

Country Journal

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A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

April 3, 2025 | Vol. 46, No. 49 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

HILLTOWNS

Wildwater Races celebrate 70 years

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

It's time to register for the 70th running of the Westfield River Wildwater Races.

The annual races will take place on Saturday, April 19 with the Expert Race starting at Knightville Dam at 9:30 a.m. A racer meeting will be held there at 9 a.m. for everyone taking part. The Classic Race starts at the MassDOT maintenance yard under the green bridge on Route 112 at 11 a.m. There will be a racer meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Racers can still register online at www.westfield-driver.org/races. Rates are currently \$45 per person and will increase to \$75 on April 14.

Racers, especially first timers, are invited to take part in the upcoming Canoe Race Clinics, to be held on Saturdays, April 5 and April 12 at 11 a.m. There is no advance sign up and it is free to racers who are already registered. For those who have not signed up to race yet, there will be a \$10 fee and



Experienced and newer canoeists take part in a previous canoe race clinic. Submitted photo

waiver to sign. Those taking part should come dressed in paddling clothes, have a full set of dry clothes in their cars at the finish line and need to set up transportation back after coming off the river in Woronoco Village.

Clinic participants should meet at the Classic Race start line staging area by the MassDOT maintenance yard in Huntington. The clinic will cover proper clothing, proper boat setup,

basic stroke techniques, how to run the rapids and what to do if you capsize. Experienced paddlers will guide people down the river to learn how to navigate the rapids, where to enter and exit the two portages and how to find the by-pass to the Hill and Dale Rapids.

In other news, details on the series of speakers about the river have changed. First in the speaker series was the Indigenous History of the Westfield

River to learn more about the first people to paddle on the river, which was held Thursday, March 20 at Stanton Hall. On Thursday, March 27, the presentation was on the History of the Strathmore Paper Mills, which will also include the story of Horace Moses. This took place at Stanton Hall in downtown Huntington from 6:30-8 p.m. Presenters were Sue Maxwell and

RACES, page 2

HUNTINGTON

Police Chief Robert Garriepy to retire

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

At the time of his hiring in the town of Huntington, Police Chief Robert Garriepy held the record, since broken, as the youngest chief in the Commonwealth.

Appointed in February 1994, Garriepy submitted his letter of intended retirement to the Huntington select board at their Wednesday, March 26 meeting. He will leave following over 31 years of service to the town on June 27.

He and Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin have nearly finalized a job description and posting. Named to a search committee for a new Chief are Gateway Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk, owner of Moltenbrey's Market Darryl Fisk, and Finance Committee member Eric Jensen. Also invited to the committee was Joe Simonowicz to represent the US Army Corps of

Engineers, but this may be determined (by the Corps) to be a conflict of interest and the town is awaiting that decision.

This did not come as a surprise to select board members Bill Hathaway, John McVeigh and Chair Roger Booth, as Garriepy had met with the board in executive session on March 12 to discuss his intention and ideas for managing the transition. Those minutes were unanimously voted via roll call to be released to the public at the March 26 meeting.

Hathaway congratulated Garriepy on his retirement and Booth commended him for his service. "I regretfully make a motion to accept the letter of retirement," Booth said, which was unanimously approved.

Garriepy and Peloquin discussed some of the details of the job posting for a new Chief, which included the town covering 75% of health insurance,

CHIEF, page 3

HUNTINGTON

Block printing, seed swap return in April

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

April's monthly calendar for the Huntington Public Library includes another block printing series for beginners and a community seed swap.

These events will take place in addition to the monthly book clubs, craft-noon, and game night. Beginning block printing will take place over three Saturdays, spaced two weeks apart. Nine spots are available and registration is required. Workshops will begin on Saturday April 5, April 19, and May 3 begin at 2 p.m.

Participants will learn basic techniques

for carving and printing your own 4" X 6" images. To register for this free series of workshops, people may visit Huntingtonpubliclibrary.org, click on events,] and scroll down to the listing.

