

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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BLANDFORD

Over 570 acres to be purchased for wildlife protection, recreation

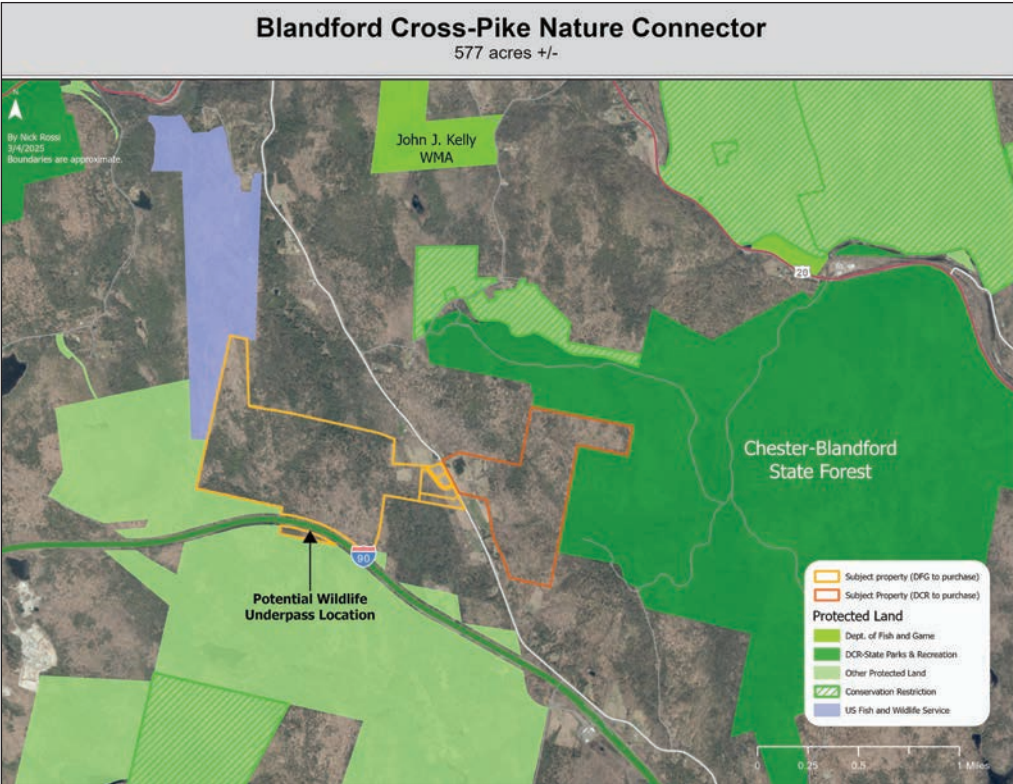
By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Conservation Commission Chair Dick Gates spoke with the Select Board Monday, March 17 about land on Chester Road to be used as a “Cross-Pike Nature Connector.”

The property in question would create a space for passive recreation as well as a wildlife protection area. He told the board he had been contacted by the Department of Recreation and Conservation by email about this earlier.

The land, a little more than 572 acres is owned by the Terry family and the property that abuts the Chester-Blandford State Forest is comprised of 218 acres on the east side of the road. This area has been used as a Christmas Tree farm. Currently the State Forest is available for hiking/ walking, fishing and biking.

The Nature Conservancy, a private non-government organization, is in the process of buying the land and will then sell it to two state agencies. The eastern half of the land is to be owned by



This map shows the Blandford cross-pike nature connector. The orange outline shows proposed property acquisition.
Map courtesy of Nick Rossi, DCR

Department of Conservation and Recreation and the western portion is to be owed by the Department of Fish and Game. TNC is buying it first to accommodate the current owner’s timeline as the state agencies are unable to move

fast enough.

According to Nick Rossi, DCR Land Protection Specialist, Mass Department of Transportation in collaboration with the partners, hopes to install a wildlife underpass under the Mass

Pike as they have identified this as a good location. These underpasses are great for wildlife, but an underappreciated by-product is reduced traffic collisions.

ACRES, page 7

HUNTINGTON

School Committee passes budget on second try

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

A special school committee meeting was held remotely on Monday, March 17 in a second attempt to achieve a 67% quorum and vote to approve the Fiscal 2026 Budget for the Gateway Regional School District.

As this was for a single purpose, was not on the committee’s usual meeting night and marked the third meeting in as many weeks, the meeting was conducted remotely over zoom. Attending were school committee members Tara Balboni, Jeana Briggs, Nicole Daviau, Pegg Dragon, Brian Fogue, Jason Fogue, Alicia Hansen, Keri Morawiec, Lyndsey Papillon, Alex Seid and Tasha Strong. Three members were absent and the fifteenth seat for Huntington is currently vacant, which also counts as a “no” vote. Ten affirmative votes were required to pass the budget and all present voted in favor of the budget.

The budget vote was broken into three motions: one for the Chester Elementary cost center totaling \$1,494,787; one for Gateway Regional School totaling \$5,132,480; and the total FY’ 26 budget for the entire district of \$18,254,669. The Chester and Gateway Regional School budgets were voted separately so that school committee members Lyndsey Papillon and Tara Balboni, who have family members employed in those schools-could recuse themselves from those votes. Both were then able to take part in voting the total district budget.

The School Committee hosted their annual Budget Hearing on Wednesday, March 5, whereupon Superintendent Kristen Smidy gave a presentation on the FY ‘26 budget. Officials said that next year’s budget is based upon a number of assumptions including continuing to receive level funded or close to current levels Rural

BUDGET, page 3

MONTGOMERY

Music in Montgomery announces April lineup

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The April Music in Montgomery lineup has been announced and includes favorites Ed Bentley & Friends; The Ravenwood String Band; Craig Manning, Dave LaBlanc and Larry Southard and closes with Helen Arbour and Joe Nerney.

All of these musicians perform throughout Western Massachusetts and may be joined during this series by surprise guests. Concerts are held every Thursday at Montgomery Town Hall, 161 Main Road and begin at 3 p.m.

The month opens on April 3 with Ed Bentley & Friends, who share the tagline “men of a certain age.” Featuring country, rock and folk music, the band includes Jane Martin Pelletier on vocals and guitar and Ron Campagna on bass and vocals. This trio can also be seen at the Daily Grind in Southwick, at open mics at Bright Ideas Brewing and Shortstop Bar & Grill in Westfield and the Southwick Inn. Campagna also performs on Wednesday

evenings at the American Legion Post 351 in Holyoke.

The Ravenwood String Band takes the stage on Thursday, April 10. Led by guitarist Barry Searle, the band includes Don Calsyn on fiddle and John Alphin on Mandolin and is frequently joined by a bass player and vocalist. Ravenwood does covers of bluegrass-influenced string jazz.

On Thursday, April 17, Larry Southard returns and will be joined by Craig Manning and Dave LeBlanc, both on guitar. Music in Montgomery organizer Dale Rogers says the group always brings “a heart-warming, singing along, tapping, clapping good time.” Southard also performs locally in Papa and Friends, a rock-country-folk band who includes Lesley Friedman Rosenthal (violin, harmony), Terry AlaBery (Terrance Hall on drums), Mike Patoniac (bass and harmonica) and Andy Gordon (pedal steel and banjo).

Helen Arbour & Joe Nerney close the month on Thursday, April 24. Arbour has performed with bands

MUSIC, page 8

BLANDFORD

Trivia Night ‘FUNdraiser’ benefits the GEF

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The emphasis was on the fun at the fourth Annual Trivia Night fundraiser to benefit the Gateway Education Foundation on Saturday, March 22 at Blandford Town Hall.

Parents, staff, students and community members formed teams to take part in a challenge to test useless knowledge. Admission was \$25 per person, or \$175 for a table of 8. The evening included the trivia contest, a door prize raffle and 50/50 raffle. Together, these three pieces raised over \$3,500 for the Foundation.

The Gateway Education Foundation began in 2012 to enhance the educational opportunities of students in the Gateway Regional School District. To date, GEF funded 125 projects totaling \$119,000. It funds “out-of-the-box” learning opportunities, such as interviews with Holocaust survivors, author visits or a field trip to study the physics of roller coasters.

Michele Crane, former broadcaster, former School Committee Chair, wife of an alumnus and the mother of two alumni, served as the emcee of the event. Her first task was to invite GEF

Board President Avery Wing to the microphone. Wing said that the Foundation pays for experiences and items that the school budget cannot cover. Just this week, students in Gateway’s welding and early childhood programs took part in the vocational Skills USA competition.

This event requires that students wear a Skills USA jacket and Gateway students used to have to arrange to borrow jackets from other schools. Thanks to GEF, Gateway Regional School was able to purchase a set of

jackets for their students.

Crane announced the rules for the night and began the questions. Each half of the night consisted of five rounds of five questions each. Topics included sports, geography, pop culture, music, science and even a set of questions around the school district and surrounding region. Teams had to grapple with questions like, “Who holds the all time NCAA Division I scoring record in college basketball?” (Caitlin Clark) or “What mountain inspired Dr. Seuss’s Mr. Crumpet

in How the Grinch Stole Christmas?” (Mount Tom).

Teams recorded their answers for each round, which were picked up by student “runners” senior Ben Pritchard and junior Theodore DeAngelis-Page. A panel of judges-junior Eliza Mueller, alumnus Joey Pisani, senior Cynthia Papillon and senior Madilyn Beneway-scored the sheets and board members Lyndsey Papillon and Nick Balboni posted the scores.

By intermission,

TRIVIA, page 7



And the winner is! The Hilltown Hippies took the high score of the night. They are Sean St. Clair, Abby Meunier, Martha Otterbeck, Matt Meunier, Jenna Kakimoto, Linda Hyjek, Ben Hyjek and Annie Pritchard.

Turley photo by Wendy Long



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SOUTHAMPTON

BLOOMING BOY



Julian, who lives in Southamptton, went to bulb show at Smith College recently. His grandparents, Bob and Joyce Dragon of Westhampton, brought him. He is the great-grandson of Connie Dragon.

Submitted photo

CUMMINGTON

Friday Night Cafe cancelled

CUMMINGTON – Unfortunately George and Nellie Wilson are unable to do their show so the Friday Nigh Cafe on March 28 is cancelled.

Organizers hope to reschedule them for sometime in the fall. They also want to announce an upcoming storytelling workshops. Storyteller Rochelle Wildfong is offering two workshops in which folks can shape a story into a tellable tale culminating with the possibility of telling the story at the May 9 Friday Night Cafe. The workshops will be on Saturday or Sunday on two weekends in April. The exact dates will be set in consultation with interested participants. It is first come, first served and limited to ten participants.

A donation of \$15 - \$20 is suggested for the workshop. To sign up or for more information people may email Rochelle Wildfong at rwildfong@hotmail.com. The next cafe is Friday, April 11 with Dave Christopolis and friends.

CUMMINGTON – A community contra dance will take place at Cummington Community House, 33 Main St., on Saturday, March 29 from 7-9 p.m.

All are welcome to attend this fun event for all ages. No special skills or dance experience is necessary. Steve Howland is the caller; George Wilson, fiddle, Annika Amstutz, fiddle and Becky Hollingworth, piano and friends.

Admission is free, but optional donations will be accepted. The program is supported in part by grants from the Goshen and Worthington Cultural Councils, local agencies, which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Contra dance takes place March 29

BECKET

FCC to hold turkey dinner

BECKET – The Ladies’ Guild of the First Congregational Church of Becket on YMCA Road are having a roast turkey dinner on Saturday, April 5 from 4:30-6:30 p.m.

The guild will be serving roast turkey, stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes, butternut squash and homemade pineapple upside down cake with real whipped cream for \$15 for adults and free for children under 13. People are welcome to eat in or call 413-623-8300 or 413-623-6455 for to go dinners. They should say if they would like white meat, dark meat, or both. Someone will call them to confirm their to go order.

Drop ins are of course welcome. Funds raised will be used for church restoration, charities or expenses.

Bridge work scheduled for I-90

BECKET – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces bridge work will be conducted on I-90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 18.4.

The work will take place from now through Friday, March 28 from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. each day. Drivers traveling through these areas should expect delays, reduce speed and use caution. Appropriate signage and messaging will be in place to guide drivers through the work areas. All scheduled work is weather dependent and subject to change without notice.

For more information on traffic conditions, travelers are encouraged to dial 511 and select a route to hear real-time conditions 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. Follow @MassDOT on X, formerly known as Twitter, to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.

