little ones to explore and play. Don't miss out on the fun. Playgroups through the Family Center are made possible through funding by the Department of Early Education and Care.

Families are welcome to attend both groups, which will meet monthly and are free of charge. In addition, the Huntington Public Library offers story hours for children on Mondays and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.

VEHICLES

thermostats; as well as more extensive projects that could be covered through Green Communities (requiring a 25% town match) and Mass Save Grants. These included switching to LED lighting, replacing boilers with HVAC Electrification systems, using infrared heaters in some areas such as garage bays and heat pump units at Stanton Hall. After discussion, the board decided to first look into the cost of potentially replacing all lighting with new LED fixtures with occupancy sensors required for grant funding.

Garage door replacements at both fire stations and the highway garage would go a long way in energy savings, Malloy said, but are not eligible for grant funding. Likewise, the single-paned windows at Stanton Hall would, in Malloy's words, "cost a small fortune to replace."

Malloy will run cost estimates on the lighting and

occupancy sensors and the town will put 25% on a warrant article to cover its share. If approved, the town will apply for grant funding in the October round.

Blandford Hill Road

In other business, Weston and Sampson won the engineering bid for the Blandford Hill Road Improvement Project, which is funded through the Fiscal Year '2025 Community Development Block Grant, outbidding the other applicants with their proposal. Hathaway said they had done this work on the Stanton Avenue Project. "It was very good work. They were very responsive," Hathaway said.

Audit report

The FY24 Audit report came in and an hour of the March 11 meeting will be dedicated to reviewing it. Booth requested that the accountant, water and sewer department, treasurer, and collector need to review and sign off on sections related to



Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long

Frank Pero worked out an agreement with the Huntington Select Board on removing unregistered vehicles from 32 Russell Road by Friday, April 3, at the board's meeting on Wednesday Feb. 25.

them, with sign offs returned by Friday, March 6.

Resignation

Peri Sossaman has resigned from the North Hall

Advisory Committee. The board reluctantly accepted her resignation and will send her a thank you for the years she served.

Confidentiality agreement

A confidentiality agreement has been drafted for all employees and board members to sign; the final version

from page 1

will be voted at the next meeting. The Finance Committee will be holding their all boards meeting on Saturday, March 7. A very early budget run shows the FY'27 budget over the levy limit by 1%.

Warrant articles

Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting warrant articles are due March 9 for the June 1 meetings. The state attorney general is supposed to respond to proposed zoning bylaw changes by March 6.

Other business

Finally, a request from Jeff Smith to involve the town in a pickup truck that is parked to impede access to the Integrity Trailer business on 38 Russell Road has been looked into. Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger has examined it and found it is not a violation of the fire code. The town's attorney has been consulted and finds this to be a private/civil dispute that the town does not need to be involved in.

PITTSFIELD

Berkshire Climate Action hosts 'Bringing Climate Action Home'

PITTSFIELD – 350Mass Berkshire Climate Action presents Bringing Climate Action Home on April 7 at Wander, 34 Depot St. Suite 101.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. to provide time for attendees to meet with and learn more about participating community organizations, speakers begin at 6 p.m. This event is free

and open to the public. This program will provide valuable resources for anyone considering home renovations, new construction and upgrading to energy efficient electrical appliances. It will include information for homeowners, landlords, and renters.

Wendy Brown, AIA, CPHD, Owner/Architect at Terra Design-Build will

address critical energy efficient design issues for new and existing homes, Mass Save, and how climate disruption impacts us locally. Joe Carry, Decumanus Green Design-Build, will offer sustainable building insight based on his local home building experience which includes net zero design/construction.

Amanda Parker, Green

Energy Consumers Alliance, will discuss the adoption of residential battery storage, window heat pumps, plug-in balcony solar and more with a focus on the needs of renters and low-income households. In addition she will outline current available financial incentives including rebates for implementing energy efficient measures.

350 Mass Berkshire Climate Action volunteer members work together to impact environmental degradation and the climate crisis at the local and state level. In recent years 350MA Berkshires Climate Action supported local efforts to convert Pittsfield's polluting "Peaker Plants" to clean energy, ensure that new school buildings are

designed sustainably for the long term and has worked on passage of statewide legislation supporting climate and social justice issues as well as clean affordable energy.

For more information visit, people may visit 350maberkshires.org or email berkshires@350mass.org. New members are welcome.

CHESTER

Chester Elementary School to hold kindergarten screening on May 8

CHESTER – The Chester Elementary School, 325 Middlefield Road, will hold kindergarten screening

on Friday, May 8 from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. for children who will be five years old on or before Sept. 1, 2026.

Parents and guardians of five year olds should call 413-685-1361 to schedule an appointment.

Hamilton Memorial Library lists events

CHESTER – Story and fun time is held every Thursday at 11 a.m. at the Hamilton Memorial Library, 15 Middlefield Road, Suite 7.

This is a great opportunity for little ones to socialize, learn new skills and have some fun. Book Club meets the third Wednesday of every month at 4:30 p.m. On March 18, they will be discussing two books. The first, "The Housemaid" by Freida McFadden is a suspenseful bestseller about a maid working for a family with secrets. The second book "Remarkably Bright

Creatures" by Shelby VanPelt is a story of friendship, reckoning and hope that traces a widow's unlikely connection with a giant Pacific octopus. There will be snacks and lively discussion. Intrinsic Movement-Let's Play, Learn a Dance welcomes back special guest, Laurel Lenski, on Thursday March 19 at 11a.m. during their regular story and fun time. Lenski always gets the fun going with her contagious enthusiasm and energy. This program is perfect for younger patrons. Free Tai Chi and Qi Gong

classes, sponsored by the Hamilton Memorial Library, welcomes all ages and abilities. The third class in the series and will be held at Chester Town Hall at 15 Middlefield Road, in the auditorium on Wednesday, March 25 from 4:30-5:45 p.m. Classes are free. People should sign up with the instructor, Doreen by emailing wellneseducation123@gmail.com leaving their name, email and phone number. If they have any questions about the content of the program, people may email the teacher.

Chester Baptist Church

Pastor Dan Herr
14 Middlefield Road
Chester, MA 01011
413-354-7743
Email: pastor@chesterbaptistchurch.org
Website: chesterbaptistchurch.org
Sunday School for all ages at 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship at 10:45 a.m.
Sunday Afternoon at 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday Evening Bible Study and Prayer at 6:30pm

First Congregational Church of Blandford

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

First Congregational Church of Chester

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

First Congregational Church of Williamsburg

Rev. Jack Kraaz
4 North Main St., Williamsburg, MA 01096
413-268-7557
burgychurch@gmail.com • burgychurch.org
Facebook:
First Congregational Church of Williamsburg
YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyH1EA-fduamqHYeekxw5w
Office Hours: Tues. - Fri. 9 a.m. - 12 noon
Days and Hours of Services: Sun. at 10 a.m.

Hilltown Community Church

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

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Your Community Church

**Holy Family Parish**

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

New Boston Congregational Church

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

Pioneer Valley Assembly of God

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

Pioneer Valley Mennonite Fellowship

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

News, photo publication policy

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

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

Deadline is Friday at NOON.

BLANDFORD

Pastor and family departing

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – The First Congregational Church of Blandford will host a celebratory fundraiser for interim Pastor Ciprian Droma and family as they prepare to return to the middle east, northern Iraq.

Pastor Ciprian has served as interim pastor for the past three years. According to the Deacons, his “dedication and unwavering commitment to serving Jesus Christ have enriched the community, leaving a lasting legacy of faith and compassion. The Droma family’s mission is to share the word and love of Jesus Christ with the people of Iraq, continuing their



Pastor Ciprian Droma and Eve Droma

legacy of service and devotion.”

To honor and support the Droma family as they begin this new chapter, the Deacons invite friends, church members and neighbors to a “special lasagna dinner celebration,” which will also be a fundraiser for the family.

Pastor Ciprian, his wife Eve and their three children, Arame, now eight, Fiorinna, five and their son, Giosue, four will be at the parsonage through April.

Reservations are required for the Saturday, March 28 dinner at 6 p.m. at the Blandford Town Hall at One Russell Stage Road. The cost is \$20 per person.

To make a reservation, people may call Ann Savery-Emo at 413-464-1685. Sean O’Clair at 413-386-6696 or Steve Hart at 413-896-2543. If anyone is not able to go to the farewell dinner, donations for the Droma family may be made by calling any of the three people listed for reservations.

Democratic Town Committee to meet

BLANDFORD – The Democratic Town Committee will meet Saturday, March 14 at 11 a.m. at the Town Hall to elect one delegate and one alternate to represent Blandford at the 2026

Massachusetts State Democratic Convention.

