

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." – Mahatma Gandhi

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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HILLTOWNS

Over 300 paddlers in 200 boats participated in the Westfield River Wildwater Races

Garet Strouse sets new Classic course record

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

Garet Strouse, 30, a member of the USA Wildwater National Team, drove up from the Philadelphia area with a goal of winning the 69th Westfield River Wildwater Races.

He did not just win the Classic Race, which goes eight miles between the center of Huntington and Woronoco, he broke a previous record. According to Eric Jones, who maintains the PaddleStats archive of whitewater racing times, at 43 minutes and 55 seconds, "He shattered it by almost 2.5 minutes off the time Joe Shaw set in a kayak 30 years

RACE, page 2



Amanda Bater, from left was the fastest woman on the course at just over 1:01. Her racing partner was Eric Jones.
Turley photo by Eric Jones



Racers finish the Classic in Woronoco.
Turley photo by Leah Hardacker



Classic Course record breaker Garet Strouse launches on the Expert Course from Knightville Dam.
Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel

BLANDFORD

Interesting mailboxes line the roads of Blandford

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Stop and smell the roses. Take time to look around. Instead of sniffing the flowers, how about taking in the look of roadside mailboxes.

When taking the time to look, there are many different kinds of mail receptacles. There are homeowner self-styled, resin lollipop look-a likes in multiple colors, some forgotten, some in disrepair, some waiting for the ground to thaw before being righted. And of course, there's the standard quonset hut with the U.S. Mail embossed on the front flap; often painted.

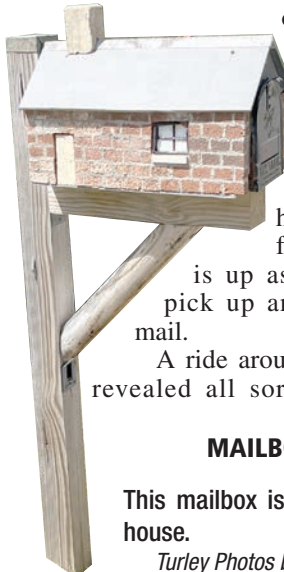
All the containers for lack of a better word than mailboxes have the side flag. The flag is up as a signal to pick up any out-going mail.

A ride around Blandford revealed all sorts of differ-

MAILBOXES, page 11

This mailbox is inside a brick house.

Turley Photos by Mary Kronholm



HUNTINGTON

Rural schools face substantial challenges

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Handouts headlined with the statement, "Every student regardless of their zip-code deserves a high-quality and equitable public education in our Commonwealth" sit at the security booth at Gateway Regional Middle/High School.

They urge parents, staff and even students to advocate for a sustainable future for rural schools like Gateway.

According to Harvard economist Raj Chetty, a zip code is one of the most reliable data points to predict the future success of children. Chetty was part of developing the "opportunity index," an online tool used by the U.S. Census Bureau that compares the likely future success of children, based upon the zip code of where they grew up. Research proving this premise followed 20 million Americans from childhood into their early thirties.

It's a compelling argument and one that is not lost on Gateway Superintendent Kristen Smidy, who continues to advocate for Rural School Aid. In July 2022, a state Commission on the Health Of Rural School Districts released their report, "A Sustainable Future for Rural Schools." In summary, the report said that the state needed to allocate \$60,000,000 under a new dedi-

SCHOOLS, page 3



Gateway teacher Val Zeh, student Joey Pisani and Superintendent Kristen Smidy gave testimony on the need for Rural School Aid before the joint Ways and Means Committee on April 13, 2023.

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES

Hikers follow Unkamit's Path

Crossing the Shatterack Ridge starting from Carrington Road in Russell on Unkamit's Path (white blaze) is still the most epic Southern Hilltown hike with stellar views, rock face and pure exhilaration.

Crossing this mountain starts with a 700 foot elevation climb which is moderate, taking you up to

the favorite vistas at the boulders giving the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers west, south and east bound views. Once across the ridge the trail drops into the Shatterack Brook Valley with its mountain waterfalls, seven mile loop coming back through Hull Lumber. Maps are available by visiting www.hilltownhikers.com.



Cybil and Betty, expert hiking dogs, enjoy the rocky ledge. Submitted photos



Hilltown Hikers head down the trail during a hike on Unkamit's Path.



Hilltown Hikers and their canine companions enjoy the view overlooking Russell.



Mary and Betty look west toward Huntington.



Stephanie is seen on the rocky ledges

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