Arts Center host dance, auction

The Becket Arts Center will host a dance party on Saturday, March 29 from 7-10 p.m. to celebrate the artists whose coffee-bag creations will be auctioned off that evening.

Donated by Barrington Coffee Roasting Company, these coffee bags have been transformed into pictures, flags, pillows, sculptures, housewares and accessories.

The admission fee and auction proceeds will go to support children’s programming at the Becket Art Center. Dancing, food, drink and fun will follow the auction.

To see the art work, to bid on a piece until Friday, March 28 and for more information, people may visit becketartscenter.org.



Above, this is one of the coffee bag art creations, which will be auctioned off on Saturday, March 29 at the Becket Art Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road.

Left, these are some of the coffee bags creations to be auctioned off at the Becket Art Center.

Submitted photos

GOSHEN

Town Clerk announces caucus information

GOSHEN –Town Clerk Kristen M. Estelle announces the 2025 Town Caucus will be held on Monday, April 15 at 7 p.m. in the town hall.

All registered voters are invited to participate. Any registered voter may be nominated for any of the positions listed below. Twenty-five voters are needed to make a quorum. Once a quorum is met, the meeting is generally over in less than 15 minutes.

Here is the list of positions up form nomination and the individuals, who currently occupy the seats.

The list contains whether they wish to continue or to step down. They include: Almoners for three year term, current holder Henrietta R. Munroe; Assessors for three year term, current holder Stephen A. Fancy; Board of Health for three year term, current holder Laura A. Barrus – not seeking another term; Board of Health for two year term, current holder Jake C. Lulek; Chesterfield/ Goshen Regional School Committee for three year term, current holder Carla K. Raymond; Finance Committee (two positions) for three year terms, current holders Kristine A. Bissell and Gina M. Paineau – not seeking another term; Library Trustees (two positions) for three year terms, current holders Melanie K. Dana – not seeking another term and Steven C. Daiber; Library Trustee for one year term, current holder Jane C. McGrath; Moderator for two year term, current holder Keith M. Wright – not seeking another term; Planning Board for five year term, current holder Julie E. Hooks; Select Board for three years, current holder Peri H. Hall and Tilton Farm Supervisors (three positions) for one year terms, current holders Robert O. Goss, Richard K. Polwrek and Roger A. Culver.

A brief descriptions of the elected positions can be found by visiting www.goshen-ma.us. The Annual Town Election will be held on Saturday, June 7. The Annual Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 17.

People may contact Town Clerk Kristen Estelle by emailing clerk@goshen-ma.us or calling 413-268-8236, extension 107.

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HUNTINGTON

BUDGET

from page 1

School Aid, Medicaid funding and federal and state grants. It also presumes that the U.S. Department of Education will continue to operate and the waiver sought for the capital stabilization account will be approved.

In Superintendent Smidy’s most recent e-newsletter “Gator Bites,” she urged people to reach out to their state legislators to support increasing Rural School Aid. A report issued by the Rural Schools Commission several years ago found that rural schools in Massachusetts were underfunded and said then that an additional \$60 million should be allocated to address this inequity. To date, \$16 million has been allocated to Rural School Aid. “On Monday, March 24 at 11 a.m. there will be an important budget hearing focused on funding for schools and towns,” Smidy wrote. The hearing will be held at the UMASS Campus Center, 1 Campus Center Way, in Amherst and will be part of import-

ant budget decisions at the state level. There will also be a public budget hearing the week of April 7 at the State House in Boston where anyone can sign up to speak. Smidy invited everyone to visit <https://www.rural-schoolsma.org/to> learn more.

According to the minutes of the March 5 budget hearing, Smidy announced that Gateway is grounding their work through the district’s instructional vision, which outlines specific expectations for students and staff. Items for students include engaging in their school community, seizing opportunities and directing next steps for learning based on interests and abilities and knowing what they are learning and why they are learning it. Staff expectations include knowing and reaching every student, creating meaningful and personalized opportunities for all students, and trusting students to succeed after productive struggles.

The total proposed budget of \$18,254,669 is up

1.57% from the current fiscal year. Changes in total assessments to the towns range from a decrease of 4.47% for Middlefield to an increase of 3.97% for Montgomery; assessments fluctuate based on shifts in the number of students from each town. Combined, town assessments are up 2.04%.

Also from the minutes of the Budget Hearing, regional transportation is going up 12% in the coming fiscal year, although Smidy reported that some districts are facing increases of 20 – 30%.

Additional budget information is posted to ClearGov with a link from the district website’s (grsd.org/) school committee page.

Before adjourning, Chairperson Jason Forgue announced the district’s insurance company will be covering the cost of the independent investigator who is looking into the administrative leave of Vanna Maffuccio. There is no deductible to be paid by the district.

Egg hunt on April 12

HUNTINGTON – The Recreation Committee will host an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 12 at 3 p.m at Pettis Field.

Children will be split into three age groups to collect eggs filled with toys and candy. There will be a lucky winner in each age group to receive an Easter basket.

Rain date will be Sunday, April 13 at 11 a.m.

The next movie night will be on Friday, May 2 at Stanton Hall. The movie will be “Moana 2” and is free and all are welcome. Summer camp plans for Huntington residents are also underway with anticipated start date the week of July 7.



Council on Aging lists news

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Council on Aging will be hosting upcoming events at Stanton Hall, 26 Russell Road.

A presentation on medication safety and blood pressure checks will be provided by the Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition’s nursing team on Wednesday, April 2 at 1 p.m. On Tuesday, April 8 at 1 p.m., spring birthdays will be celebrated with cake and Bingo. Karen Miller from

Coolley Dickinson VNA and Hospice will lead a discussion on Making the Right Choice for Hospice/Palliative Care on Wednesday, April 16 at 1 p.m.

Sarah The Fiddler will perform on Wednesday, April 23 at 2 p.m. The Hilltown Memory Café is held weekly at 2 p.m. The weekly café provides seniors with activities while their caregivers participate in a support group. The café is open to all with and with-

out memory issues. The café is made possible by a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act and by a grant from the Huntington Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. All events are free and open to residents of any community. For more information, people may call Crystal Wright-Partyka at 413-685-5283.

RUSSELL

Russell Public Library announces upcoming April events

RUSSELL – The Russell Public Library, 162 Main St., is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3-7 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

April is Poetry Month, children may choose a poem at the library and read it to the librarian to win a prize.

If patron haven’t signed up for their CWMARS card yet, come to the library to sign up. CWMARS offers online ordering, convenient pick up and return, right here at the Russel library. It would be appreciated if patrons would

complete the Library Survey. They may put it in the library drop box or complete it online. This is a way for the library to better serve patron needs.

Starting Friday, April 4, the library will have Game Night every Friday for tweens and teens. All games and snacks will be provided. Participants are welcome to join anytime during library hours on Friday from 3-7 p.m.

Adults will have their first Monthly Book Club on Tuesday, April 8 from 6-8 p.m with the book “James” by Percival Everett. People

should sign up by Tuesday, April 1.

On Tuesday, May 13 from 6-8 p.m. the Monthly Book Club will meet again. They will discuss the book “Braiding Sweetgrass.” People should come to the library the week of April 21 to get a copy of the book and guiding questions for the book club discussion. They may register by email rpldirector@townof-russell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message or come in and sign up at the library by Wednesday, April 30.

On Saturday, April 12 from 2-4 p.m. adults can cre-

ate four beautiful, handmade greeting cards with Kim Bean. There is an \$8 supply fee. Participant number is limited to 15. People may register by email rpldirector@townof-russell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message, or come in and sign up at the Library by Saturday, April 5.

Children ages 5-11 will celebrate Earth Day and vacation Tuesday, April 22 and Thursday, April 24 from 1-2 p.m. as they repurpose recycled paper and posters to make new paper on Tuesday and paper airplanes on Thursday.

Children ages 3-9 will join Ms. Jennifer at the library on Saturday, April 26 from 11 a.m.-noon. They will hear a story and build a beautiful fairy house for their yard or garden. Together they will build a Library Fairy house to be placed along Noble View Outdoor Center’s All Persons Trail. Register by email rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message, or come in and sign up at the library by Tuesday, April 22.

On Saturday April 26 from 2-4 p.m. adults can attend a native wildflower

talk by Dr. Robert Kidd. He will take participants on a guided picture walk through the Russell forests and fields. Register by email rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message, or come in and sign up at the Library, by Tuesday, April 22.

The Library’s Technology Help session if Friday, April 18 from 5-7 p.m. Ms. Kate will be available to help individuals with their technology questions. They may bring their phone, laptop or tablet to learn an app and/or get the tech support they need.

OTIS

Town Clerk lists election information

OTIS – The Otis Town Clerk announces the caucus request and nomination papers deadline is Tuesday, April 8 at 5 p.m.

This is last day and

hour for a registered voter to request their name be placed on the caucus ballot for the Annual Caucus on Tuesday, April 15 and the last day to submit nomination papers for

the Annual Town Election on May 27.

It is the last day and hour to submit nomination papers for the Annual Town Election on Tuesday, May 27.

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Matters
By Russell Gloor



Will my Medicare premium change because I sold investment property?

Dear Rusty:
I have questions concerning the deduction of money from my Social Security benefit amount as relates to the sale of investment property.
I am 66 years old and have been drawing Social Security since I turned 62. My wife is 56 and is a housewife and has no taxable income. Our income comes from our rental property and my Social Security benefit. I have decided to liquidate two of our properties, one was sold in December 2024, and one is in Escrow and is scheduled to close in March 2025.
My normal Adjusted Gross Income has been running about \$30K-\$32K. However, last year with the sale of the property I will receive a long-term capital gain profit of about \$255,000. I did a rough calculation on what my AGI will be for 2024 and it looks to be about \$318,000. How will this affect my Social Security benefit and will it have an effect on the amount I pay for my Part B Medicare Plan going forward? I have a Medicare Advantage plan.
My next question is about 2025, after the next property closes and I file taxes), my AGI with the long-term capital gain profit could be between \$700,000-\$800,000. How will this affect my benefits going forward?

Signed:
Prudent Investor

Actually, the gross amount of your Social Security benefit will not be affected by these transactions, but the net amount of your SS benefit payment will change due to a provision known as Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount. IRMAA affects the Medicare premiums you pay from your Social Security benefit and a higher Medicare premium will result in a lower net Social Security payment.

Here's how this will work for you: Your Medicare premiums each year, typically for Medicare Part B and Part D are determined by looking at your "Modified Adjusted Gross Income," or "MAGI" from two years prior. MAGI is your normal AGI plus any non-taxable interest you may have had. Since the property you sold in 2024 will be reflected as part of your 2024 income, IRMAA will cause your

2026 Medicare premiums to be higher than the standard monthly 2026 amount. How much higher depends on how much you exceed the income level for your IRS filing status. Using 2025 rules, if you file as married/jointly and your taxable income (MAGI) is more than \$212,000 but less than \$334,000 then, instead of paying the standard 2026 monthly Part B premium, you'll each pay \$370 per month for Medicare Part B and likely a supplemental amount of \$35.30 if your Advantage plan includes prescription drug coverage.

Your Medicare premiums are recalculated every year, again based on income from two years prior. Thus, in 2027, IRMAA will also affect your Medicare premiums and your net Social Security payment because of your 2025 real estate transaction. If your MAGI in 2025 will be over \$750,000, then IRMAA will increase each of your 2027 Medicare Part B premiums to \$638.90 and likely also add a supplement of \$85.80 per month each to your Medicare Advantage premium for prescription drug coverage.

The good news is in 2028 all of this will be behind you and your Medicare premiums will revert to whatever the standard monthly premiums are for that year because your income levels thereafter will presumably be below the then-IRMAA thresholds).

For reference, here is a link to Medicare's information on the Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount, or "IRMAA:"
<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/2025-medicare-parts-b-premiums-and-deductibles>

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

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

Say no to Gov. Healey's proposed drug tax

Is Gov. Maura Healey high on some kind of drug?
How else to explain her proposal to levy a new tax of 6% per prescription or \$2 per, whichever is less on all our meds. Pharmacies that fail to comply with the plan could face fines of up to \$25,000 or even risk losing their licenses. By the way, this is just one of Healey's moves to hike taxes; she wants to triple the vehicle excise tax.