Another returning event is a community seed swap. People with excess seeds are invited to come to the library on Saturday, April 26 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. They will share seeds and knowledge and meet other gardeners. Children and beginners are welcome to attend. If

PRINTING, page 2



Erica Wells took part in the first block printing series of workshops at the library last winter. Submitted photo

BLANDFORD

Sheriff recruits perform community service

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Members of the 53rd Western Massachusetts County Correctional Officers Academy, all recruits for the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, spent Friday, March 28, in Blandford and Chester.

In Blandford, the recruits focused on beautifying the area around Town Hall, Town Common and Watson Park. In Chester, they cleaned up the playground at 10 Middlefield Road, across from Chester Town Hall and also tackled a cleanup project at Hampden Park on Hampden Street.

Sheriff Nick Cocchi expressed his pride in the recruits, highlighting their dedication and

hard work. "Becoming a correctional officer in Hampden County is never easy and it's always earned. I am incredibly proud of this class for not only the hard work they've put in

during their time in the academy but also for the commitment they've shown to giving back to the community. Their graduation next week will mark the start of their careers as correctional officers and they will continue to make meaningful contributions to Hampden County long after this ceremony," Sheriff

Cocchi said, "This community service project is a perfect example of how the work of correctional officers extends beyond the walls of our facilities. Giving back to the community is part of the job and while graduation is a significant milestone, it is by no means the end of their hard work; it's only the beginning."

The graduation marks the culmination of a rigorous 12-week training program held at Westover Air Reserve Base, where recruits underwent intensive preparation to serve as correction officers. The graduates represent a diverse group, hailing from various cities and towns across the region, as well as from multiple countries.

SERVICE, page 5



Correctional Officers Academy recruits rake leaves as part of their community service. Submitted photos



Members of the 53rd Western Massachusetts County Correctional Officers Academy in Blandford ready for spring cleanup work at the Town Hall and Watson Park flanked by Academy instructors Sgt. Gina Walters, left and Cpl. Hector Perez, right. Turley photo by Mary Kronholm

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



The trolley railbed can clear by seen.

Submitted photos



The bridge abutment, far left, remains. This was for the trolley bridge over over the NY, NH and Hartford Railroad.



Above, Karen stands on a trolley railbed above a cattle crossing. These tunnels were created so that the animals in pastures could safely pass. Below, The 1910 Carnegie steel truss trolley bridge at the Wyantenuk Country Club.



The raised hill on the Wyantenuk Country Club is the trolley bed. It was raised and lowered along the way to keep the grade manageable for the trolley cars.



Liz and Gary are shown in front of the historic Wheeler homestead.



Local historian narrates trolley bed hike

Saturday's group hike was narrated by special guest Gary Leveille, author and historian, was on the Berkshire Street Railway from Great Barrington Historical to Egremont hiking Western Massachusetts history.

All enjoyed a 2.5 mile in and back journey on the over 100 year old trolley bed including the stories of travel and transportation here in South County and it's struggles including a robbery right here of the trolley men's payroll. The journey started at the Wheeler Family Farmstead, built in 1771. It was the last surviving farm located near downtown.

Today it is the home of the Great Barrington Historical Society. The trolley spur we traveled jutted off of its main route following Route 7 at this point and on to the West towards Egremont.

The Berkshire Street Railway trolley line was extended from Great Barrington to South Egremont as a spur. A massive amount of fill was dug and dumped during construction. Giant concrete monoliths were built to support a bridge that carried the trolley cars high above the Ny, NH and Hartford railroad tracks. Those remains can still be seen.

Unfortunately, the spur

to South Egremont operated only until 1919 when a strike ended service. Much of the fill was removed in the 1940s and used elsewhere. One of the massive towers still survives near the northeast corner of Wyantenuk Country Club and the trolley bed including a Carnegie truss bridge from 1910, which still stands.

Thank you to Gary Leveille and the Great Barrington Historical Society for sharing history with the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers. He writes a Then and Now series in a local newspaper and has published books. Leveille is keeping Hilltown history alive.



This shows a trolley car on Main Street, on Great Barrington.

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Congratulations Karly Smith! We are so very proud of you and your accomplishments. Good luck at Springfield College!

Love Dad, Mom & John

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