During last year’s Democratic State Convention in Springfield, the first one since the formation of the Blandford DTC, a video was featured with comments from two of DTC officers, Pam Dirschka and Lloyd Martin. The delegate was Greg Lanzoni and Dirschka represented the DTC chair.

It was part of the opening presentation for the convention and it celebrated newly formed DTC in

Blandford. Preparing for the 2026 Worcester Convention, there will be nomination papers at the caucus for at least eight candidates to represent Blandford at various levels.

Speakers and out of town guests at the recent monthly meeting commented that the Blandford DTC is recognized in other parts of Massachusetts for its effective and dynamic energy. Alex Rikleen, a recent guest speaker running for US Senate, compared the DTC favorably to the over 70 DTC meetings he has attended statewide.

Registered and pre-registered Democrats in Blandford, who are 16 years old by Saturday,

March 29 may vote and be elected as delegates or

alternates during the caucus. Youth, age 16

to 35, individuals with disabilities, people of color, veterans, and members of the LGBTQ+

community not elected as delegates or alternates are encouraged to apply to be add-on delegates

at the caucus or by visiting <https://www.massdems.org/caucus-and-convention>.

The 2026 Convention will be in person at the Digital Federal Credit Union Center in Worcester on Friday, May 29 and Saturday, May 30.

Any Blandford resident interested in getting involved with the Blandford Democratic Town Committee should email Judy MacKinnon at BlandfordDems@gmail.com.

Department of Conservation and Recreation announces 218-acre land acquisition

BLANDFORD – The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation announced the acquisition of 218 acres of forested land in the town of Blandford, which will now be permanently protected. The land acquisition, located west of the Chester-Blandford State Forest, strengthens the connection between existing conserved properties.

“This project strengthens an important wildlife corridor for the region and protects the biodiversity that make our forests resilient,” said DCR Commissioner Nicole LaChapelle. “By conserving this land, we are safeguarding important habitat, supporting species movement, and reinforcing the natural systems that sustain clean water, healthy forests and vibrant ecosystems for generations to come. We are grateful to our partners at the Nature Conservancy and Department of Fish and Game for their collaboration in protecting this important landscape.”

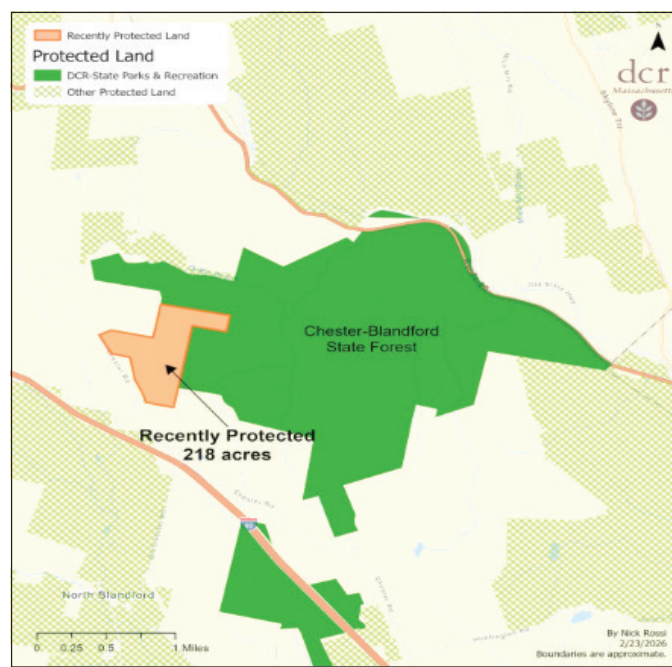
The acquisition marks the latest phase of the

Blandford Cross-Pike Nature Connector, a conservation initiative led by The Nature Conservancy in collaboration with DCR and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game to conserve land that fills gaps between larger blocks of protected conservation land along this section of the MassPike.

In the first phase of the initiative, TNC purchased 580 acres of land from a private seller with the intent to sell the land to DFG and DCR for preservation. These 218 acres acquired by DCR are a portion of that original property.

“Transferring this land will boost habitat protection, strengthen safe passage for animals and people, and build a more resilient landscape for the future,” said Kris Sarri, Massachusetts State Director of The Nature Conservancy. “We’re proud to work with our state partners to deliver lasting benefits for wildlife and the Berkshire communities that depend on these natural systems.”

“Partnership and col-



Submitted photo

The land, located west of the Chester-Blandford State Forest, will be added to statewide protected forestland, enhancing wildlife movement and public access.

laboration are essential to advance our ambitious Biodiversity Conservation Goals. We are delighted to work with DCR and The Nature Conservancy to strategically protect key habitats like this for wildlife.”

said DFG Commissioner Tom O’Shea. “By conserving large, connected landscapes, we give wildlife the best chance of keeping pace with climate shifts, all while helping people connect with nature through outdoor rec-

reation.”

The property was acquired through DCR’s Land Protection Program, which is dedicated to conserving land integral to protecting wildlife, conserving natural and cultural resources and providing recreational opportunities to the public.

The land recently acquired by DCR was identified by the Nature Conservancy as part of a crucial area for wildlife movement. DCR’s purchase and stewardship of the property will ensure that a variety of species will continue to be able to pass through this area freely. Wildlife movement will be made easier by planned improvements to culverts beneath the Mass Pike. These upgrades will create safe pathways for animals to cross under the highway, reducing the risk of accidents to both wildlife and motorists.

Today’s announcement demonstrates progress towards the state’s goals to protect 30% of the lands and waters by 2030 and 40% by 2050. Through the

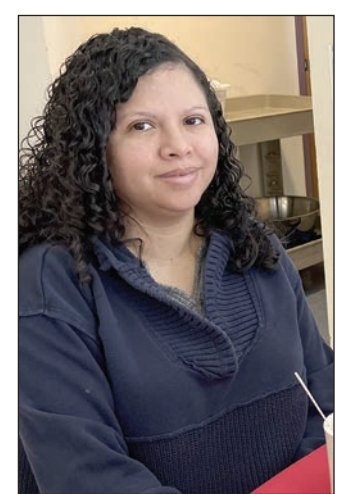
Biodiversity Goals for the Commonwealth, the state has committed to doubling the pace of land conservation to meet these ambitious targets, strategically focusing their efforts areas that are most important for wildlife. Through the Mass Ready Act, the Healey-Driscoll Administration has proposed historic investments to accelerate progress towards these goals, including \$304.5 million to support state land protection programs and \$20 million dedicated to advancing the Biodiversity Conservation Goals.

Prior to its purchase, a portion of the land had been part of a former Christmas tree farm. Today, the area is primarily forest, largely populated by sugar maple, hemlock, birch and ash trees. The land also features rocky streams, which contribute to the water quality of Saunderson Brook and the Westfield River further downstream. DCR staff have found numerous signs of wildlife on the land including deer, moose, turkeys and bears.



Turley Publications photos by Mary Kronholm

Above, serving Spaghetti, meatballs and Brussels Sprouts are, from left, Judith MacKinnon, Susan Racine, COA Director Margit Mikuski and Deborah Lundgren. Right, Town Hall colleagues, who are not regular Friday workers, came for lunch on Feb. 27. Assistant Treasurer/Collector Jordana Gonzales Mora, left and Michaela Smith enjoyed their lunches.



COA



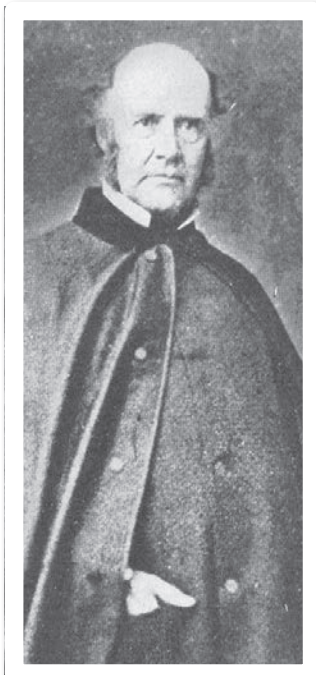
from page 1

dae – vanilla ice cream with fresh raspberries and Judith MacKinnon’s homemade seeded raspberry sauce.

Diners were well-fed

Friday at the second monthly luncheon. Luncheons are held on the second and fourth Fridays monthly and there is no charge.

Blandford Historical Society... Did You Know?



George Ashmun 1804-1870

Editor’s note: The Blandford Historical Society will submit this “Did You Know?” column on a regular basis.

George Ashmun was born on Christmas Day in 1804 to a family prominent in the town for three generations.