Like many Hilltown seniors, I've seen the co-pays on my prescriptions already go up this year thanks to my health insurer. And given the record profits being enjoyed by the big pharmaceutical companies, I don't see the need to pay

more for Healey's "pharmacy assessment." Johnson & Johnson only made \$85 billion last year. Merck & Company had to make do with \$60 billion. Pfizer got by with \$58.5 billion. You get the picture.

A survey earlier this month by the Fiscal Alliance Foundation, a nonpartisan watchdog non-profit, found that roughly 83% of the 800 likely voters who participated in the poll opposed Healey's proposal, with just 6% in favor. Of the respondents, 48.2% were Independent, 40.6% Democrat and 11.1% Republican. Now is not the time for new taxes when consumers and patients are already struggling to afford

other essential goods by paying higher costs for gas, eggs and other items.

Please contact your legislator and ask them to oppose the Healey drug tax when the House takes up the state budget next month. If you live in: Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg or Worthington, call or e-mail Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa at 413-270-1166, lindsay.sabadosa@mahouse.gov. If you live in: Becket, Otis or Sandisfield, call or e-mail Rep. Leigh Davis at 413-854-4623, Leigh.Davis@mahouse.gov

Matt L. Barron
Chesterfield

Giving space to readers views important

Your coverage of the recent wind storms and national coverage of numerous deadly tornadoes in the South should be enough to remind your readers of the climate disruption our region and the whole big world must confront.

The fact that our federal government refuses to confront or even admit that there is such disruption, can simply be described as willful ignorance. Heretofore our Fed

sponsored climate scientists have repeatedly shown CO2 level increases in direct parallel with increasing temperatures.

This is not coincident. Now science is denied and the messengers fired. In this respect the current Republican party can honestly be compared to the Know Nothing party of the 1840s and 1850s.

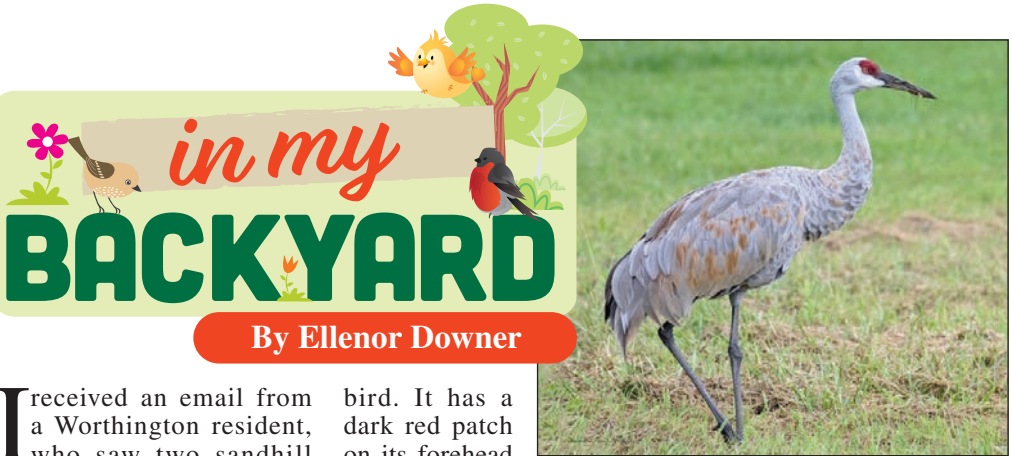
Forgive me for monopolizing your space for reader's opinions. Before your letters

from readers went unused (a couple of years), there were many submitted weekly. These times of chronic political extremes make your space given to readers views a vital resource towards trying to understand one another. Hopefully, your letters space will once again be employed to such ends.

Thank you,

Richard Mansfield
Worthington

GUEST COLUMN



I received an email from a Worthington resident, who saw two sandhill cranes on Sunday, March 16.

It was most likely was just a coincidence. However, the next day March 17, I spotted a pair of sandhill cranes in my hayfield, a first ever sighting at that location.

Several people reported seeing sandhill cranes at various locations in town last year. There is a breeding pair, who successfully raised young, in nearby Hardwick.

The sandhill crane is a tall, 45," gray, heron like

bird. It has a dark red patch on its forehead and a black bill. Some of the feathers on the sandhill crane's back are iron stained due possibly to preening from mud rich in that mineral.

Immature cranes are grayish with more rust stained feathers. They keep this plumage for two years. The female sandhill crane lays one to three olive eggs with dark marks in a mound like nest of weeds, grasses

Sandhill crane
and marsh like plants placed on the ground or in shallow water. They migrate in flocks, feed on agricultural fields and roost in the center of shallow lakes or rivers. They display courtship behavior of jumping off the ground during their migration. They feed on seeds, agricultural grains and small animals.

BACKYARD, page 5

Election letters to the editor welcome

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

include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by **noon 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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EDITORIAL POLICY

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

Mail letter to Country Journal, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069 or mail your letter to: countryjournal@turley.com.



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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Teeth are made for gnashing

By Deborah Daniels
Correspondent

Have you ever got up close to a beaver and seen those orange teeth?

Probably not because those guys are either working a tree or submerging like submarines at the sight of you. You can't see their bright orange teeth when they are gnawing, but we hikers have come across a few beaver skulls complete with long curling orange teeth.

We always thought post mortem changes, right? Well no, the orange color comes from iron that strengthens the enamel of beaver teeth. The iron serves to reinforce the teeth against all that gnawing beavers do and it makes their teeth resistant to decay from acids. That fact has intrigued researchers looking for a way to slow decay in human teeth, which is made of calcium. I'm not sure we are ready for orange teeth.

Diving deeper into beaver teeth reveals that their molars have sharp ridges of enamel interlaced with softer dentine inside in a zig zag maze-like pattern. Most herbivores such as deer, rabbits and cows have this pattern in their molar teeth. The beaver's molars grind down woody material into a pulpy mush that they eat. The front teeth or incisors are shaped like chisels to gnaw on the bark that provides them with food.

After years of grinding wood the molar enamel ridges slowly wear away and the



Squirrel with an inset showing the orange tint to its incisor teeth. The lower incisor teeth are longer than the top.

inner dentine which is softer wears away faster. Scientists studying skulls know that flat teeth mean the animal was old when it died and use it as a clue in dating bones. That information won't take up room in your backpack but good to know when coming across the odd animal carcass.

That got me thinking about squirrels, do they have orange teeth? Turns out they have orange tinted teeth. A diet cracking nuts requires strong teeth. Squirrels just like beavers have to gnaw to wear down their teeth that are constantly growing. Beaver incisors grow on average 1.7 feet per year. Squirrel incisors grow on average six inches per year. So these guys have a biological imperative to gnaw.

While on the topic of squirrels have you seen all the red acorns lying on the ground. There is a bumper crop of 'em. Well it turns out that squirrels prefer white (green) acorns over red because the red acorns taste bitter. Another reason they

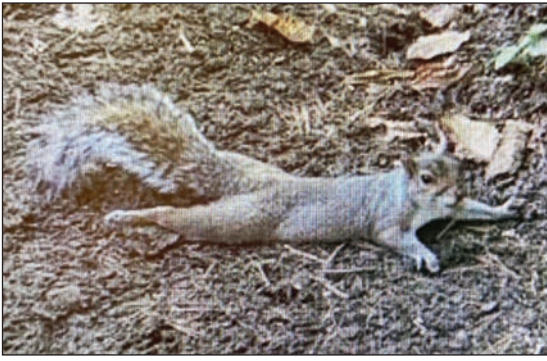
choose white acorns over red is because the white acorns germinate quickly when buried. They might find instead of an acorn, a small tree growing where they buried the white acorn. We are glad they are burying the acorns because we need those acorns to become oak trees.

And before we leave acorns alone it is important to note those acorns are buried in very shallow graves so squirrels can find them later. Scientists believe they locate them later by their smell or would that be eaud-oak tree. Yes some field research is in order here hikers, can you detect an odor to acorns? One could really ask, aren't these squirrels just randomly digging? No one will argue with the thrill of finding buried treasure, much less a squirrel coming upon an acorn.

To answer another question plaguing us naturalists is how come there are so many squirrels? Squirrels have two litters of babies every year, late spring and a second batch mid summer of



This shows a skull of a beaver with the orange teeth.



A gray squirrel splooting to cool off.

Submitted photos



This beaver shows his orange teeth.



A skull of a beaver shows the molars with enamel and with the softer dentine maze-like pattern evident.

one-seven babies. The babies are hairless, blind and their ears are closed. They will nurse for 10-12 weeks and be ready to find their own way in the world after this.

It is hard to believe they were introduced into city parks to liven things up for folks after the Industrial Revolution. They thrive in city parks and cars would be

their biggest predator. Lest you should want to feed them know that they are rarely infected with rabies.

They can deliver a nasty bite. but they make a study of begging and usually approach only people they perceive as friendly. Before leaving squirrels you must understand they are displaying a new behavior called

splooting. Splooting is where they flatten their body on something that is cool. They do this to cool off. It seems they have noticed a warming trend to the planet. And to leave you with a bit of entertainment, watch the video squirrel scoring a touchdown. Welcome spring viewing to hikers.

Early spring questions for the Garden Lady

Lisa, who gardens in Belchertown, had this question for the Garden Lady: "I saw a video online of someone using a weed whacker to cut down their raspberry plants. Why would they be doing that now? Aren't they cutting off all of the fruiting buds?"

It's sure interesting that you mention this particular topic! My husband and I stared at our raspberry plants and talked about getting out there to prune as well.

Before you grab the weed whacker and head out, though, you have to know your raspberries. Do you have "summer bearing" or "ever-bearing?"

If you have raspberry plants that bear one crop each summer, you would not cut them down to the ground now because you would be removing all of the fruiting buds. The berries grow on canes that are a year old.

All you would do to summer bearing raspberries now is prune out the canes that fruited last year if you haven't already done so. They will look old and the bark will be shedding a bit.

Another giveaway is that when you cut into them there is no green "living" tissue. Very thin canes,



or canes that are growing closer than six inches apart can also be cut down to the ground.

Pruning is a bit different for those of us that have "ever-bearing" raspberries. You must decide if you want two smaller crops - one in the summer and one in the fall or one bumper crop in the fall.

Chances are that the video you saw was of someone turning their "ever-bearers" into "fall bearers" instead, by cutting the canes that fruited in the fall all the way down to the ground. New canes will grow and in late August-early September they will fruit, in abundance, hopefully.

If you like the idea of two crops, then do not prune away the canes that fruited last fall, but do cut off the tops of these canes. You'll see evidence of old berry clusters. Cut just below that point, leaving the rest of the cane.

New buds will form here, and these will be your first, summer crop. Do also cut away any remaining dead canes, and thin or too close together canes as mentioned above.

Christi wrote in with this question about her Rhododendrons, "I noticed that parts of my rhododendron (as well as others in my neighborhood) are curled and perhaps dead. They normally curl when it gets really cold, but unfurl

when it gets warm. Today is 65 degrees and parts have still not unfurled. I was wondering why this happened and what suggestions you might have."

Rhododendrons curl their leaves in the cold as a defense mechanism to reduce the overall surface area of the leaf in an effort to curb moisture loss. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't work as well.

Take, for example, if the plant was already stressed when it entered winter; then this process may not have the same effect. Perhaps we didn't have sufficient rain and supplemental water wasn't provided, then the plant's efforts of curling their leaves may not get them through the winter unscathed, especially the incredibly windy winter we had.

Once the ground thaws, give the shrubs a drink and if indeed these branches don't respond as spring weather continues, it may be time to do some corrective pruning. Oftentimes, stems that are cut back to well within the shrub respond with new growth that will rejuvenate the rest of the plant, making it look better and better. Good luck!

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

BACKYARD

from page 4

Common mergansers

I received reports of seeing common mergansers. My daughter saw common mergansers in Hardwick. A Hubbardston couple also saw common mergansers. A Brimfield resident, who sends bird reports on a regular basis, saw common mergansers at a pond in Warren last week. There was a large section of open water. He also saw lots of mallard, Canada geese, a few black ducks and a hooded merganser.

Bald eagles

The Brimfield resident in an email on March 8 said, "Yesterday in Ludlow I visited an eagle's nest on the bank of the Chicopee River. Eagles have nested in this area for over ten years with four different nest locations. I first found a nest across the Chicopee River in Springfield that was visible from Ludlow. Then the nest was on the Ludlow side of the river for one year. I lost track of the nest for a few years when it was in a tree that subsequently fell down. I was told about the fourth and current nest three years ago. If the bird on the nest is the female that has been nesting in this area and had at least one young two years ago she is banded and is twenty years old."

