

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

June 4, 2026 | Vol. 48, No. 6 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2026



Turley Publications photos by Wendy Long

Six seniors graduated with their Early Education and Care certification and wore stoles that had been created with their students. They are, from left, Lily Peloquin, Rylan McCaul, Shelby Jackman, Elizabeth Kadzik, Kate Lewis and Jayliana Rivera.

Peloquin, DeAngelis-Page, take top honors at GRHS

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Gateway Regional School seniors, Lily Peloquin and Theodore DeAngelis-Page took the school's top honors as

announced at the school's Senior Awards Assembly held on Wednesday, May 27.

Peloquin was named Valedictorian for having the highest weighted Grade

HONORS, page 8



Turley Publications Photo by Wendy Long

Gateway seniors Theodore DeAngelis-Page, Salutatorian and Lily Peloquin, Valedictorian and Golden Achievement Award, took top honors at the Class of 2026 Senior Awards Ceremony held on Wednesday, May 26.

GRADUATES, page 10

Gateway graduates 33 on Booster Field

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The 63rd Annual Commencement Exercises honoring the Class of 2026 from Gateway Regional School took place on Booster Field on Friday, May 29 at 6

p.m. The Gateway Band performed "Pomp and Circumstance" as the graduating seniors were led onto the field by Marshals Charlotte Hansen and Cailin McKellick. Dr. William Sullivan, Principal led the

pledge of allegiance followed by the band's rendition of the National Anthem.

Class President Grace Renaud welcomed the attendees referencing the "great separation" that in theory is set to occur the summer after graduation; how-

ever, Renaud cautioned that everyone was free to choose to keep people in their lives.

She also referenced her ultimate supporter, her younger brother Oliver calling him "my biggest fan, and

BLANDFORD



250th anniversary events include fireworks, music, more

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The town of Blandford will kick off America's 250th anniversary celebrations a full week early with two days of fireworks, live music, history, hometown pride and family fun during "Blandford's Happy Birthday America 250 Celebration" on Friday and Saturday, June 26-27 at the Blandford Fairgrounds.

The community-wide celebration is designed to bring together residents, families and visitors, connected to Blandford for a festive weekend honoring both America's birthday and Blandford's deep Revolutionary-era roots.

Friday night fireworks and fun

Sponsored by the Blandford Historical Society, festivities begin Friday, June 26 from 6-9:30 p.m. at the fairgrounds with an evening of live entertainment, food and fireworks.

The Pitoniak Brothers Band will provide live music leading up to fireworks at dusk. Attendees are encouraged to bring blankets, lawn chairs, and picnics for an old-fashioned summer evening celebration.

Food and refreshments will also be on sale including hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks, apple cider doughnuts and craft beer from Skyline Beer Company.

Saturday parade and community celebration

Sponsored by the town of Blandford, the celebration continues Saturday, June 27 beginning with the "Then & Now" Parade at 11 a.m.

The parade will travel from Blandford Town Hall to the fairgrounds and feature police and color guards, the Holyoke Caledonian Pipe Band, veterans, fire trucks, historical families and places, elected and appointed officials,

250, page 12

BLANDFORD

Blandford remembers its fallen veterans

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Monday morning got off to a dank, dark and dreary start.

Fog had settled in, but it was dry, then about 7:15 it poured. But then by the time the parade was ready to step out, there was sunshine and warmer weather.

Veterans led the parade marchers followed by members of the Select Board. There was a crowd on the lawn at the Blandford Historical Society at the top of Main Street, and it spread down North Blandford Road with a view of Veterans' Park at Town Commons.

Maple and Gibson Mangini carried the town's banner. Blandford Volunteer Firefighters paraded their equipment and were escorted by several departments from surrounding towns.

Organizer Douglas Emo was the master of ceremonies and introduced the American Legion's Chaplain, Pastor Tom Crouse, new pastor at the Blandford Congregational Church.