His grandfather, Justus Ashmun, was the first of the family to settle in Blandford in 1777; a tavern owner and member of the town’s Committee of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety during the Revolutionary War. Today Justus and other Ashmun descendants are buried in the Old Burying Ground.

George wasn’t just a small-town boy; he was a power player, who stepped out of the Berkshire hills to

navigate the halls of power and change the very tide of American history.

Architect of Lincoln’s Nomination

As the permanent chairman of the 1860 Republican National Convention in Chicago, Ashmun presided over one of the most volatile and significant political gatherings in American history. Despite not being an original delegate, he was chosen to lead because of his reputation for fairness and a commanding presence that could “still the passions of thousands.”

Ashmun successfully managed the floor as delegates moved through three ballots to eventually nominate Abraham Lincoln over the favored William H. Seward. Following the victory, Ashmun led the official

notification committee to Springfield, Illinois, to formally offer the nomination to Lincoln. This role cemented his place as a primary architect of the Republican Party’s rise to power, bridging the gap between old-guard Whigs and the new anti-slavery coalition.

Bridge to war time unity

Ashmun’s influence extended beyond party lines, most notably in his role as a diplomatic mediator during the early Civil War days. In April 1861, Ashmun personally facilitated a meeting between President Lincoln and Senator Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln’s longtime political rival. During this private conversation, Douglas pledged his full support for the Union’s war policies, a critical moment that helped

unify the North against the rebellion.

Ashmun remains the primary historical source for the details of this meeting, which effectively neutralized Democratic opposition to Lincoln’s initial military mobilization. His ability to foster high-level cooperation made him one of Lincoln’s most trusted unofficial advisors and a key player in maintaining Northern stability during the nation’s darkest hours.

Last Words of a President

One of the most poignant facts of Ashmun’s life is his direct connection to the night of Abraham Lincoln’s assassination on April 14, 1865. Ashmun visited the White House that evening to speak with the President about a legal claim. Because

the Lincolns were departing for Ford’s Theatre, the President could not meet with him at length. Instead, Lincoln hastily scribbled a note that read “Allow Mr. Ashmun and friend to come in at 9 a.m. tomorrow.” This brief message is widely considered to be the very last words Lincoln ever wrote. Ashmun’s presence at the White House in those final hours serves as a testament to his enduring proximity to the center of American power. He later served as a director of the Union Pacific Railroad.

George Ashmun died in the summer of 1870 at the age of 65 and is buried in Springfield. He’s yet another example of why Blandford is a “small town with a big history.”

NORTHAMPTON

Hosmer Gallery lists exhibit

NORTHAMPTON – The Forbes Library, 20 West St., will exhibit Lasting Impressions Artwork by Judith Wolf, Susan Byrne, Kate Jenkins and Mel Petty in the Hosmer Gallery located on the second floor and accessible by elevator.

The exhibit will be on view from Tuesday, March 3 to Monday, March 30. An artists reception will be held Thursday, March 5 from 6-8 p.m. Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Friday through Saturday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. The gallery is closed Sundays and holidays. People may visit forbeslibrary.org/info/hours for any updates.

Forbes Library competes in ‘Minute Madness’

NORTHAMPTON – This year Forbes Library, 20 West St., is competing against 18 other Massachusetts public libraries in the Fifth Annual Minute Madness, a bracket-style tournament in which they’ll go head-to-head with other libraries to see who can read the most minutes.

March 1-12 is Round 1, a “free for all” round in which they compete for one of 16 places on the bracket. This is an All-Ages competition and all kinds of reading counts: books, graphic novels, audiobooks, magazines and newspapers.

Help Forbes bring glory to western Massachusetts by reporting how many minutes you’ve read during each round via this Google form. For Round 1, please report your minutes by March 12 at 11am.

The second of two jug-

gling workshops will be held on Tuesday, March 17 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. The workshop was rescheduled from Jan. 26 and 28. People will learn the fundamentals of juggling in a relaxed, supportive environment. This beginner-friendly workshop series, led by Joseph Goldin, covers basic patterns, hand-eye coordination techniques and fun skill-building exercises.

March Saturday matinees are held every Saturday during March beginning March 7 starting at 11 a.m. in the Community Room. All film genres for all walks of life, all available to stream for free via Kanopy. Food and drink are welcome in the Community Room, people may bring a brunch.

“An Open Door: Temple Grandin (2024)” will be shown on March 7. This acclaimed documentary cele-

brates Dr. Temple Grandin’s pioneering work in animal welfare, autism advocacy and neurodiversity through her unique perspective as a visual thinker on the autism spectrum.

Other Saturday films are March 14 “My Life as a Zucchini” (2016), March 21 “Hunt for the Wilderpeople” (2016) and March 28 “Cemetery of Splendor” (2015).

Threshold Circle: End of Life Discussion with end of life doula Alison Keller and Alyssa Walters takes place Saturday, March 7 from 1-3 p.m. Registration is appreciated, but not required.

Gallery of Readers on Saturday, March 7 from 4-5:30 p.m. presents a monthly reading. This is free and open to the public. This month’s readers are Robin Barber & Kathie Fiveash.

This event will also be live streamed on the Forbes Library YouTube channel.

Chromebook Workshop Series led by Hannah Cox, digital Navigator at Northampton Open Media takes place Tuesdays, March 10 to 31 from 2-3:30 p.m. vSpace is limited; registration is required. Participants will gain new digital skills and strengthen their understanding of Chromebooks in this workshop series. Attend all four workshops to receive a Google Chromebook, free of charge. Devices will be provided for all participants.

History of Jazz Singing: The Voices and the Styles takes place Tuesdays, March 10-April 28 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. This eight-week course examines the history and nuances of Jazz singing. They’ll outline key concepts

in how vocal expression has been defined and perceived in Jazz and follow the steps in its development. It is led by jazz scholar and educator Ben Young and co-sponsored by Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares, Turn It Up and Northampton Jazz Festival.

Sourdough Class with Hearthstone Artisan Bakery will take place on Tuesday, March 10 from 6-7:30 p.m. Registration is required to attend. Nicholas D’Alessandro from Hearthstone Artisan Bakery will lead the class. He will explain exactly what a sourdough culture is, how to maintain one in a home kitchen, the common errors people make and how to incorporate it into a favorite recipe. They will take home a healthy sourdough starter for themselves. They should a small container.

STOCKBRIDGE

Chamber of Commerce elects new officers at annual meeting

STOCKBRIDGE – The Stockbridge Chamber of Commerce elected new officers and honored members during the annual meeting held at the Berkshire Botanical Garden on Wednesday, Feb. 18.

Barbara Zanetti, executive director of the chamber, said officers elected for the 2026-2027 term included President Amanda Barcnas, Prado de Lana Sheep Farm, Vice President Avie Maloney, Once Upon a Table, Assistant Vice President: Amy Oberfield, Stockbridge Coffee & Tea, Treasurer: Philip Celentano, Trustco Bank, Secretary: Kelly Palmer, Marian Service Corp. Seven others will be

joining the board as members-at-large, Michael Beck, Berkshire Botanical Garden; Wendy Pearson, Stockbridge Library Association; Douglas Goudey, Wheeler & Taylor; Stacey Gravanis, The Red Lion Inn; Margit Hotchkiss, Norman Rockwell Museum; Amy Aldrich, Tanglewood and Michelle Teillon, Chesterwood. These members sit on the board as advisory members.

Amanda Barcnas, chamber President gave thanks to members individual and collective efforts this past year. She recognized new businesses, highlighted chambers’ marketing efforts, special events and thanked the town of Stockbridge for

their continued support.

Special recognition during the evening was given to Business Member Lee Bank; resigning president, Pamela Boudreau and long-term treasurer, Douglas Goudey. For more than 170 years, Lee Bank has remained an independent community bank grounded in exceptional service, sincerity of purpose and simplicity in banking. As they have expanded across the region, these core values have remained constant. Lee Bank lives these values daily by empowering employees, supporting customers, and reinvesting in our local area. Their commitment to the community dates back to

1852; since then, their contributions and sponsorships have supported a wide range of organizations and initiatives throughout Berkshire County.

Pamela Boudreau has been an exceptionally active member of the Chamber. She has served on the chamber board of directors for the past four years as President, following one year term as Vice President and brief initial term as a Member at Large.

Douglas Goudey has been an integral part of the chamber for over 30 years. He has served in various capacities on the Executive board, but primarily as Treasurer and is now transitioning into an advisory role.

Michael Beck, Co-Executive for the Berkshire Botanical Garden, hosted the evening’s event. Established in 1934 as the “Berkshire Garden Center” and revered as one of the older public display gardens in the Northeast, Berkshire Botanical Garden is a not-for-profit, membership-supported educational organization encompassing 24 acres of land at the intersection of Routes 102 and 183 in Stockbridge. The Garden is open year-round for classes, lectures, workshops and exhibits and the display gardens can be visited daily May through October. For more information, people may visit www.berkshirebotanical.org.