Two of my grandchildren and I saw a mature bald eagle perched in a tree at the edge of my hayfield on Saturday, March 15. I stopped the car and my granddaughter, Lizzie, got out of the car to take a photo with her cellphone. I said the eagle will probably fly away. As she approached, the eagle turned its head to watch her. As she approached it bent down, opened its tail

feathers displaying the white feathers and then took off. She got a photo of its white tail.

The Brimfield resident saw two bald eagles at a pond in Warren, an adult and an immature. The immature eagle flushed up some ducks while flying around the pond. On another day he saw four eagles, two adult and two immature. An Oakham resident also saw a bald eagle recently.

Other birds

The same person saw a great blue heron, hooded mergansers, three ringed bill gulls and a small flock of red-winged blackbirds. Earlier this month, he said, "Two fox sparrows showed in the afternoon, always nice to see them. A pair of blue birds are irregular visitors as are sharp-shinned hawks. Last week an adult chased juncos into a quince bush without success. And this week an immature sharpie was in the yard for awhile."

He said he takes in his feeders at night as bears should be out and about. He read an article that the skunk cabbage is up and is a sign that so are the bears. Black bears eat skunk cabbage leaves in the spring when they first emerge from the dens to "kick start" their digestive system. They also return to their favorite feeding grounds, often back yard bird feeders.

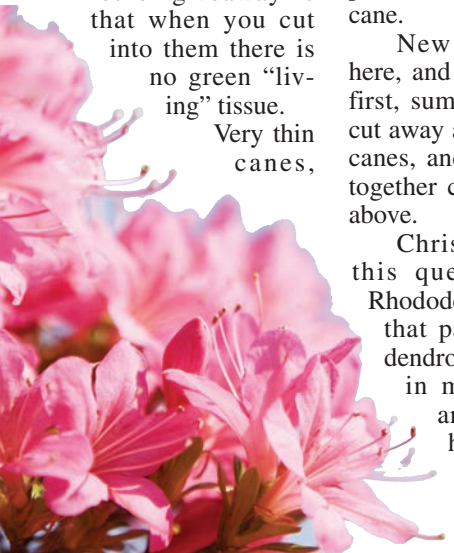
People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

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.



WORTHINGTON

STREAMING SERVICE



This cascade along Route 112 in Worthington is a seasonal event. Normally there are no falls there. They develop with abundant rainfall and the drop in elevation.
Turley photo by Deborah Daniels

Worthington Gardeners host Master Gardener

WORTHINGTON – The Worthington Gardeners will hold a timely presentation on Gardening Water Wisdom by Carol Rego, a certified Massachusetts Master Gardener on Thursday, April 10 at 7 p.m. in the Worthington Historical Society, 6 Williamsburg Road.

Gardening Water Wisdom: Save Water, the Environment, and Money presentation explains the water cycle on earth both the natural cycle and the human cycle and then reviews the local (Massachusetts) impact of climate change on both drought and precipitation. It presents the reasons why, as gardeners and environmental stewards, people need to start adapting to these climate variations to preserve and protect the quantity and quality of natural resources. The second half of the presentation covers many practical and effective ways of being “Water Smart” to reduce water consumption, improve the environment, and maintain a healthy, productive garden.

Carol Rego is a 2022 graduate of the MMGA Master Gardener Certification Program. As a Professional Engineer she is passionately committed to delivering safe, quality water as an essential community service. During her 40-year career with a global consulting firm headquartered in Boston, Carol has managed many large and complex drinking water projects. Her expertise includes treatability studies, process selection, drinking water research, Safe Drinking Water Act compliance, water supply planning and water treatment plant evaluations, operations and design. She participates in several MMGA outreach and educational programs, including managing the soil pH testing team and the outreach garden and training program at the Pondville Correctional Facility.

This presentation is sponsored by the Worthington Gardeners. Refreshments will be served. For more information, people may email Michele Dodge at michelesdodge@yahoo.com.

NORTHAMPTON

Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice offers panel discussion on April 16

NORTHAMPTON – In observance of National Healthcare Decisions Day, Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospital invites the community to an enlightening panel discussion on April 16 from 2-4 p.m. at Northampton Elks Lodge, 17 Spring St.

People should RSVP by calling Kelley at 413-582-5330 or emailing vec-dhc@cooleydickinson.org. The panel will explore the vital aspects of self-advocacy, from designating a health care proxy to establishing a power of attorney. Having meaningful conversations about how people wish to approach the end of life is important in supporting themselves and their loved ones.

Panel participants

include: Priscilla M. Ross, RN, Program Director with the Executive Office of Aging and Independence, who will shed light on the options available in Massachusetts to ensure you get the care you want. Ben Palkowski, Attorney/CPA, Old Colony Law, who will clarify the significance of a Power of Attorney (POA) and estate planning, outlining the legal avenues available to ensure your wishes are honored. Jennifer Hutchison, PT, DPT, Clinical Director, Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice, who will explore the vital concepts of a health care proxy. Jenny Papageorge, Director of Planned Giving, Cooley Dickinson Hospital, will share ways you can create a charitable legacy.

PLEASE REMEMBER
TO RECYCLE
THIS NEWSPAPER

CHESTER



Two dinosaur friends showed up to surprise children at a recent library Story and Fun Time.



The craft at a recent Story and Fun Time was making a dinosaur.

Submitted photos



Children pose with a dinosaur friend at Story and Fun Time held Thursday, March 20 at the Hamilton Memorial Library.

Library holds dinosaur event

CHESTER – Children of all ages are invited to the Hamilton Memorial Library, 195 West Main St., for the next monthly movie, “Hop” on Tuesday, April 1 at 4 p.m.

This family friendly

live-action/animated comedy stars E.B., the Easter Bunny’s son who is expected to take over the family business, but who would rather follow his own dream to be a drummer in a band. E.B.

meets an unemployed human when he runs away, whose wish is to become the next Easter Bunny, but an evil chick plots to take over the business instead. Snacks will be served.



These two dinosaurs greeted library patron by standing next to the Hamilton Memorial Library sign.

Senators Markey and Cruz reintroduce bill to keep AM Radio in new vehicles

Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), member of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, and Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, reintroduced the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act.

This legislation would direct the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to require automakers to maintain AM broadcast radio in

their new vehicles at no additional charge.

“As we witness more tragic climate change-induced disasters like the wildfires in Los Angeles, broadcast AM radio continues to be a critical tool for communication. AM radio is a lifeline for people across the country for news, sports and especially emergency information,” said Senator Markey. “Tens of millions of listeners across the country have made clear that they want AM radio to remain in their

vehicles. Our AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act heeds their words and ensures that this essential tool doesn’t get lost on the dial.”

“During weather disasters or power outages, AM radio is consistently the most reliable form of communication and is critical to keep millions of Texans safe. AM radio has long been a haven for people to express differing viewpoints, allowing free speech and our robust democratic process to flourish for decades.

I am honored to once again partner with Sen. Markey on this bipartisan legislation on behalf of our constituents who depend on AM radio and public airwaves for access to news, music, talk, and emergency alerts,” said Senator Cruz.

Cosponsors in the Senate include Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.), John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Katie Britt (R-Ala.), Ted Budd (R-N.C.), Maria

Cantwell (D-Wash.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.V.), Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), Jim Justice (R-W.V.), Angus King (I-Maine), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), James Lankford (R-Okla.), Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.),

Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.), Roger Marshall (R-Kan.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Rick Scott (R-Fla.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Tim Sheehy (R-Mont.), Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Todd Young (R-Ind.), John Barrasso (R-Wy.), Jim Banks (R-Ind.), and John Hoeven (R-N.D.).

BLANDFORD

TRIVA NIGHT HELD IN BLANDFORD TOWN HALL



Residents of Blandford had a Trivia Table at the Gateway Education Foundation Trivia Night fundraiser last Saturday. They are Peter and Barbara Langmore, Kim Dirschka, Pam Dirschka, Ginger Pisano (Joey Pisano's mother) Paul Dirschka, Meg Arvin and Beth Langmore Avila.
Photo courtesy of Pam Dirschka

ACRES

from page 1

This effect on collisions is a well-established fact, which adds a public health/safety component to the project, Rossi stated in his email.

There are four partners working on this project DCR, MassDOT, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game and The Nature Conservancy. “DCR is excited about our section of this project because it will create a new access point in Blandford for Chester-Blandford State Forest. We’re too early in the process to have specifics on parking, specific trails, etc., but there are two gates and some dirt roads on the property. So that certainly offers a head start.

Plans will start to take shape more after closing. Uses on the property will be the same as the rest of the State Forest, hunting, hiking, biking, snowmobiling, etc.,” he said. DFG will have their portion open for public use like their other facilities including hunting. Gates also told the board that the DCR planned on making access to the state forest from the Chester Road site as well.

“I think this is an awesome project for the town,” he said. The other Conservation Commission members are in full support and have signed a letter to that effect.

The question was

asked about how the tax rolls would be affected. Harald Sheid, CEO of the town’s assessing agency, Regional Resource Group, said Wednesday that the maximum amount added to the tax bills could possibly be \$.02 per \$1,000. The property will still be taxed, but at a predetermined rate that has already been set by the state.

The property in question is already in Chapter land, meaning it is assessed at a lesser rate. DCR has notified Sen. Paul W. Mark, Rep. Nicholas A. Boldyga, and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission of this proposal.

Dirt roads have new mud season signs

BLANDFORD – Highway Superintendent Ray Hultay told Select Board Monday, March 17, that the department had purchased “enough signs for all the dirt roads to make sure we can visibly post to the public” that the dirt roads are closed to commercial vehicles during mud season.

The signs also have the department’s telephone number on them. The signs are red outlined and lettered on a white background and are reflective, Hultay told the board. The signs are placed just under the street signs and at a height visible to larger commercial vehicles. The department is addressing road washouts, problem culverts and flooding issues.



Highway Superintendent Ray Hultay stands by a new Mud Season sign on Huntington Road. The intent is to prevent commercial traffic on dirt roads.
Turley photo by Mary Kronholm



Send Us Your Photos!

countryjournal@turley.com

TRIVA

from page 1

the Hilltown Hippiess and Hilltown Hicks were tied for first place with 19 points, followed closely by Tiki Time (18) and Spring Fling (16). Checking in with the Hilltown Hicks, Scott Atkin said that the two most difficult questions in the first half were the movie that was mistakenly named best picture at the Oscars in 2017 (La La Land) and the number of steps that are taken by soldiers in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (21, to match the 21 gun salute).

Alumnus Joey Pisani of the Gateway Class of '24 spoke with the room during the halftime break. As a student, Pisani had testified at the State House about the

need for equitable funding to rural schools. “What are we sending Gateway kids out into the world, ready to do?,” Pisani asked. “It is the funds that you are giving tonight that help students from a super small school with experiences that uplift them.”

Pisani moved to advocacy in his remarks. “It’s time to advocate for state funding. But these funds [from GEF] tell students I can do anything because I am from Gateway.”

By the end of ten rounds, the Hilltown Hippiess had pulled away with 35 points. Tied for second were Spring Fling and Hilltown Hicks at 32 points. Members of the winning team includ-

ed Bob Hyjek, Linda Hyjek, Jenna Kakimoto, Martha Otterbeck, Abby Meunier, Matt Meunier, Annie Pritchard and Sean St. Clair.

Bragging rights also went to the team with the best themed table. Doors had opened an hour before the game started for the 11 teams to lay out food, drinks, decorations and costumes. With names like Buzzer Beaters, Tiki Time, Ridge Runners and March Madness the competition was lively. In the end, Tiki Time took the honors.

Adding to the festivities were a basket raffle of items donated by area businesses and a 50/50 raffle, where the winner gets half

of the funding in the pot. As usual, area businesses came through by donating 48 beautiful items that upped interest in purchasing tickets to win prizes. Those who donated were Applebees, Azure Green, B & D's, Bee Shine Spa, Carms, Comfort Kitchen, Sarah Foley Photography, Gateway Farm & Pet, Grey Catbird Studio, Moltenbrey's Market, Starbucks and Westfield Bank. Anticipation was high during the raffle, including for a quilt and basket donated by Superintendent Kristen Smidy's mother.

