

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Ashfield, Becket, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Dalton, Easthampton, Florence, Goshen, Granville, Hawley, Haydenville, Hinsdale, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Peru, Plainfield, Russell, Southampton, Washington, Westfield, Westhampton, Windsor, Williamsburg, Worthington

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

May 14, 2026 | Vol. 48, No. 3 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

GATEWAY INDUCTS NINE INTO NHS



Senior, left, and junior members of the Dana O. Webber Chapter of the National Honor Society at Gateway Regional School. Nine juniors joined the Chapter in an induction ceremony held on Wednesday, May 6. See story page 9. Submitted photo

HUNTINGTON

Postal changes impacts town

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Huntington Board of Assessors met with the town's Select Board at their Wednesday, May 6 meeting, in an effort to get to the bottom of a change in postal regulations that has created problems for the town's residents and departments.

Chairman Roger Booth and Selectmen Bill Hathaway and John McVeigh met with Principal Assessor Harold Scheid, Assessors Lorraine Wickland and Christine Stochlinski and Mikaila Smith from the Regional Resource Group on the issues.

Booth explained that the town is having multiple problems with postmarks and mailing addresses. According to him, the U.S. Post Office instituted a change effective Dec. 24, 2025. Mail is no longer post marked at the Huntington post office. They are now date-stamped when they reach the postal distribution center in Hartford, which he discovered can take up to six days from putting it in the mailbox.

This delay is affecting the timeliness of tax payments, dog license paper-

POSTAL, page 2

BLANDFORD

Tax collector mails excise demand bills

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera updated the board on a tax collector's office issue.

Excise demand bills were mailed out on March 19, which included a \$30 demand fee and interested calculated through the due date, April 2. These were mailed in the Southwick Post Office.

No payments had been received and checking on the mailing, tax payers were only just receiving these bills. It is the tax collector's understanding that the bills were sent to Georgia before arriving at the appropriate addresses in Blandford.

Therefore, the collector has decided to allow the taxpayer to pay the total amount printed on the demand bills due April 2 before sending any forward to a collection agency. No interest will accrue.

Wildfire Preparedness Plan

Springfield Water and Sewer Commission has informed the town that will have a presentation of a Wildfire Preparedness Plan by Municipal Resources Inc. This presentation and training event is designed to strengthen wildfire response capabilities in environmentally sensitive areas with a particular focus on protecting critical drinking water resources.

Blandford has SWSC watershed land within its boundaries that protects Cobble Mountain Reservoir.

The program is set for June 4 in Westfield.

Ferrera told the board that SWSC is also working on tree removal on Herrick Road, which is not yet finished, and their (SWSC's) discussions regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems have been con-

BILLS, page 6

MIDDLEFIELD

Leonardo-Bell receives citizen award

Lois Leonardo-Bell holds her Community Citizen Award, bestowed by the Hinsdale Grange on April 13, 2026. Submitted photo



By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Lois Leonardo-Bell received the Hinsdale Grange's "Community Citizen Award" in a ceremony held at Hinsdale's First Congregational Church on April 13.

She was nominated by Middlefield resident Chris Bresnahan in appreciation for her work on improving the Middlefield Public Library since becoming Library Director. Grange President Heather Brooks presenter Leonardo-Bell with a certificate.

Many friends and neighbors attended the presentation. Bresnahan, who serves as lecturer of the Hinsdale

Grange, said that the grange gives out community service awards each year honoring someone from the members' home towns. She nominated Leonardo-Bell because the work she had done to turn the library around was truly impressive, she said.

In her speech announcing the awardee, Bresnahan said, "When Lois came on board as Middlefield Public Library Director, the library had been languishing-irregular hours, with few active patrons and few programs to attract community members. Now it is a bustling, welcoming, and friendly place, with an active and engaged group of volunteers, intriguing book

AWARD, page 3

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Gateway Regional rethinks student achievement

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

When the state voted to end Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System as a requirement for high school graduation, it gave school districts the option of designing their own measures of success.

Many high schools chose to continue to use MCAS as their requirement. Gateway Regional School, in the midst of redesigning education through its work with the Barr Foundation, used it as a chance to forge a different path. "We saw it as an opportunity to define what competency really meant," said Dr. William Sullivan, principal at GRS. "We used it to empower students to share with us what they wanted their last couple of years of high school to look like."

It's part of a bigger, broader redesign of education at GSR, which starts in seventh grade and eighth

grade with a new exploratory program. Students choose two exploratories a quarter (eight per year) that take place during the last block of each day. Students can select from a variety of options.

Some may have a career focus, such as introduction to engineering, tourism, welding or early education and care. Others might have a life skills focus, such as cooking or how to get your learner's permit and maintain a car.

Students, who discover something they feel really passionate about can sequence a series of related exploratories together to design a "Gateway." This happens when students complete four related exploratories that partner to fulfill something akin to a college minor.

For example, a student could complete exploratories in video shorts, digital art, drawing and one other related exploratory to earn



A reinvention of education is underway at Gateway Regional School, thanks to guidance and funding through the Barr Foundation. Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long

an "Art Gateway."

Sullivan said they can even finish their Gateway in ninth or tenth grade. If they are still passionate about that field, they can dig deeper into further high school classes or opportunities in that field.