Grange hosts March dinner

STOCKBRIDGE – The Stockbridge Grange is having a community dinner on Sunday, March 8 featuring corned beef and cabbage, carrots and bread with dessert choices of chocolate cream or lemon meringue pie.

Dinner is \$17 per person and is take-out only with noon-1:30 p.m. pick up at the Stockbridge Grange Hall at 51 Church St. Orders may be made by calling 413-243-1298. Inclement weather postpones the meal for a week.

Grange dinners are held to raise money for non-profit projects and building maintenance.

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) of the Town of Huntington will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, March 19, 2026 beginning at 6:30 pm** in Stanton Hall.

The Public Hearing is scheduled for 6:30 pm for the one year evaluation of the Special Permit Application of Jonathan Groff of 38 Russell Road to operate a new trailer sales, repair, parts and rental business (including U-Haul franchise) at 38 Russell Road (former Smith’s Sled Shop), Huntington, Parcel # H3-28-0.

The Special Permit Application will be available to view by appointment in the office of the Selectboard during regular business hours, as well as at the Public Hearing.

ZONING BOARD
OF APPEALS
TOWN OF HUNTINGTON
03/05, 03/12/2026

Notice of Chester Special Permit Granting Authority Public Hearing Special Permit Review for Cell Tower Modifications at 65 Old State Highway, Chester, MA 01011

The Planning Board of the Town of Chester, as the special permit granting authority, will hold a public hearing to conduct a special permit review for a proposed modification of the cell tower located at 65 Old State Highway, Chester, MA.

The public hearing will be held as follows:

**Place: Chester Town Hall,
15 Middlefield Road,
Council on Aging room
Date: March 11, 2026
Time: 5:00 pm**

The special permit review is for a proposed modification of the existing cell tower as follows: Remove fifteen antennas and six 1 5/8” coax cables. Install six 1 5/8” coax cables, two OVPs

and one 1 1/4” 3 x 6 hybrid and one 1 5/8” 6 x 12 hybrid cable. 02/26, 03/05/2026

TOWN OF CHESTER Public Hearing Monday, March 23, 2026 6:00 PM Town Hall 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA 01011

Proposed Joint FY26 CDBG Application with Holland

The Town of Chester, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, acting as lead community on behalf of itself as well as the Town of Huntington, will conduct a public hearing regarding the FY26 Community Development Block Grant Program. The hearing will take place at **6:00 PM on Monday, March 23rd, 2026, in person at the Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA 01011.** If the meeting is cancelled due to inclement weather, the hearing will take place during the rescheduled Board of Selectmen meeting.

The public is encouraged to attend this hearing to discuss the town’s joint FY26 application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for up to \$1,150,000 in available Community Development Block Grant Funds. All persons with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Those unable to attend can send written comments to the Chester Board of Selectmen, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA 01011, Attn: Andrew Alward.

The Town is encouraging input on community needs and projects which would benefit from grant funding. Projects currently being considered include a joint housing rehabilitation program, public social services and water main designs on streets potentially including Maple Street, Maple Ave, Andrews Ave and Main Street. Additional projects may be discussed and may be included in the grant application.

Persons who require special

accommodation for the hearing should contact the town at least one week prior to the hearing date at (413) 354-7760. For further information contact Joe Hagopian at PVPC at (413) 781-6045 or jhagopian@pvpc.org. 03/05/2026

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Planning Board of the Town of Huntington will hold 2 public hearings on **Monday, March 23, 2026 beginning at 6:00 pm** in Stanton Hall for changes to the Huntington Zoning Bylaw, according to MGL Chapter 40A, Section 5.

The first Public Hearing will include 1) Adding a definition for Large Scale Ground Mounted Commercial Solar installations to Section I.F. Abbreviations & Definitions, 2) Adding language to Section IV.T. ...Solar Bylaw... Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations to clarify the power source allowed for such commercial installations, 3) Changing Section V. Special Permits to specify most “Use” Special Permits to

expire (and require renewal) in five (5) years, rather than the currently specified four (4) years.

The second Public Hearing will begin at 6:15 pm and will cover changes voted in favor of at the 2025 ATM, but which may need to be voted again at the 2026 ATM because of potential procedural deficiencies in 2025 required by MGL Chapter 40A, Section 5. These changes are: 1) Removing page numbers from the Header of the Zoning Bylaw, leaving page numbers in the Footer, 2) Numerous revisions and additions, including a new Section I.V.S: Accessory Dwelling Unit Bylaw (ADU) to replace the now obsolete Section I.V.S: Accessory Family Dwelling Unit Bylaw (AFDU) required by the Affordable Homes Act, Chapter 150, Sections 7 and 8 of the Acts of 2024 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Replacing that bylaw also requires changing Section I.F. Definitions and Sections IV.B.1b. and IV.B.1e. under “Residential Uses”, 3) Minor revisions to Section IV.I. Signs, to clarify original intent of former changes and 4) Minor revisions to Section V. Special Permits, to clarify original intent of former

changes. All text changes will be available for review at the Public Hearing and at Town Hall **by appointment only** during regular business hours (Monday-Thursday 10-3).

PLANNING BOARD
TOWN OF HUNTINGTON
03/05, 03/12/2026

TOWN OF HUNTINGTON Public Hearing Wednesday, March 25, 2026 5:00 PM Town Hall 24 Russell Road, Huntington Proposed FY26 CDBG Application

The Town of Huntington, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will conduct a public hearing regarding the FY26 Community Development Block Grant Program. The hearing will take place at **5:00 PM on Wednesday, March 25th, 2026, in person at the Town Hall, 24 Russell Road, Huntington, MA 01050.** If the meeting is cancelled due to inclement weather, the hearing will take place during the rescheduled Selectboard meeting.

The public is encouraged to attend this hearing to discuss the

town’s FY26 application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for up to \$950,000 in available Community Development Block Grant Funds. All persons with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Those unable to attend can send written comments to the Huntington Selectboard, 24 Russell Road, PO Box 430, Huntington, MA 01050, Attn: Jennifer Pelouquin.

The Town is encouraging input on community needs and projects which would benefit from grant funding. Projects currently being considered include the phase I construction of the Blandford Hill Infrastructure Improvement Project. Additional projects may be discussed and may be included in the grant application.

Persons who require special accommodation for the hearing should contact the town at least one week prior to the hearing date at (413) 512-5200. For further information contact Sarah Maroney at PVPC at (413) 781-6045 or smaroney@pvpc.org. 03/05, 03/12/2026

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WESTFIELD



Submitted photos
Graduates of the 31st class of the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Chief Fire Officers Management Training Program are shown.

Westfield Deputy Fire Chief graduates MFA management class

STOW – “Dozens of fire service leaders from across Massachusetts graduated today from the 31st class of the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program,” State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine said.

This year's graduates included Deputy Chief Christopher King of Westfield Fire Department. The four-month program for

new chief officers and chief officer candidates is delivered jointly by the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy and the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at UMass Boston. Through intensive classroom instruction, challenging out-of-class assignments, and student presentations, the course delivers multifaceted training in the managerial aspects of leading a municipal fire

department.

“The Chief Fire Officer program is a tremendous opportunity for new chiefs and rising officers,” said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine, who graduated from the program in 2016. “The rigorous instruction in such a wide variety of topics will help these graduates provide the leadership that their departments and communities deserve. Completing the

program is a major accomplishment and I want to congratulate all of them on their initiative and dedication to professional development.”

The Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program covers a spectrum of topics considered essential for effective public sector management. It includes human resource management, ethics, executive leadership, governmental and

organization structures, information management, customer-focused strategic planning, legal issues, budgets and public finance, community awareness, media relations and labor relations.

The curriculum helps fire officers improve their ability to lead and manage personnel, understand employees' needs and problems, communicate effectively to a variety of audiences

and leverage inter-agency cooperation. The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, a division of the Department of Fire Services, offers this program tuition-free. The MFA provides recruit and in-service training at three separate campuses for Massachusetts firefighters and delivers courses to upward of 13,000 students at every level of the fire service each year.

FWA to hold upcoming book sale

WESTFIELD – The Friends of the Westfield Athenaeum seeks donations of gently used adult and children's books, DVDs and jigsaw puzzles for their upcoming book sale.

Donations will only be accepted by curbside drop-off at the back door of the First United Methodist Church, 16 Court St., during the weeks of April 6-11 and April 13-18 as follows: Monday, Wednesday

and Friday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday from 4-7 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m.-noon.