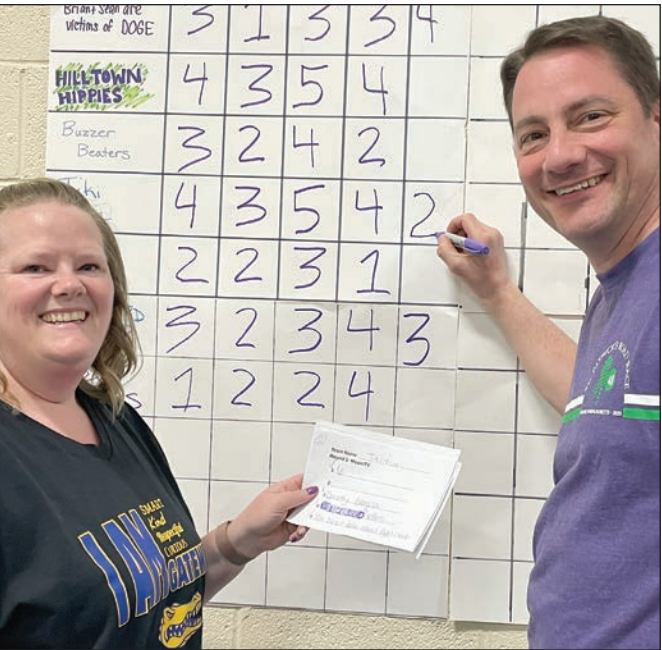
The 50/50 raffle was held last and would yield \$117 to the winner. Peter Langmore of Blandford won

the drawing and generously donated his winnings back to the Foundation.

Wing looked back at prior trivia nights. The first was held outdoors at Strathmore Park, but had to take place later in the school year-a time that tends to be very busy for schools and families. They moved indoors to Stanton Hall the following year and were able to shift the event to March. Last year, Wing said, interest had grown and they had so many people they needed to look for a bigger space, hence the move to Blandford Town Hall.

Wing said that the Board had scheduled a number of planning meetings for this

year and realized early on that they all knew what to do and were able to get it all done and skip the meetings. Under their bylaws, the Board consists of a mix of teachers, parents, alumni and school committee members. They include alumna Laurie Martell; parent/staff Annie Pritchard, teacher/parent Linda Hyjek; teacher Jenna Kakimoto; parents Nick Balboni and Tara Balboni, who is also on School Committee; parent Chrissy DeAngelis' parent/school committee member Lyndsey Papillon and retired teacher/parent of alumni Chris Bresnahan. Superintendent Kristen Smidy serves as an ex-officio member.



GEF Board members Lyndsey Papillon and Nick Balboni kept careful count and posted each round of scores.



Trivia judges Eliza Mueller, Joey Pisani, Cynthea Papillon and Madilyn Beneway reviewed each submission and scored accordingly.
Turley photos by Wendy Long



Emcee Michele Crane led the trivia contest.



Spring Fling team (left to right): Chrissy DeAngelis, Mary Mueller, (David Hopson, standing), Mark Mueller, Nick Balboni, Norm Peloquin, Beth Peloquin, Tara Balboni and Jesse Balboni.



Some of the members of the winning themed Tiki Time team: Aurora Hayes, James Hayes, Bridget LcClair, James Mastorakis and Margaret Petzold.



Hilltown Hicks team included retired teachers Ruth Harper and Karen Savoy, and parent of alumni Scott Atkin.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Culinary program hosts open house

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College will host an open house and free community tasting event on Wednesday, April 9 from 4-7 p.m. at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St.

Visitors will be able tour the state-of-the-art kitchens at the college’s culinary arts facility, sample dishes prepared by culinary arts students and faculty, learn about the college’s culinary arts certificate and associate degree programs, noncredit job training and personal enrichment classes and play Food Bash Bingo for a chance to win prizes.

“We will have food in every kitchen, showcasing the work of our talented students and instructors,” said Stacy Graves, the culinary arts institute coordinator. “Various HCC programs and community partners will have informational tables in the dining room so the public can learn about their programs.”

Visitor will have the opportunity to talk to representatives from HCC programs and offices, including Admissions, the Marieb Adult Learner Success Center, HCC Foundation, Alumni Relations, Thrive Center and Food Pantry, El Centro, ALANA Men in Motion, and Jumpstart, as well as personnel from area community groups, including Tech Foundry/Tech Hub, United Way, Alzheimer’s Organization, and Holyoke Medical Center.

The HCC Culinary Arts Truck – a.k.a. The CAT – will also be parked outside the building for visitors to explore, and the HCC Culinary Arts Club will be selling homemade ice cream as a club fundraiser.

Staff from the HCC Admissions office will be on hand to discuss enrollment options, including MassEducate, the state program for free community

college.

In 2021, HCC placed 50th among the Best Culinary Schools in America, a list that also includes such esteemed schools as the Culinary Institute of America. HCC’s culinary program ranked third in New England after Johnson & Wales in Providence, R.I. and Southern Maine Community College in Portland. Best Choice Schools cited HCC for the quality of its one-year certificate and two-year associate of arts in science degree programs in culinary arts, as well as its 20,000 square-foot culinary arts facility, which opened in downtown Holyoke in 2018.

The HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute is equipped with four modern kitchens, a bakery, hotel lab and student-run dining room.

For more information about HCC’s Culinary Arts program, people may visit hcc.edu/culinary or send an email to CAI@hcc.edu.

BOSTON – Ella Mastroianni of Westfield, a member of the Class of 2026, made the fall semester Dean’s List at Emerson College.

She is majoring in Writing, Literature and Publishing and is a member of the Emerson College Class of 2026. The requirement to make the Dean’s List is a grade point average of 3.7 or higher for that semester.

Ella Mastroianni makes Dean’s List

SPRINGFIELD – The Valley Press Club, based in Springfield, will award \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut, who are interested in pursuing a career in journalism.

The Valley Press Club Scholarships, funded by contributions and dues to the Press Club, are for students planning careers in print, online or broadcast journalism.

The Edward J. Malley Jr. Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of a chief photographer for the Springfield Newspapers, is for students planning

Scholarship applications are available at www.ValleyPressClub.com or high school guidance offices. Applications may be sent by mail to Noreen Tassinari, Scholarship Chair, Valley Press Club, P.O. Box 5475, Springfield, Mass. 01102 or electronically to NTassinari77@gmail.com

Over the course of six decades, The Valley Press Club has presented over \$140,000 in scholarships to eligible students. The Valley Press Club consists of active and retired journalists and public relations professionals from corporate and nonprofit organizations.

careers in photojournalism.

The Rhonda Swan Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of the award-winning journalist, editor and author, is for students who are underrepresented, in the Springfield, area, planning careers in journalism.

Primary emphasis is placed on career goals, writing ability, scholastic aptitude and overall achievement as measured by an applicant’s high school transcript, class rank, academic awards, SAT scores and extracurricular activities.

The deadline for submissions is Friday, April 4.

Valley Press Club offer scholarships

EASTHAMPTON

bankESB parent company wins top workplace award

EASTHAMPTON – Hometown Financial Group, the parent company of bankESB, bankHometown, North Shore Bank, Abington Bank, a division of North Shore Bank and Hometown Mortgage, announced it has earned the 2025 USA TODAY Top Workplaces award for the third time in four years.

Top Workplaces USA

celebrates organizations with 150 or more employees that are dedicated to building an exceptional people-first culture. Winners are chosen based solely on employee feedback gathered through an anonymous, third-party employee engagement survey, issued by Energage, a leading provider of technology-based employee engagement tools.

More than 42,000 organizations across the country were invited to participate in the Top Workplaces USA survey. Results are calculated by comparing the survey’s research-based statements, including 15 Culture Drivers that are proven to predict high performance against industry benchmarks.

“We’re honored to have received this trio of national

awards as an employer of choice. But we’re even more grateful to our employees because it’s their positive feedback that earned us the honor,” said Hometown Financial Group Chairman and CEO and bankESB President and CEO Matthew S. Sosik. “Our dedicated, talented, and passionate employees continually

unlocking potential for our customers, our communities and one another. And they’ve embraced our culture where ‘Respect everyone,’ ‘Foster positive energy and laugh often. Have fun.’ are three of our most treasured core values. They believe we’re doing something right.”

“Earning a Top Workplaces award is a

badge of honor for companies, especially because it comes authentically from their employees,” said Eric Rubino, Energage CEO. “That’s something to be proud of. In today’s market, leaders must ensure they’re allowing employees to have a voice and be heard. That’s paramount. Top Workplaces do this and it pays dividends.”

MONTGOMERY

Library to host pastel workshop on April 5

MONTGOMERY – The Grace Hall Memorial Library, 161 Main Road, will host “The Seahorse: How to Pastel Paint,” with materials, for adults and teens.

Award-winning pastel artist Gregory John Maichack will present “The Seahorse,” a pastel painting workshop for adults and teens 18+ hosted by the Montgomery Library on April 5 from 11a.m.-1 p.m. This is a pastel painting workshop designed for both sheer beginners to advanced participants. People may email GraceHallMemorialLibrary@montgomerylibrary@yahoo.com or call 413-862-3894 to pre register.

This all-new “The Seahorse: How to Pastel Paint,” all draw a seahorse or

use a template that Maichack provides, both large and small seahorses. We also create bubbles and a template will be provided as well. This is fun, and has an ocean of possibilities, having instruction in expressive pastel strokes, blending, slurring and layering. Additionally emerald pastel pencils will be provided for details. All keep their 12” X 18” pastel painting of their personalized vivid seahorse.

Photo references of various pastel seahorses are supplied for ideas allowing unfathomable possibilities. Maichack’s own pastel painted seahorses will unveil the process. All will be entertained by lively anecdotes on the mystery of seahorses.

Maichack, is an

award-winning artist, twice Mass. Cultural Council Gold Star Award Program nominee, a seasoned pro from instructing at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, colleges, to 100s of libraries.

Maichack lives in the Berkshires and is a portraitist and painter working primarily in pastels. Maichack was commissioned by Westfield State College to paint the pastel portrait of the past president of Westfield State University, Doctor Frederick Woodward, which was unveiled at the dedication of the Woodward Center; and pastel painted dictionary great Charles Merriam, unveiled by Merriam-Webster Co. at Merriam-Gilbert Library.

Maichack has been a fac-

ulty member of the Museum Studio School in the Fine Arts Museum Quadrangle in Springfield and taught at Holyoke and Greenfield Community Colleges, Westfield State University, East Works, the MFA, Boston, and The Guild, Northampton. Maichack’s pastel paintings have been selected twice for the Annual National Exhibition of the Academic Artists Association and as a result Maichack was invited to be a member of this prestigious organization.

This project is supported in part from a grant from the Montgomery Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

MUSIC

from page 1

Skyline, Sure Shot and Liquid Floyd. Saxophonist Joe Nerney studied music education at Boston Conservatory and is also seen performing throughout the area with the likes of Seth Glier and as part of the duo the West Hill Two and his larger ensemble, West Hill Groove. He also hosts “Podcast from Joe” on apple podcasts.

This monthly series is co-hosted by the Montgomery Public Library and by Gray Catbird Pottery Studio.

Attendees are invited to bring baked goods to share. Donations are accepted for the refreshments with money split between the Montgomery Volunteer Firemen’s Association and the Town Library. Donations are also accepted to tip and thank the fabulous musicians who perform each week.

This event is open to all who are interested. For more information, people may call Dale Rogers at 413-875-5205.

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countryjournal@turley.com

PUBLIC NOTICES

TOWN OF WORTHINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to MGL 71 section 38N, the Worthington School Committee will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 6:30 PM at R.H. Conwell Elementary School, 147 Huntington Road, Worthington and via Google Meet** to consider the proposed school district budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

School Committee Meeting via google meet
Thursday, April 10, 2025 6:30–10:00pm
Time zone: America/New York
Google Meet joining info meet.google.com/xho-xahh-dgk
Or dial:
(US) +1 678-769-4479
PIN: 343357737

Copies of the proposed budget are available in the main office of the R. H. Conwell Elementary School and will be available below on March 27, 2024:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17eMuVIL_mwJXme6AF0Opf-4mjLFW9BVW?usp=share_link
03/27/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD25P0393EA Estate of: Martha Louise Hoynoski Date of Death: 11/28/2024 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons: A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Robert J Guz, Jr. of Austin, TX** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Robert J Guz, Jr. of Austin, TX** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain

a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 04/15/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.**

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

A **Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the**

Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: March 18, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
03/27/2025

REQUEST FOR SERVICES (RFS) Porter Memorial Library Design Services

The Town of Blandford is soliciting qualifications for the MPLCP Level of design services for the Porter Memorial Library design services. The MPLCP Level of Design services will be a negotiated fee. The Town may negotiate with the same designer for additional design services such as design development, surveys plans, specifications, bid phase, and construction phase services, FF&E, and close out services, etc.