The sophomore year

is when students across the Commonwealth take the MCAS exam in English, mathematics, science and social studies. Passing the tenth grade exam was the previous measure of student achievement needed for a diploma.

At Gateway, this year's

sophomores each gave a "demonstration of learning" to a panel of teachers, staff and administrators. This presentation includes six elements: a description of courses completed in ninth and tenth grade, evidence

GATEWAY, page 9



PAGE 8

Blandford.....6	Florence.....7	Middlefield.....3	Schools & Youth.....9
Chester.....2	Goshen.....8	Northampton.....3	Stockbridge.....3
Classifieds.....10	Houstatonic.....8	Obituaries.....9	Washington.....6
Cummington.....3	Huntington.....2	Opinion.....4, 5	Westhampton.....3
Easthampton.....7	Lee.....12	Pittsfield.....8	Worthington.....2



8 04879 13178 6

HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



This interpretive sign is the first sign at the Chester Granite Saw in Chester and was installed April 2026.



Liz Massa stand by the Chester granite saw.

Submitted photos

Hilltown Hikers continue renovating granite saw site

A monumental April day at the Chester Granite Saw in Chester as co-founders Karen and Liz installed the first of a future many more weatherproof interpretive signs along the footpath.

The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers have been historically renovating the entire three acre parcel which contains the 1870 Chester Granite Works property, which includes its building remains and the twelve foot diameter saw blade.

Volunteers have worked all by hand with wheelbarrows and no mechanical equipment uncovering history for the past two and a half years. The goal is to bring this property back to how it was in 1947 going by the

only original blueprint we have for the mill.

Thanks to a grant from the Chester Cultural Council in 2025 the interpretive trail now contains a beautiful two foot by four foot weatherproof sign, which details the Granite Industry in Western Massachusetts including it's origins of granite being discovered in Becket in 1870 by the York brothers from Maine.

This first sign overlooks the massive piles of granite blocks which were brought here on the Chester and Becket Railroad for cutting and finishing from the Hudson and Chester Granite Quarry in Becket, today known as the Becket Quarry. The property is open to the public year round and contains many artifacts including

machinery.

The entire parcel was covered in eight to twelve inches of dirt, debris and trees for eighty years. Three phases of dead ash tree cutting has already taken place since September of 2023, when we first purchased this mill property, a footpath trail has been created making for easy access to visit and see all the relics.

The next goal will be to fundraise enough money to build a pole barn to protect the saw structure and machinery from the weather. Donations are welcome by visiting the website www.hilltownhikers.com or by [venmo @hilltownhikers](https://www.venmo.com/hilltownhikers). Thank you to all for supporting the Hilltown Hikers preservation efforts to keep Hilltown History alive.



The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers Board of Directors hold the interpretive sign before installing it by the granite saw.



Here is another view of the giant granite saw with a pavillion protecting it from the weather.



Here is photo of the Cheter Granite Saw employees standing amid blocks of granite brought from the Hudson and Chester Granite Quarry in Becket.

LEE

Lee Library hosts Jacob's Pillow exhibit and programs

LEE – The Lee Library, 100 Main St., hosts Jacob's Pillow exhibit from Monday, June 1 to Tuesday, June 30 from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. in Scolforo Gallery.

The exhibit traces the long and often overlooked relationship between the internationally renowned dance hub Jacob's Pillow

and the neighboring town of Lee from the early 1930s to today.

An opening reception takes place on Tuesday, June 2 from 4-5:45 p.m. in the Scolforo Gallery at the Lee Library, 100 Main St. Pamela Tatge, executive and artistic director of Jacob's Pillow will provide welcoming

remarks.

History of Lee seniors dancing at Jacob's Pillow takes place on Thursday, June 11 from 11 a.m.-noon. Sponsored by the Lee Council on Aging, this program takes place at Lee Council on Aging, 21 Crossway S. Researcher Joshua D. Bloom will present

the history of Lee senior citizens performing at Jacob's Pillow from 1985-1993; lunch follows.

"Secret" Gay History of Jacob's Pillow with Norton Owen, Historian and Founding Director of Preservation for Jacob's Pillow, takes place Thursday, June 11 from 4:30-5:45 p.m.

He will explore how gay history is intertwined with Jacob's Pillow's very beginnings, often hiding in plain sight.

Marketing, tourism and business relations between Jacob's Pillow and the town of Lee. Monday, June 29 from 4:30-5:45 p.m. Closing reception for the "Jacobs

Pillow in Lee, Mass" exhibit at the Lee Library. Sponsored by the Lee Chamber of Commerce, speakers are Alex Hedding, Vinny Vigilante and Bill Yehle.

All events are free and open to the public. People may visit <https://linktr.ee/jacobspillowinleemass> for more information.

Parents, Grandparents & Friends **SPECIAL!**

Congratulate YOUR Graduate

Class of **2026**

We are offering a great deal for you to **CELEBRATE YOUR GRADUATE** in your community graduation issue. Submit a photo and a brief message.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION MAY 29th

EMAIL YOUR AD TO: wdelcamp@turley.com

MAIL YOUR AD WITH PAYMENT TO:
Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069
 Pay by check or credit card: Checks Payable to Turley Publications, Credit Cards be sure to include: Paper, Name, Address, Phone, Credit Card Number, Exp. Date & CVV

2x3 Black & White Grad Ad

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



Love, Mom & Dad