They will not accept musty or damaged books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, textbooks, Reader's Digest books or outdated manuals, travel book or self-help books.

The book sale will be held at the church on Thursday, April 23 from 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Friday, April

24 from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday, April 25 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. On Thursday only, they are offering a \$5 discount for educators (bring ID) and new Friends members joining at the door.

The Friends of the Westfield Athenaeum is an all-volunteer 501(C)3 not-for-profit organization that supports the programs and services of the Westfield Athenaeum.

St. Joseph's Church to host baked fish dinner March 15

ESTFIELD – St. Joseph's National Catholic Church, 73 Main St., is hosting a community dinner on Sunday, March 15 at noon.

This community dinner will feature baked fish with crumb topping, scalloped potatoes, and Cole slaw. Dessert served will be lemon

cake. Coffee and bottled water will also be available. Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under.

Everyone is welcome. To purchase tickets and reserve a place, people should text or telephone Cliff at 413-977-2007. If leaving a

message, they should provide their name, telephone number and if the meal is to go or sit down. Take-out meals-to-go will be available for pick-up at 12:30 p.m.. When ordering tickets, indicate if dinners are To-Go. Deadline for purchasing tickets is Thursday, March 12.

'Let's Get Growing!' Spring Gardening Workshops coming up March 28

By Kristin Rivers
krivers@turley.com

WESTFIELD - The Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association will be holding the 27th Annual “Let's Get Growing!” Spring Gardening Workshops on March 28 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Westfield Middle School - South.

The festivities will include a marketplace fair, raffles, an Ask a Master Gardener table, refreshments, soil testing and 10 classes to help educate and empower them in gardening this spring.

This year's topics are “Using Trees and Shrubs for Year-long Interest,” “Berry Delicious Gardens,” “Practical Tips: Growing for a Changing Climate,” “Gardening in Small Places,” “From One Comes Many: Propagation Workshop (Hands-on),” “Invasive Species 101: Identification & Management,” “Vegetables vs. Pests: How to Win!” “Design Your Own Water Feature,” “Let's Go Native: A Sustainable, Attainable Approach,” and Get your Hands Dirty: Creating a Succulent Garden (Hands-on).”

The hands-on workshops, it should be noted, are already filled.

The speakers include

Dan Ziomek, owner of Sugarloaf Gardens, Berry Specialist Laura Griffin McDermott, Plant Magic Garden Owner and Gardening for Hot People Podcast Co-Host Cheryl Rafuse, Master Gardener Chris Ferrero, Wistariahurst Gardens Master Gardener Toi Graham, Environmental Biologist at the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Jennifer Forman, Master Gardener Ed Sourdiffie, Full Circle Garden Master Gardeners Margery Gerard and JoAnne Palmer and Kessa McEwen, horticulturist and landscape designer at Berkshire Botanical Garden.

Anyone interested is encouraged to register quickly, as classes fill up fast. Mail-in registrations have to be postmarked and sent in by March 16 at \$35, online registration is through March 26 for \$35 and walk-ins are the day of at \$40 cash only.

Rosey Bonner, a member of the WMMGA and part of the Planning Committee for the event, expressed excitement for this year's workshops and said attendees have an opportunity to take two of them during the day.

“The sessions are an hour and 15 minutes long. The speaker usually speaks for an hour and then gives them a good 15 minutes because they usually have



Submitted photo Rosey Bonner

Hands on workshop making succulent container gardens

lots of questions that may not have come up in what we were talking about,” Bonner said.

On the topics, Bonner explained, “our whole mission is sustainability and good practices” and community feedback also guides this, with evaluations at the end of the workshops. A couple of this year's workshops, for example, came to be through those evaluations.

“We didn't have anything on trees and shrubs last year, so a lot of people said, ‘Can you bring back something else in trees and shrubs?’ So, the person we have doing it this year is Dan Ziomek and he's been in the industry for 20 plus years. He's currently the manager of the Sugarloaf Gardens in Sunderland,” Bonner said. “He has a

wealth of information. He will bring his truck loaded with shrubs and trees and his focus this year is make sure if you're going to use trees and shrubs, it's just like flowers. You just don't have them look good one season, you have them look good four seasons. So, he's really going to talk about what trees or shrubs might be featured for your garden or landscape over the year long. So, it's just good biodiversity, but it also makes pretty art too.”

Another topic Bonner highlighted was “Vegetables versus Pests: How to Win!” as attendees always seek a topic on vegetables.

“They talk about some common vegetables that you grow and pests or diseases that take them over. Number one, how to prevent it and number two, how to manage

insects and diseases if you get them. It's practical, useful ideas that really work,” Bonner said. “I say they really work because the two presenters, Margery Gerard and JoAnne Palmer, are both master gardeners, but more important than that, their expertise in this area comes from the fact that they are two of the people that oversee the South Hadley garden called Full Circle Garden. It's a vegetable garden and they raise way over 2,000 pounds of food in the summer for the food pantry there, so not only are they master gardeners, they have such practical, hands-on experience.”

Bonner said another concern gardeners have is invasive species in “how to identify it and what to do about it,” with the focus on spotted lanternflies, jumping worms, Japanese Knotweed and more.

“The person doing it is very careful to say manage, not completely eradicate, because sometimes, once you get these invasives in here, you can't get rid of them, but you could at least manage them. Others you catch them early enough because you've identified them early enough you can really get rid of,” Bonner said. “She is the point person for Massachusetts that watches over what plants or insects

that go on the invasive list, so she's really got her hands into this part.”

After Bonner expressed gratitude to the Western Mass community for supporting the event year after year and, also, for this year's raffle, as many community members donated items too, she added that she hopes attendees take away inspiration and ideas to help better understand biodiversity.

“They're an important part in saving our world and making a difference, and it's not mammoth things they have to do. It's small, little changes that they can do. Whether it's adding a little water feature or adding a native or addressing that invasive or adding a bush with berries for the birds, there's something that they're going to walk away with that they truly will make a difference in helping to save our world,” Bonner said. “They're taking care of our environment and that's really what we need is everybody doing a little piece.”

Bonner's message was this.

“If you're looking to get energized, inspired, get out of this humdrum of winter, come to our workshops. We guarantee you'll walk away with a smile and feeling spring is here!” Bonner said.

To learn more and to register, visit wmmga.org.



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WORTHINGTON

Library to hold book and bake sale

WORTHINGTON – The Friends of Worthington Library will host a book and bake sale at the Worthington Town Hall to raise funds for children's programming and museum passes at The Worthington Library on Saturday, April 11 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

There will be a 9 a.m. “Early Bird” admission of \$10. General admission at 10 a.m. is free. Items for sale include gently used fiction

and nonfiction books, audiobooks and DVDs. Items for all ages are available including picture books, young adult novels and graphic novels. Books are priced at \$1 each. Baked goods are available by donation. Reusable bags are encouraged. The Worthington Town Hall is located at 160 Huntington Road.

Proceeds from the event will help fund children's programs, museum pass-

es and wish list books for patrons of The Worthington Library. For more information or updates, people may visit the Worthington Library website at www.theworthingtonlibrary.com or The Worthington Library Facebook page. The Friends of the Worthington Library is a volunteer run committee established to support The Worthington Library in Massachusetts with programs and patron resources.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Elijah Howe elected into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi

BATON ROUGE, LA – Elijah Howe of Easthampton was recently elected to membership into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society, at University of Massachusetts. Howe is among approximately 20,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi

each year. Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10% of seniors and 7.5% of juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10% of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

Littleville Elementary School to hold kindergarten screening

HUNTINGTON – Littleville Elementary School, 4 Littleville Road, will hold kindergarten screening on May 1 from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The screening is for

children, who will be five years old on or before Sept. 1, 2026. Parents and guardians should call 413-685-1301 to schedule an appointment.

HRHS presents musical 'Lional Bart's Oliver'

WESTHAMPTON – Hampshire Regional High School performances of the classic musical "Lionel Bart's Oliver" by Lional Bart's are Friday, March 13 and Saturday, March 14 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 15 at 2 p.m.

All performances will take place at the Hampshire Regional High School auditorium. The production is directed by Myka Plunkett and Nicole Tripp, music directed by Graham Christian and choreographed by Engelbrecht. Students in the cast range from grades fifth-12.

Ticket prices are: \$15 adults, \$10 for seniors and children under 18 and \$5 for Hampshire Regional High School students and staff. HRHS students and staff can get \$5 tickets by visiting the main office.

Tickets are available by visiting GoFan link: <https://gofan.co/app/school/MA23946>, by calling 413-437-5582, emailing hrh-tickets@gmail.com or at



Scan the QR code to purchase tickets.

the door. There is a service fee for all tickets purchased online.