Designer Selection Services are being procured under M.G.L

c. 7c §§44-57

A **Mandatory** briefing and walkthrough will be held at Porter Memorial Library, 87 Main Street Blandford, MA, 01008 on March 25th, 2025 at 9:00am.

Request for Services documents are available from the Town of Blandford OPM, Aaron Singer, via email - aaron.singer@skanska.com.

Forward any questions by 2pm April 1st 2025, as instructed in the RFS document to the Town of Blandford OPM, Aaron Singer, via email aaron.singer@skanska.com. As mandated by Massachusetts General Law, c. 7C ss44 the applicant principal designer shall be a Massachusetts registered Architect or Engineer.

Sealed proposals should be delivered to the Porter Memorial Library and will be received until the RFS proposal deadline of **Wednesday, April 9th, 2025 at 2:00pm**.

Late qualifications will be rejected. Proposal submissions should be in an envelope labeled ‘RFS – Porter Memorial Library Design Services’, along with the complete contact information of

the proposer. The proposal submission should include six (6) hard copies of the proposal and one (1) thumb drive containing the submission in a PDF.

The Town of Blandford, reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, waive informalities, and to award contracts in the best interest of the Town.

03/20, 03/27/2025

BLANDFORD NOTICE OF TOWN MEETING PUBLIC HEARING

On **Monday, March 31, 2025 at 6pm** at Town Hall the Blandford Select Board will hold a public hearing to discuss the following

- Petition order from Ever-source for joint or identical pole locations.
- Certificate of Announcement pursuant to 301 CMR 51.07(2) The Department of Conservation and Recreation may acquire an interest in a parcel of land located in Blandford.

The documentation is available for inspection at the Select Board Office, Library and Post Office.

03/27/2025

REGION

April is Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Month

BOSTON – April is Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Month and the American Parkinson Disease Association will commemorate the month with a “Did You Know?” campaign that will educate the public about Parkinson’s Disease.

They will highlight everything from statistics and symptoms to personal stories and ways to get involved while also helping those affected by Parkinson Disease feel empowered with the resources and support they need.

Through a nationwide network of Chapters and Information & Referral Centers, APDA works every day to provide the support, education and research that will help everyone impacted by PD live life to the fullest. The APDA Massachusetts Chapter and APDA I&R Center at Boston University School of Medicine work in tandem to support people living with PD throughout the Commonwealth and beyond,

as well as their care partners and loved ones, by helping them assemble the resources, support and medical expertise they need to feel more empowered, connected and optimistic.

Throughout Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Month and always, the APDA Massachusetts Chapter and APDA I&R Center at Boston University have a variety of programs and events planned, with many ways for people to get involved. April is the perfect time to register for the 39th Annual Massachusetts Optimism Walk, which will take place on Sunday, May 18 in Framingham as part of a nationwide initiative to raise awareness and vital funds for the PD community. The Optimism Walk series is a cornerstone of APDA’s efforts to empower individuals living with PD and their families while advancing research towards better treatments and, ultimately, a cure. Additionally, throughout the



month, APDA will share educational information and resources on all APDA social media channels using #DidYouKnow.

With approximately one million people living with PD in the United States: 21,000 of which are in Massachusetts and 90,000 new diagnoses every year, it is critical to engage, inform and support the PD community and raise public awareness about the disease. Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Month is the perfect time to shine a spotlight on this issue.

“With a new diagnosis every six minutes, nearly 7,200 people in this country will learn they have PD in April alone,” states Cathi Thomas, RN, MS, Program Coordinator at the APDA I&R Center at

Unlocking Strength Within, and Let’s Keep Moving with APDA to a variety of virtual exercise and movement classes, there is something for everyone.

Support from the public is crucial and Parkinson’s Disease Awareness Month is an especially meaningful time to take action to help those coping with this progressive neurodegenerative movement disorder. People can support by raising awareness of PD and/or by making a donation that will enable APDA to continue their critical work and fund research that will lead to better treatments and ultimately, a cure. Every effort makes a difference.

The APDA Massachusetts Chapter and APDA I&R Center at Boston University offer a wide range of Parkinson’s disease programs, resources, education, and support. To learn more, visit www.apdaparkinson.org/ma, email apdama@apdaparkinson.org or call

800-651-8466.

The American Parkinson Disease Association is a nationwide grassroots network dedicated to fighting Parkinson’s disease and works tirelessly to assist the more than one million people with PD in the United States live life to the fullest in the face of this chronic, neurological disorder. Founded in 1961, APDA has raised and invested more than \$313 million to provide outstanding patient services and educational programs, elevate public awareness about the disease and support research designed to unlock the mysteries of PD and end this disease. To join in the fight against Parkinson’s disease and to learn more about the support APDA provides nationally through a network of Chapters and Information & Referral Centers, as well as a national Research Program and Centers for Advanced Research, people may visit us at www.apdaparkinson.org.

AAA finds fatal pedestrian crashes occur mostly at night

WESTWOOD – New research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reveals concerning trends in pedestrian fatalities in the U.S., which have soared by over 80% in the past 15 years.

There have been 7,522 fatalities nationally in 2022, after reaching a historic low of 4,109 fatalities in 2009. Almost the entire increase in pedestrian deaths has occurred on urban arterial roads, after dark. These busy roads are typically built to quickly move a lot of traffic in urban and suburban areas while still allowing access to local streets.

Examples of these roads

in Massachusetts include Route 1 and Route 9. This means pedestrians and vehicles often share congested roads that are not always well-lit or have appropriate sidewalks, crosswalks or traffic signals.

Researchers uncovered that a disproportionate number of these pedestrian deaths occurred in socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Many residents in these areas depend heavily on walking, especially to reach public transportation. Cities and suburbs continue to grapple with several challenges when it comes to implementing the neces-

sary infrastructure upgrades needed to make roads safer in these communities. AAA urges planners, public health professionals, legislators and traffic safety practitioners to work together to reverse these deadly trends.

The study also identified several interconnected factors in these crashes, including a lack of safe crossing locations, high pedestrian crossing volumes and poorly lit roads without continuous sidewalks.

“Reducing the spike in pedestrian deaths requires data-driven investments made where they can have maximum impact,” said Mark Schieldrop, Senior

Spokesperson for AAA Northeast. “Drivers and pedestrians alike must behave appropriately on the road. But, to truly move the needle on safety, policymakers must invest in road improvements in communities where a disproportionate number of pedestrians are hit and killed.”

AAA recommends a Safe System approach, which considers the need to address both human and infrastructure factors, reducing crash severity through safer roads, vehicles, speeds and road users.

AAA reminds drivers to do their part as well: Remember to stay alert.

Engaging in risky driving behaviors such as speeding, texting, driving while drowsy or distracted or driving under the influence of cannabis or alcohol significantly increases the risk of a collision. Follow speed limits, keep your smartphone out of reach and only drive when sober.

Do not rely on pedestrian detection systems to prevent a crash. This technology should only serve as a backup, not a replacement for an engaged driver.

Drive with extra caution at night, as this is the riskiest time for pedestrians and when vehicle safety systems struggle the most.

Drivers are responsible for yielding to pedestrians, but those traveling on foot should also be vigilant. Pedestrians should use caution by staying on sidewalks and using crosswalks as often as possible. Always obey traffic signals, look both ways before crossing the street and do not walk and text.

AAA Northeast is a not-for-profit auto club with offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and New York, providing more than 6.5 million local AAA members with travel, insurance, financial and auto-related services.

BEAT host NOFA soil scientist

SHEFFIELD – Rubén Parrilla, a soil scientist with the Massachusetts Chapter of Northeast Organic Farming Association will discuss the relationship between glyphosate use and soil health at the April Berkshire Green Drinks event on Wednesday, April 9.

This free hybrid event will take place online via Zoom and in person at Race Brook Lodge, 864 South Undermountain Road. The in-person social gathering will begin around 5:15 p.m.; the presentation and Zoom meeting will start at 6 p.m.



Glyphosate is a widely used herbicide that kills plants and is a key ingredient in Roundup. In this presentation, Rubén will explore the effects of glyphosate on soil health, microbial communities, water permeability, and broader ecological impacts, with a strong focus on the research of Dr. Don Huber. Rubén will examine how glyphosate influences soil microbiology, nutrient availability, and plant disease susceptibility.

Additionally, Rubén will discuss its potential health implications for wildlife and humans, application method differences and alternative land management approaches. The goal of the presentation is to provide an engaging and informative discussion that equips attendees with a deeper understanding of glyphosate’s role in soil ecosystems and its relevance to our region.

To learn more and RSVP, people should visit <https://tinyurl.com/April2025-Berks-Green-Drinks>.

Rubén Parilla is the Soil Technical Coordinator and Education Director for NOFA/Mass and trained in microscopic soil microbial identification through the Soil Food Web School. He is a Certified Lab Tech and studied Environmental Design at the University of Puerto Rico. Rubén has 15 years’ experience working at different capacities in the environmental laboratory industry. He has been performing soil carbon proxy testing, soil health assessments, soil chemical analysis and soil microbiological evaluations for NOFA/Mass over the past 3three years and has extensive experience farming and working with farmers including beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers. Rubén performs soil health-related outreach and education events for NOFA/Mass by leading monthly

farmer learning calls, providing hands-on workshops and instruction at soil health education events, and networking with farmers and individuals in the agricultural industry. He is a fluent and native Spanish speaker and fully English/Spanish bilingual.

The April Berkshire Green Drinks event is co-sponsored by Race Brook Lodge. Consider making a dinner reservation in advance for after the Green Drinks event!

Berkshire Green Drinks is an informal gathering on the second Wednesday of the month that is free and open to everyone with any environmental interest. A guest speaker talks about an environmentally related topic for approximately 30 minutes beginning at 6 p.m.; the presentation is followed by a discussion and question and answer. The drinks aren’t green but the conversations are. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join and bring along questions

Berkshire Green Drinks is sponsored and organized by the Berkshire Environmental Action Team. This month’s Berkshire Green Drinks event is co-sponsored by Hot Plate Brewing Co. For more information regarding Berkshire Green Drinks, people may email Chelsey.Simmons@thebeatnews.org or call 413-464-9402.

Gas prices decrease two cents

WESTWOOD – Northeast gasoline prices continue to buck the seasonal trend, falling at a time they typically climb thanks to sizable inventories that remain well above average and economic uncertainty gripping global markets.

The dip in prices comes despite demand for gasoline last week reaching the highest level of the year at 9.18 million barrels a day, according to the Energy Information Administration. That’s an increase of 300,000 barrels a day from the previous week and the highest seen for an early March week since 2020.

But the stronger domestic demand wasn’t enough to keep petroleum prices from falling alongside stocks and commodities as uncertainty about tariffs and trade injected volatility into markets last week. Global demand is also weighing heavily on prices, particularly because OPEC+ production increases are expected to begin in April. Last week, the International Energy Agency forecasted that global supply will exceed demand later this year, which could keep a lid on crude prices and lead to cheaper gasoline.

The other factor keeping prices down is strong supply: domestic inventories of gasoline are about seven million barrels above where

they were in the comparable week of last year and about three million more than the five-year average, according to the EIA. It’s a similar story in the Northeast: 65.3 million barrels are in storage, compared to 61.1 million last year and the 62 million five-year average.

“As more Americans took to the road last week, they enjoyed markedly lower gas prices this year than last,” said Mark Schieldrop, senior spokesperson for AAA Northeast. “In Massachusetts, for example, prices are nearly 30 cents lower than they were last year.”

The average gas price in Massachusetts is down 4 cents from last week (\$2.99), averaging \$2.95 per gallon. Today’s price is eight cents lower than a month ago (\$3.03) and 29 cents lower than this day last year (\$3.24). Massachusetts’ average gas price is 12 cents lower than the national average.

AAA Northeast’s

March 17 survey of fuel prices found the current national average down a penny from last week (\$3.08), averaging \$3.07 gallon. Today’s national average price is nine cents lower than a month ago (\$3.16) and 39 cents lower than this day last year (\$3.46).

Today, Mississippi and Texas have the lowest prices in the nation, at \$2.63 and \$2.65 respectively. California and Hawaii hold the highest prices in the nation this week at \$4.65 and \$4.51, respectively. Massachusetts holds the 24th place on the list of highest gas prices in the nation.

AAA Northeast is a not-for-profit auto club with offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and New York, providing more than 6.5 million local AAA members with travel, insurance, financial and auto-related services.



National Alliance on Mental Illness hosts art and poetry show April 1

HOLYOKE – The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Western Massachusetts will hold an opening reception for its 14th Annual Art and Poetry Show featuring the work of artists and poets living with mental

health conditions.

It will take place on Wednesday, April 1 from 6-8 p.m. at the Chicopee Public Library, 449 Front St., Chicopee. The reception, and parking adjacent to the library, are free. The show will feature

art and poetry works, some for sale to the public, with all proceeds going to the artists. Complimentary refreshments will be served and all are welcome to attend this very special event. The exhibit runs the entire month of April.

This is a wonderful venue for artists and poets with lived experience to have a showcase for their work. It provides an important opportunity to educate the public about the lives, abilities, and creativity of individuals in the Western

Massachusetts community with mental health conditions.

NAMI Western Massachusetts is dedicated to building better lives for individuals and families affected by mental health conditions. According to statistics, 1 in 5

Americans will face mental health problems every year. With people’s help, NAMI-WM can continue to raise awareness and provide essential education, advocacy, and support programs for people in our community.

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Light Equipment Operator/Laborer has a 40 hour per week position available for a Light Equipment Operator/Laborer. This position requires the ability to operate various types of machinery, hand tools and equipment (examples include lawnmowers, plows, sanders, asphalt paving equipment). The position is Grade 3 class classification. Steps within this grade range are from \$18.72 - \$24.42 per hour. A valid Massachusetts class A or B CDL driver's license is required. Special consideration will be given to candidates who possess a license in the higher license class, or additional licenses and/or relevant construction experience that would be determined to be beneficial to the operations of the Highway Department. Please contact the Highway Superintendent at **413-467-7575** at the **Highway Garage (15 Crescent Street, Granby MA 01033)** for further information. In return, a copy of the job description and/or an application for employment. Applications will be accepted through May 1, 2025.

The Town of Huntington is seeking a full-time **Highway Truck Driver/Equipment Operator/Laborer**. Applicants must possess a Massachusetts Class B CDL with Air Brake Endorsement and possess or be able to obtain 2B or higher & 4G Hoisting Engineer's licenses within 6 months of hire. \$27.50 to \$28.79 per hour based on qualifications. Application and complete job description are available online at www.huntingtonma.us or by emailing admin@huntingtonma.us. Position is open until filled. Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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OPPORTUNITY**

ALL REAL ESTATE advertised herein is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation, or discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination." We will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. All persons are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised are available on an equal opportunity basis.

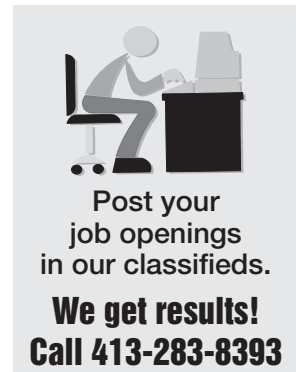
FOR RENT



All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination.

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

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1	2	3	4
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13	14	15	16
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21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40

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Card #: _____ Exp. Date _____ CVV _____

Amount of charge: _____ Date: _____

Quabbin Village Hills
Circulation: 50,500

Towns shown: PETERBURN, HUBBARDSTON, BARRE, RUTLAND, DORHAM, NEW BRANTREE, NORTH BROOKFIELD, WEST BROOKFIELD, WARREN, BROOKFIELD, PALMER, WARE, BELCHERTON, AMHERST, GRANBY, PLAINFIELD, CUMMINGTON, GOSHEN, WORTHINGTON, CHESTERFIELD, WILLAMSBURG, MIDDLEFIELD, BUCKET, CHESTER, HARTFORD, WEST-HARTFORD, UTE, BLANDFORD, RUSSSELL, WESTFIELD, GARDENFIELD, TOLLAND, GRANVILLE.

Suburban Residential
Circulation: 59,000

Towns shown: HADLEY, EASTHAMPTON, SOUTH.

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CHESTERFIELD

EARLY SIGNS OF SPRING



These croci, one of the early flowers of spring, are in bloom in West Chesterfield.

Turley photo by Deborah Daniels

OBITUARY

David J. Watson, 73

David J. Watson, 73, of Worthington, passed away on Feb. 13, 2025 at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton. Born on March 24, 1951 in Westfield, David was the son of the late Ernest F. Watson and Jean A. (Glasing) Watston.

David grew up in Russell, where he attended Gateway Regional High School and was a graduate of the class of 1969. After graduation he made a career as a welder on the railroad; eventually retiring from Conrail Railroad.

Throughout his lifetime he enjoyed many hobbies to include quarter midget racing,, skiing, hiking and caring for his chickens on his hobby farm. Nothing, however, could compare to his passion for music. This love started as part of high school



bands such as “Alexander’s Brother” and “Non Ce Fuss.” They were all the rage for local high schoolers in 1968-1969, where Alexander’s Brother” won several battle of the bands. Since that time, he was rarely seen without an acoustic guitar nearby, although his taste for music mellowed over time from rock and roll to the blues. Not only did he love to play, he was known for repairing and building acoustic guitars. His love of music and guitars gave him a lifetime surrounded by friends and beautiful music.

David was predeceased by his sister, Donna Cranson. He leaves behind his daughters, Stacy Stewart (Willard) of Chester and Stefani Watson of Cazenovia, New York.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

DEATH NOTICE

WATSON, DAVID J.

Died Feb. 13, 2025
Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

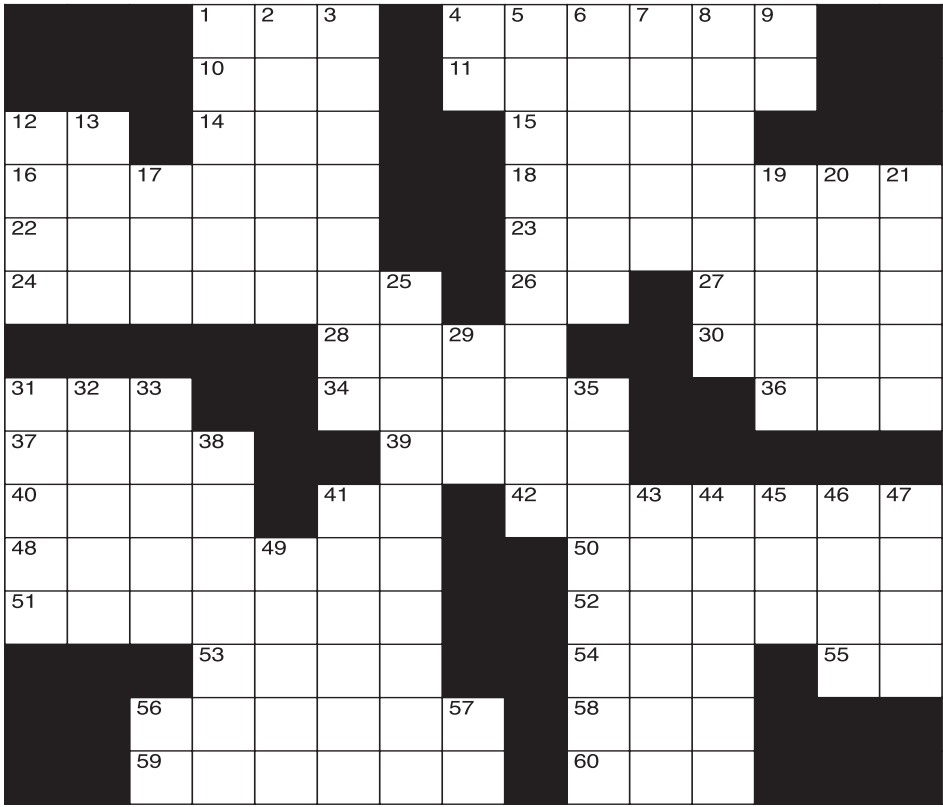
Country Journal OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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



CLUES ACROSS

- State in southwestern India
- Pashto
- Corpuscle count (abbr.)
- Supervised release from prison
- Greeting
- Type of drug
- ___ Sagan, astronomer
- Every year
- Nasal cavities
- Nova ___, province
- In an inactive way
- Cream-colored root
- Nervous system disease
- Guitarist Clapton
- Three came to see Baby Jesus
- Lebowski's nickname

- Play a role
- Not fresh
- Where golfers begin
- Negatives
- Wild goat
- Releasing hormone
- Makes up
- Fastens
- Exists in large numbers
- A connecting word
- A phase of the heartbeat
- Northern Ireland county
- An independent ruler or chieftain
- Pacific sea bream
- Commercial
- Azure
- Doctor of Education
- Protected oneself

- against loss
- Car mechanics group

CLUES DOWN

- Pastes for filling crevices
- Acquire
- Heralds
- News group
- Exact copies
- Particles
- Noted 20th C. performer Lena
- Tempted
- Midway between north and east
- Slotted, hinged metal plate
- South American hummingbird
- Neither
- Walk with confidence
- Omit when speaking
- Imperial Chinese currency
- A bakery specializing in French pastry
- Talk incessantly
- Ethnic group of Nigeria
- Longtime NY Times film critic
- Beginners
- Makes a trade
- Sleep
- Not moving
- Popular drink: Pina ___
- Potential benefits
- A place you can get stuck in
- Ancient Greek City
- Chalcedony
- Rover
- Digraph
- Investment vehicle

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, you may encounter some stubborn people this week and that always has the potential for confrontation. Make yourself scarce if conversations veer in the wrong direction.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Things might not be lining up perfectly for a whirlwind trip right now, Taurus. Don't let it get you down. In a few more weeks, an entirely different story may emerge.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, this is a good opportunity to begin clearing up the clutter in your life. Start tackling the mess as soon as possible and enjoy the weight being lifted off your shoulders.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Try not to sweat the small stuff. It often is easier said than done, but the little things could be dimming your light. Seek the support of positive people.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, there are plenty of opportunities available to you now whether you realize it or not. Keep an open mind and equally open eyes to see if you can spot chances to learn and grow.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, your mind and heart are simply not able to let something go that happened in the past. Your emotions may feel restricted because of it. It's a passing thing and will resolve.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, you are going through a period of evaluation of certain things in your life. This may bring about tension and even some friction, but it's a necessary step for you.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

This week there may be a weighty air that puts a damper on your jovial nature, Scorpio. Instead of getting down on yourself, use this time to focus and get a job done.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, you have a chance to make tremendous progress and further your career. It will take hard work, but the rewards will start to roll in soon enough.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Avoid questioning superiors or those in positions of authority right now, Capricorn. This is a surefire path into hot water. Take a break and sort through negative emotions.

AQUARIUS

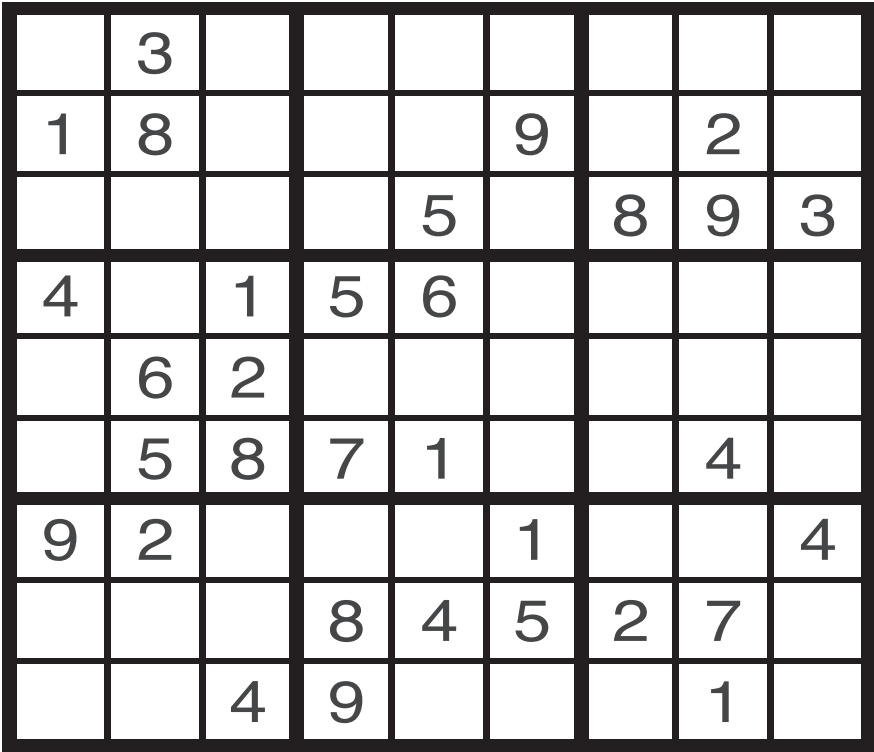
Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you might be going through a time of great preparation with a focus on building a major life project. This is not to be taken lightly and will require a lot of attention.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

There may be a sober feeling to the week that leaves you feeling a bit down, Pisces. Focus on finishing projects and these feelings will pass by before you know it.