The musical program is grateful for the support of local businesses and organizations with special thanks to Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Cultural Councils of Chesterfield, Goshen, Southamptn, Westhampton, Williamsburg and Worthington for their financial support. Lionel Bart's Oliver is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International. All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

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

PRESIDENT'S LIST

Goodwin University
East Hartford, Connecticut
Lisa Neveu of Blandford

DEAN'S LIST

College of the Holy Cross
Worcester
Olivia Lawry of Westfield, Class of 2026
Megan Moran of Westfield, Class of 2029
Lilly Patton of Washington, Class of 2026

Dickinson College

Carlisle, Pennsylvania
Sofia Rowan Marie Getoff-Scanlon of Easthampton, senior majoring in Spanish and Portuguese studies and political science

Emmanuel Colleges

Boston
Brandon Shuman of Westfield, finance major
Lydia Donatelli of West Chesterfield, nursing major
Rowan McDonald of Westfield, nursing major
Ryan Lambert of Westfield, psychology, counseling and health psychology major

Goodwin University

East Hartford, Connecticut
Ryan Taylor of Westfield

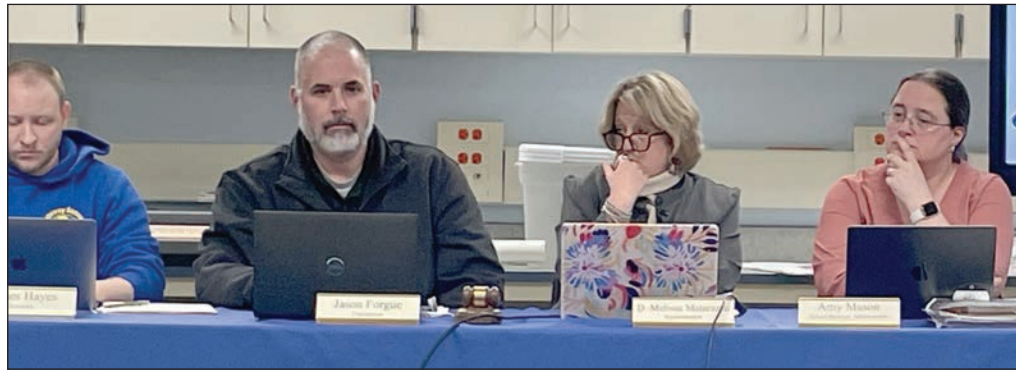
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BUDGET

how many of those students will be accepted at either Westfield or Smith Vocational schools. While each town pays the tuition for its own students, which is substantially higher than the cost per student for those who stay at Gateway, it reflects a loss of revenue from the state, which is paid into the district on a per student basis. Sixteen current eighth graders have expressed interest in Gateway's own Chapter 74 (vocational) programs, welding and early education and care.

Administrators have built their current budget draft by projecting level funding from state revenue (\$150 per student), state and federal grants (\$1.5 million) and Rural School Aid (\$753,000).

Strategies to reduce the budget include using incoming school choice monies (\$542,000) to fund all technology staff and expenses and some paraprofessionals, a para/nurse and some transportation costs and using \$430,000 in tuition payments for its vision program to fund



Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long

School committee Secretary James Hayes, from left; Chairman Jason Forgue; Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo and School Business Administrator Amy Mason are shown at the Feb. 25 meeting of Gateway Regional School Committee.

that program's staff, part of the salary of the Assistant Pupil Services Director and program supplies.

"I just think there is a lot of uncertainty, which is difficult for the towns," Matarazzo said.

Gateway will hold its annual Budget Hearing on Wednesday, March 4 at 7 p.m. in the Gateway Performing Arts Center for all, who are interested. It will have firm student census numbers from the towns due March 1 for that present-

ation. At their Wednesday, March 11 meeting, the school committee will vote on its FY '27 Budget, which must be approved at least 45 days before their first member town meeting and no later than Tuesday, March 31 under state law.

In other business, Matarazzo announced that she has named Dr. Todd Gazda as the Principal of Chester Elementary School. Gazda was originally named the interim principal last summer.

The committee took five votes at the meeting. First, they voted to have Matarazzo serve as their representative to the Middlefield Capital Planning Commission. The second vote was to approve a dedicated student activity account for the early childhood program's Skills USA fundraiser. The third and fourth votes were to waive a requirement of a second read of Gateway's Career and Technical Education Admission Policy for those enrolling in Gateway's two

vocational programs.

This policy required several changes due to regulation updates last summer. Both votes to waive a second reading and to approve the updated CTE policy with changes recently approved by Department of Elementary and Secondary Education passed. Finally, a fifth vote approved two reported donations to the district that included office and teaching supplies donated by the Chicopee Staples store and iReady compatible decodable texts and resources to support early literacy development in grades K-2 and valued at \$3,684.75.

Senior representative to the committee, Ana Holmes, gave an update on student activities throughout the district. Included were a new teacher and student teachers at Gateway Regional School, the Spanish class trip to Spain over the winter break and a new ability for sophomores to take the SAT and ACT exams at Gateway.

In grades 6-8, two new exploratory blocks are being offered, social games

and cooking and celebrations took place for increasing academic performances. Elementary events of note included the 100th day celebration and Winter Carnival at Littleville and Chester's annual spelling bee and upcoming play "Nemo."

Committee member Brian Forgue, legislative liaison for Gateway, announced that the Governor's budget has an increase of \$20 million in Rural School Aid, but proposes having vocational, charter and collaborative schools be eligible for funding. The Rural Schools bill, currently in the Ways and Means Committee, specifies that those types of schools would not be eligible for this aid. The outcome on this issue is presently uncertain.

For the past two fiscal years, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has not announced the final Rural School Aid allocations until November, over four months into each fiscal year. The committee moved into Executive Session at 8:33 p.m.

CHESTERFIELD

Congregational Church to hold St. Patrick's Day breakfast March 8

CHESTERFIELD – The Chesterfield Congregational Church, 43 Main Road, will celebrate Saint Patrick's Day early at the best breakfast in the Hilltowns on Sunday, March 8 from 8-10 a.m.

The cost for the monthly breakfast is a voluntary donation. The menu features pancakes with or without blueberries, French toast, pure Chesterfield maple syrup, free range, organic, farm-

fresh eggs any style including eggs Benedict, breakfast sandwiches, sausage, home fries, excellent homemade corned beef hash and homemade biscuits and sausage gravy. Juice, tea, cocoa, and coffee will also be available.

In addition, the special item for this breakfast will be four varieties of homemade scones. Music will be provided by the traditional Irish band The Rolling Scones. All are welcome to attend.

Northern Hilltowns Consortium to hold job fair

CHESTERFIELD – The Northern Hilltowns Consortium will sponsor the upcoming Hilltown Resource, Volunteer and Job Fair on Saturday, April 25 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. in the New Hingham Regional Elementary School.

All community members are encouraged to attend. The event designed to connect community members to available resources and to meaningful work and volunteer opportunities that directly support older adults across the Hilltowns and western Massachusetts.

This fair will highlight a wide range of resources available to seniors and

their families. Attendees can learn more about services including Veteran Affairs benefits, in-home support, help with housekeeping and daily tasks, transportation assistance, nutrition programs and other community-based supports designed to make daily life safer and more manageable for older adults.

Whether people are a senior seeking assistance, a caregiver looking for guidance or someone hoping to give back, there

will be valuable information available. In addition to providing information about resources available to

Hilltown seniors and their families, this fair will bring together local organizations and service providers, who are actively seeking compassionate, dependable employees and volunteers.

Opportunities range from caregiving, transportation and nutrition services to outreach, social support, and community engagement. These roles play a vital part

in helping seniors remain safe, connected, and able to age with dignity in their own homes. The need is real and the impact of showing up is profound.

At the Council on Aging, they believe every older adult deserves access to support, respect and compassionate care. By empowering them with information about what resources are available, they aim to increase their independence. By strengthening community partnerships and empowering people to share their time and talents, they reinforce the networks that serve our elders and enrich the fabric of our small towns.



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OTIS

ALEXANDER

from page 1

home they built by the Otis reservoir, on a lot they'd purchased for \$500 in 1953. There, they would raise a family of four sons, Glenn, Philip, Gregg and Kurt, and daughter, Rita, later welcoming their many grandchildren and great-grandchildren to the lake. Winifred passed away in 2002 after over 53 years of marriage.

Lenny would spend his career as a welder at Nash Steele in Pittsfield and would mentor many young welders through internship placements from a program at Holyoke Community College, where Lenny also taught.