SUDOKU

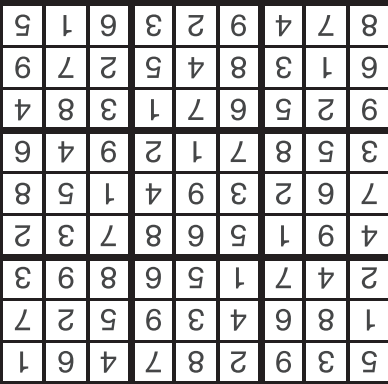
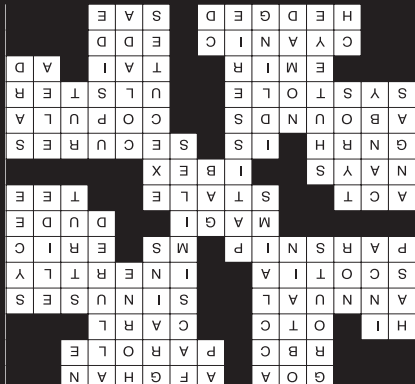
Here's How It Works:

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

Fun By The Numbers

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

answers



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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Tom and Frankie, the Frenchie, eat lunch by the river's edge near the 70 foot high arch.

Hikers make another trek to Keystone Arch Bridge

By Elizabeth Massa
Guest Columnist

Note: Historic facts are courtesy of Dave Pierce.

It has been written about in this very newspaper many times in the past about our Hilltown Destination known to many simply as the KAB.

The Keystone Arch Bridges Trail not only takes one to the first series of stone arch railroad bridges built in America, but tracks the first Wild & Scenic River and the longest free-flowing river in MA, all within the states largest roadless wilderness. This unmatched historic and environmental experience is 90% within the town of Middlefield and Hampshire County, with portions in Chester; Hampered County and Becket; Berkshire County.

The keystone arches in Becket, Chester and Middlefield have exceeded expectations, carrying trains 40 times heavier than designed, with no maintenance for 91 years after being bypassed in 1912. Early locomotives paved the

way for increasingly powerful engines to handle heavier trains and steeper climbs.

Engineering of stone arches was, by the 1830s, a well-established procedure. First developed by the Romans, it is one of only three advances in the science of spanning large spaces in the history of civilization. First were columns, developed by the Greeks, then arches, which could morph into domes, and lastly, in early 20th century America, structural steel.

The oldest known arch still in use is believed to be in China, erected in 610 AD. While this would seem to make arch building technology somewhat mundane by 1835, it was still a painstaking and very expensive method of bridge construction. Therefore, they were chosen for only the most remote locations in the belief that the elimination of periodic maintenance would justify the added expense.

The trail is accessed from Herbert Cross Road, off Middlefield Road in Chester. Park by the kiosk and begin walking. Hikers

will see the double arch at the end of Babcock Brook with its turquoise blue Serpentine Rocks. The true highlight, if there is such a thing, (since this entire trail is a highlight) is my personal favorite. The National Historic Landmark known as the seventy foot stone arch is the big beauty in the woods.

People have to hike in for about two miles or so to get to it and the trail takes you walking right over it. The woods begin to open to the sky as hikers come onto the 70 foot high arch. This bridge sports massive wing walls, some gently curving through the forest for up to 300 feet.

This stone arch bridge abandoned by the railroad long ago is seventy feet tall and has wing walls in both directions. No guard rails protect you from the edges so be cautious with your dogs and your footing while you cross this magnificent wonder.

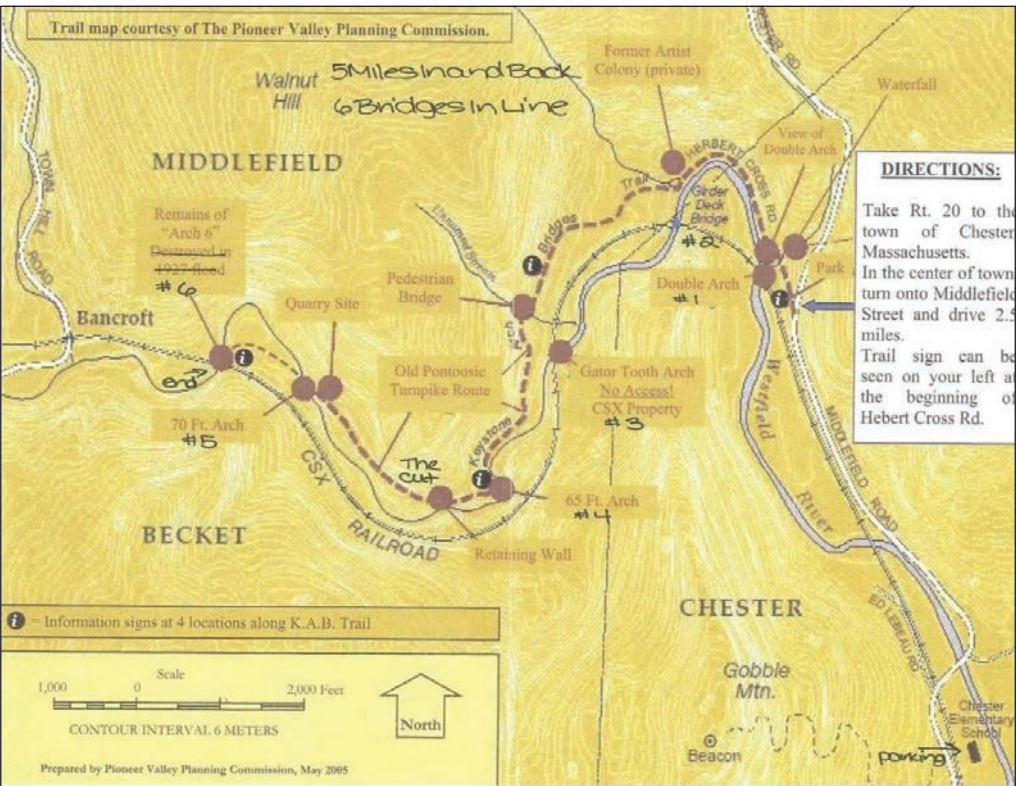
Look at both sides of this arch as they are both very different. You can see the buttresses and how they



A Hilltown hiker points to the massive wing walls by the bridge providing prospective to the size of the arch bridge.



Before the leaves peep out, hikers get the grand view of the entire stone arch.



This is a map of the Keystone Arch Bridge Trail.

Submitted photos

were built to withstand the rivers power. Over the years, the river has unfortunately take is a bit crumbled.

The ultimate experience is to get down below on the

steep footpath. People will be amazed at what they see and it will be well worth it. Observation of this bridge from water level is a must and it is truly the crescendo

of the hike. This is a breathtaking structure, brilliantly revealing its ancestry in the great cathedrals of the Old World. Whistlers Cathedrals never disappoint.

WILLIAMSBURG

Land Trusts launch campaign to purchase golf course

WILLIAMSBURG – The Trustees of Reservations and Hilltown Land Trust are working to purchase the Beaver Brook Golf Course in Williamsburg and Northampton with the intention of rewilding the property to create a dynamic hub for recreation and conservation.

A fundraising campaign has been launched to raise \$1.5 million by June 30 to complete the purchase of 288 acres of floodplain, wetlands and forest. The Beaver Brook acquisition would fulfill many of The Trustees’ objectives in its new five-year strategic plan, which will accelerate conservation of large landscapes, build climate resilience, and connect more people to nature.

The property is highly visible along Route 9, the busiest east-west road in Hampshire County. As a new Trustees’ reservation, the floodplain will be rewilded, creating a community park with accessible walking trails and scenic views. The surrounding wooded hills have informal trails that The Trustees will improve, pro-

viding enhanced connectivity and access. The property and trails will support snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and mountain biking, among other activities. The existing cart paths will provide accessible trails to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers and walkers.

Existing buildings on the property will be repurposed in the future to provide flexible space for community gatherings, a potential western Massachusetts headquarters and office space for The Trustees and its affiliate Hilltown Land Trust and workshop space for The Trustees’ and HLT’s stewardship staff and equipment.

“Protecting and restoring Beaver Brook, one of the largest remaining tracts of open land in the Northampton area, will provide new opportunities for people to get outside while enhancing critical wildlife habitat, and building climate resiliency,” said Katie Theoharides, president and CEO of The Trustees. “As an organization, The Trustees is committed to

continued support for critical conservation work in Western Massachusetts and look forward to stewarding this important community resource.”

The acquisition will include restoration of the Beaver Brook floodplain, focusing on replanting native species and restoring the floodplain habitat, which will allow the brook to naturally meander and store floodwaters. Recognized by the Commonwealth as a cold-water fishery and core aquatic habitat, restoration will also enhance the property’s biodiversity and climate resilience. The remainder of the property’s roughly 175 acres of forest will provide significant carbon storage and vital habitat for plants and wildlife. The restoration process will be documented for scientific study to help inform future approaches to restoration and interpretative signage will engage visitors in the hopeful work of nature-based climate solutions.

The Trustees has until June 30 to raise the \$1.5

million needed to purchase Beaver Brook, said Wendy Ferris, The Trustees’ vice president for the Central and Valley Region.

“Beaver Brook is a great opportunity for residents of the Valley to come together to save the largest remaining undeveloped property so close to a city in Hampshire County,” Ferris said. “It’s a rare location that is part of a connected wildlife corridor, on a busy road and bus route, and part of a neighborhood. The property will feature accessible walking paths, diverse trails through the woodlands, restored ecosystems, and amazing potential for environmental and ecological education. It is our plan that it becomes a destination for education and recreation pursuits.”

Ferris said the property is also attractive because the existing 250-person pavilion will provide a beautiful and flexible sheltered gathering space with sweeping views. The communities of Northampton and Williamsburg play important roles by apply-

ing for state grants which, if successful, will result in Williamsburg holding a conservation restriction on most of the property owned by The Trustees with Northampton acquiring a smaller portion of the property that lies within its city limits.

“Hilltown Land Trust is thrilled to be involved in this transformative project which is one of the best opportunities to improve the region’s climate resilience and offer new recreational opportunities,” said HLT Executive Director Sally Loomis. “A project of this size requires the capacity of a statewide land trust such as The Trustees and the community connections of a regional organization such as HLT. This project highlights the original purpose of the formal affiliation between these two organizations.”

The total cost of acquiring, activating, and endowing the project is \$5.5 million and The Trustees have public and private grants in the pipeline totaling \$4 million. The Trustees is seeking donations for the remaining \$1.5

million by the end of June 2025.

It will take approximately two years for the new reservation to be fully activated, which includes rewilding the golf course area, installing signage, completing trail work and converting the existing clubhouse into office space. For more information on the project or to make an online gift toward the purchase of Beaver Brook, people may visit www.thetrustees.org/beaverbrook.

Founded by landscape architect Charles Eliot in 1891, The Trustees has, for over 130 years, been a catalyst for important ideas, endeavors and progress in Massachusetts. The Trustees is the nation’s first preservation and conservation organization and its landscapes and landmarks continue to inspire discussion, innovation and action today as they did in the past. We are a nonprofit, supported by members, friends and donors and our 123 sites are destinations for residents, members and visitors alike, welcoming millions of guests annually.