Photos of Lenny's amazing cork sculptures (furniture and miniatures created from wine corks) were on display at the event. Everyone at the celebration had a story to tell about Lenny and all of them featured things he had done for others. Lifelong neighbor Ellen Diltsi said that Lenny and her father were close friends in the 60s. Lenny was instrumental in build-

ing Ridge Avenue in Otis to a point where it could be approved and maintained by the town. She had recently seen Lenny when they both witnessed the moving of the Bernie's Railroad Car through Chester onto the Chester Railway Museum grounds—an extraordinary achievement that Lenny himself lit up to talk about.

Chris and Norm Picard got to know Lenny through the local snowmobile club. "He was involved for 30 to 40 years," Norm said. "He not only helped with trail work but he built the Knox Trail Cable Bridge over the Farmington River and the Don Chaffee Bridge located behind Katie's," (a landmark store/deli. Picard said that Lenny got all the materials and did the welding for both bridges.

"Whenever the club needed something welded, they knew who to call. He is so well liked. He helped us with everything," Chris Picard said.

The Breakfast Club

One of the largest tables in the room was taken by members of a breakfast club that Lenny is part of. This remarkable group was founded by five high school friends, who had stayed close through their adult lives. Over time, the group grew to include others; it meets once a week at either Ozzie's Steak 'n Eggs in Hinsdale or Shelley's Kitchen in Pittsfield.

One of the group's founders was Ed McDonald, who had interned with Lenny and was then hired to work for him at Nash Steele. "About 10 years ago, Eddie said he wanted to bring a new guy to breakfast," Mark Savoy recalled. Little did they know, Ed's guest already held strong connections to several other group members.

John Renzi had also worked for Lenny previously. He said Lenny had taught him everything about fabrication and would drag John out on jobs where he learned piping, how to braid rope and many

other skills that Renzi would find valuable as an adult and homeowner. "When Eddie brought Lenny to breakfast, it turned out to be the same man; I hadn't seen him in many years," Renzi recalled. "I couldn't wipe the smile off of my face." Lenny had been his first boss at Nash Steele and there was no question that Lenny had been a mentor to him, Renzi said.

Another group member, Vinny Stracuzzi, said his father had worked at Nash and he'd met Lenny when he went to work at age 15. Lenny would call him when they needed extra workers during union strikes. Vinny didn't want to cross a picket line, so Lenny would arrange to quietly get him into the building through a back door. When they reconnected at the breakfast club, he learned that Lenny had been a Mason for 72 years, but had gotten away from it. Vinny brought him back into the Dalton lodge.

Lenny was a member of the breakfast club from that

point on. Savoy said, "He's the first one there every week and he travels the furthest."

"Lenny's the kind of guy you just like. He never gets riled. He's helped so many of us kids," McDonald's widow Arlene said. "He's a great example of how to be a boss and still be a nice, nice man." Renzi agreed, calling Lenny "the perfect gentleman. If I got to have a second father, I'd want him."

Family

All of Lenny's children were at the event along with their partners and some of his grandchildren. Glenn said that his father is a man who worked hard for his family.

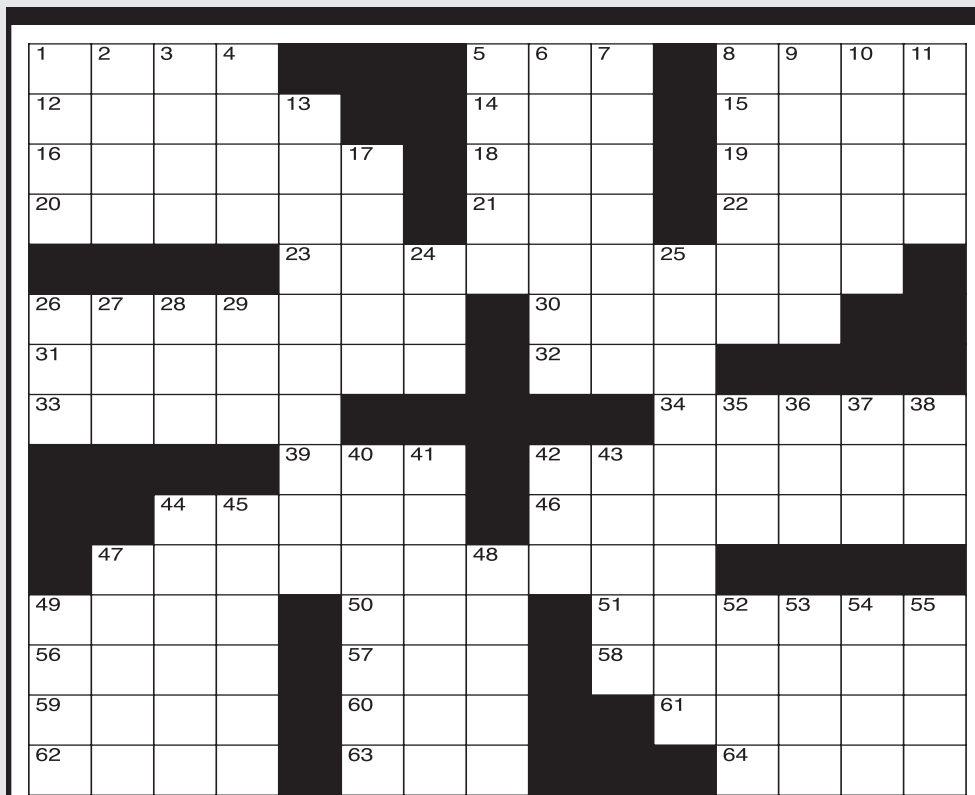
His youngest son, Kurt, recalled working with his father on job sites at times, including helping to repair the town's water system when he was 17. His father loves to give people nickname and those given to Kurt included "Goop," "Scoundrel" and Sam, which several people came to believe was actually Kurt's name. As a teenager,

Kurt reciprocated and started calling his father "Homer." One of the town workers overheard this and called him Homer as well. "To which Dad fixed him with a stern gaze and announced slowly and clearly that his name is Leonard," Kurt said.

Kurt's partner Susan Heath said that, "Nothing was ever really broken in our house, it just needed an adjustment." To which Kurt added that he still has the kitchen table that had been used by several generations of his family. In fact, he said, a doctor had come on a home visit many years before to remove someone's tonsils on that very table.

"We all feel pretty blessed to have him as a father," Kurt said for himself, his three brothers and sister.

This sentiment was not lost on Lenny. When asked about the highest point of his remarkable life, he answered, "The best thing in my life is my family. They're really good to me."



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Unit of dry measure
- 5. One who defies authority
- 8. Social media giant
- 12. Render holy
- 14. "Much ___ about nothing"
- 15. Computer manufacturer
- 16. Creed
- 18. Immoral act
- 19. Mountain pass
- 20. Winged nut
- 21. Don't know when yet
- 22. Elected officials
- 23. Corrupt tendencies
- 26. Popular adult beverage
- 30. Made a mistake
- 31. Morally correct
- 32. Type of whale
- 33. Portable conical tent

- 34. Native people of the Congo
- 39. More (Spanish)
- 42. Classroom implements
- 44. Cognizant of
- 46. One who tells
- 47. Free from bondage
- 49. Thick piece of something
- 50. Containing two adjacent nitrogen atoms
- 51. Removed from the record
- 56. Legendary singer
- 57. Broke up the earth
- 58. Hunting expedition
- 59. Contributes
- 60. Unit of work or energy
- 61. Wreckage on the sea bed
- 62. Affirmative! (slang)

CLUES DOWN

- 1. "___ and flows"
- 2. Humble request for help
- 3. A position of leadership
- 4. Continent
- 5. Adherent of a particular religion
- 6. Things that can be eaten
- 7. Self-governing Netherlands territory
- 8. Long-tailed crow
- 9. Repeated
- 10. Bluish greens
- 11. Humanities
- 13. Someone who serves in the armed forces
- 17. Labor (Spanish)
- 24. Zero
- 25. Shared by involving three parties
- 26. Queens ballplayer
- 27. Consumed
- 28. Rest here please
- 29. Men's fashion accessory
- 35. American time
- 36. Sound unit
- 37. They ___
- 38. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 40. Places to play video games
- 41. A sudden attack of illness
- 42. When you hope to arrive
- 43. Charges
- 44. Actress Seyfried
- 45. A tributary of the Ohio River
- 47. Omit when speaking
- 48. Armored fish
- 49. Remain
- 52. From a distance
- 53. Adventure story
- 54. Geological times
- 55. Eat dinner

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, your natural charisma is at an all-time high right now. A bold idea you've been sitting on finally gets the green light. Put your plan into action this week.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Recognition is coming your way, Cancer. Your hard work hasn't gone unnoticed. A small win will feel like a major victory, helping to inspire you to keep going.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

A conversation with a loved one could bring you two closer together than ever before, Libra. In fact, harmony will be a major player in all of your relationships right now.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Your foundation this week feels rock solid, Capricorn. A family matter is resolved with grace, leaving you feeling supported and loved. You will share good fortune with others.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Comfort and luxury find you this week, Taurus. Expect a heartwarming moment in your personal or professional life that restores your sense of peace and well-being.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, adventure is calling you this week. Whether you take a trip or get involved in a new book, your mind is expanding and your imagination is soaring.

SCORPIO

Oct 23/Nov 22

You are a magnet for productivity this week, Scorpio. You will breeze through your list of things to do with plenty of time left over for self-care.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

This is the perfect week to share your vision with the world, Aquarius. Your communication skills are sharp. People will come around to your way of thinking.

GEMINI

May 22/June 21

Your social circle may expand this week in the best way possible, Gemini. A new connection brings a refreshing perspective to a creative project. Now you'll work out the details.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

A solution to an unsolved puzzle finally clicks into place, Virgo. You will feel a deep sense of relief and clarity. Don't take on too much more right now, and ride this high that you are feeling.

SAGITTARIUS

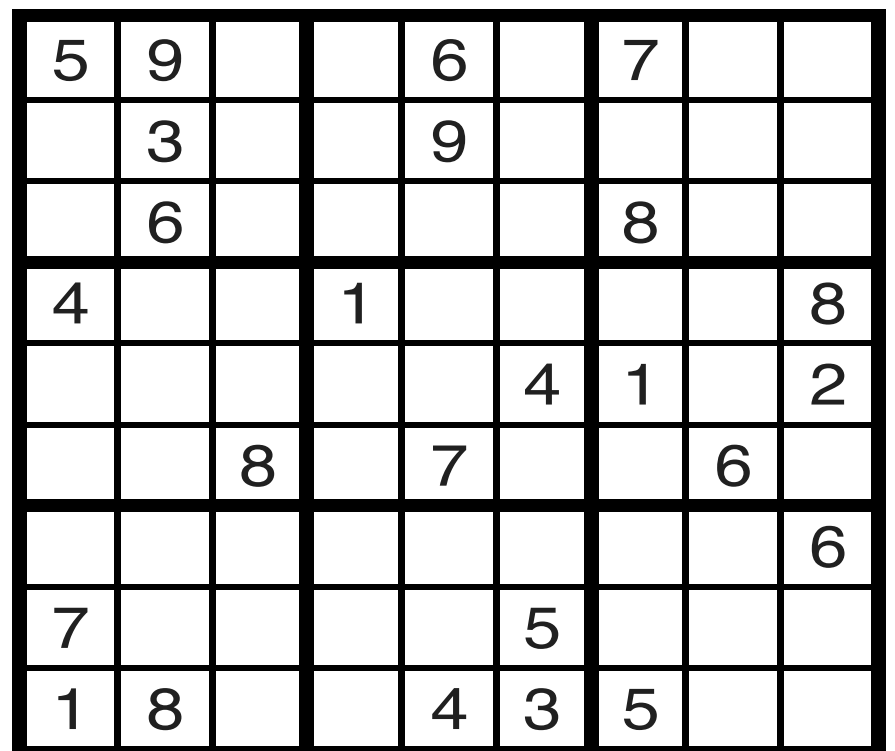
Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, creativity is your superpower this week. Do not be afraid to express yourself through art, music, writing, or other creative pursuits.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Abundance is flowing toward you, Pisces. Keep your eyes open for a surprise gift or a sudden increase in the tools you need to get things done.



SUDOKU

Here's How It Works:

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

Fun By The Numbers

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

answers

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

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GREAT BARRINGTON

Berkshire South Regional Community Center hosts Splash-A-Thon

GREAT BARRINGTON – Berkshire South Regional Community Center, 15 Crissey Road, will host its 16th Annual Splash-A-Thon fundraiser on Saturday, April 11 beginning at 8 a.m. in their Norris Aquatics Center.

The community-wide event supports Berkshire South's Adaptive Aquatics programs, which provide inclusive swim instruction and water-based therapy for individuals of all ages and abilities.

Event participants may sign up to swim laps or choose from two special-edition adaptive swim classes offered throughout the morning: Aqua Thrills (for adults ages 18+) at 10 a.m. or Swim

Jam (for children ages 0–17 with adaptive needs) at 11 a.m. With the addition of these adaptive classes, the Splash-A-Thon Fundraiser is designed to be a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive event. This year's Splash-A-Thon fundraising goal is \$20,000, which will directly support Adaptive Aquatics programming.

Adaptive Swim Instructor Catherine Blake has been named the 2026 Splash-A-Thon Ambassador. Through weekly lessons at Berkshire South, Blake works with children and adults to build swimming skills, water safety awareness, and confidence in the pool.

"For so many in the adaptive community, safety around water is a huge issue," says Blake. "Learning about safety in and around the pool is incredibly important. Being able to teach someone how to swim is a necessity even if it takes years."

Currently, dozens of local residents regularly participate in Berkshire South's Adaptive Aquatics programs. Classes are led by specially trained instructors, who tailor instruction to meet each participant's individual needs. Adaptive aquatics programming offers essential benefits, including improved range of motion, increased strength, physical relief and meaningful community connection.

"Having access to year-round weekly swimming lessons and aquatic therapy is incredibly

important to swimmers and their families," Blake explains. "Families support one another, build each other up and look forward to seeing each other every week."

While Berkshire South's Splash-A-Thon fundraising goal is \$20,000, the Adaptive Aquatics program costs more than \$50,000 annually to operate. While additional grant support helps offset costs, the fundraiser remains essential to sustaining and expanding the program. "It means we're able to offer fully funded weekly lessons four days per week," says

Blake, who currently teaches five adults and 12 children in the program. "When I started, we had only four participants. Now, we have a waiting list."

All funds raised through Splash-A-Thon directly support BSRCC's aquatics and adaptive programming, including swim lessons and assistive equipment designed for a wide range of bodies and abilities. "I can't imagine not having the funds to continue expanding to meet our community's needs," Blake adds.

Community members are invited to support Splash-A-Thon by swimming laps, attending the Aqua Thrills or Swim Jam class, sponsoring swimmers, volunteering, or

by making a direct donation. For every donation, a paper droplet displaying the donor's name will be featured in the Berkshire South lobby. Those unable to attend on April 11 may schedule an alternate swim day.

Berkshire South is committed to meeting the needs of all members through inclusive programming, specialized instruction, and ongoing staff education. Adaptive aquatics remains a priority as the organization continues working to keep programs accessible, supportive, and adaptable for everyone.

For more information, to register or to donate, people may visit www.berkshiresouth.org/splashathon

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Make the most of the summer camp

Summer camp season will soon be here, and throngs of children will board buses each morning or pack their parents' cars full of essentials to survive a few weeks away from home.

Looking back, many adults who experienced summer camp have fond memories of their adventures — whether they all went according to plan or there were some hiccups along the way. Parents want their children to make their own summer camp memories. Even if the canoe capsizes or the cabin leaks during a summer thunderstorm, such experiences can build character and strengthen friendships.

According to RegPack, an online registration software company, more than six million American children participate in some form of camp each year, including sleep-away camp or day camp. The American Camp Association says that number is closer to 14 million, with the most popular camp session length around one week or less. Families getting prepared for camp can follow these guidelines to ensure the experience is one kids won't soon forget.

Search for an accredited camp

Accredited camps must meet more than 300 standards related to program quality, safety and health, according to the ACA. An accredited camp will likely give parents the most peace of mind.

Consider children's readiness

There's no magic age when a child may be ready to go to camp, but generally kids who are ages seven or eight may be fine to start a resident sleep-away camp. Day camp kids can begin as early as age three, the same age kids often begin preschool programs. Gauge whether the child has spent time away from home at friends' or family members' homes to decide if a resident camp will be the right fit or if a day camp is a better fit.

Connect with fellow campers

If possible, attend a meet-and-greet prior to the start of the season. Neighborhood day camps tend to draw kids from local communities, so there's already a chance kids will know a few fellow campers.

Get to know camp counselors early on

Campers can introduce themselves to camp counselors and other program directors and are urged to ask questions about specific programs. Counselors can direct campers toward activities they may enjoy.

Make the most of all situations

Much of summer camp will likely be smooth-sailing, but it's reasonable to expect some bumps along the way. Campers shouldn't expect perfection, but use the situations that may go awry as learning experiences on how to handle adversity — trying to find the fun in them anyway. Even a medical situation can be overcome, particularly because camps staff qualified medical personnel to ensure campers are safe and well.

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