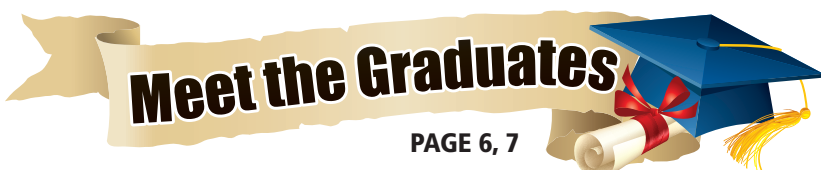
Kyle Mangini performed America the Beautiful and the Star Spangled Banner and Jon Berman played taps on his prized 1967 Henri Selmer saxophone. Maple Mangini and Aliviana Michalski pre-

VETERANS, page 12



Turley Publications photos by Mary Kronholm

Above, veterans led the Memorial Day Parade, first row from left, U.S. Army Sgt. Tom Huntoon; on active duty, E1 U.S. Air Force Amber Stearns and Technical Sgt. U.S. Air Force Douglas Emo and second row, 1st Infantry Division U.S. Army, James Crane; Senior Airman, U.S. Air Force, Lloyd Marti; U.S. Marines David Howe and U.S. Navy E5 Second Class Petty Officer Scott Lemme. Left, laying the commemorative wreath are, U. S. Marine Sgt. Michael Wojcik and U. S. Army Sgt. Tom Huntoon who were escorted by E1 U.S. Air Force Amber Stearns. The wreath was placed at the center marker commemorating Gen. Henry Knox's trip to Boston with cannons for Gen. George Washington.



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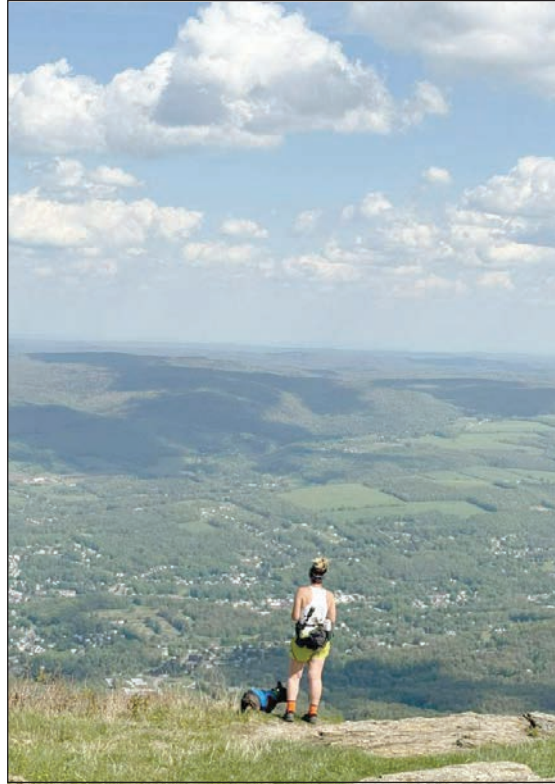
HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



The Thunderbolt Shelter is located in the Mount Greylock State Reservation.



Penelope looks out at the summit of Mt. Greylock.



Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hiker Liz looks out Adams.



Dayna, Sadie and Penelope siting near the War Memorial Tower on Mt. Greylock.

Hilltown Hikers explore Mt. Greylock

It was an exciting weekend May 16 and 17. Not only was it Chester On Track but the Auto Road opened for the summer season at Mount Greylock State Reservation. If people have never been to the highest mountain in

Massachusetts this is their chance.

In less than an hour drive from the Hilltowns people can experience the beauty of this special place. Rockwell Road climbs steadily from Lanesborough at the Visitors

Center up the mountain sometimes called "The Purple Majesty" on a narrow road.

The road was a major feat in itself to build a road to tackle this monster. At 3,491 feet, people can see 90 miles.

The summit is accessible for all with a quarter mile paved loop. So, no need to take a hike, although there are over twenty trails here; people can simply drive.

In May and early June the leaves have not yet

peeped at the summit so this drive becomes a magical scenic once entering War Memorial Park at the top third of this giant.

People are encouraged to stop at the Mount Greylock Visitors Centers and say "hi"

to Ranger Mike. The Visitors Center is open daily from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and includes a relief sculpture of the entire mountain, a must see.

The mountains are calling and I must go...even if it is just a drive.



This is a view from Adams Overlook on Rockwell Road.



This is a view of the Taconic Ridge.

Submitted photos

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Cecropia moth is mysterious marvel

By Deborah Daniels
Correspondent

Once you have seen a cecropia moth you won't forget it, they are that impressive.

So wonder of wonders this was a second sighting of two doing the tango. Yes it looks like Huntington is a hotbed of mating activity for cecropia moths.

This is why you won't normally see one of these moths because they have such a short life span, live only long enough to mate and they are only active at night. Are we blessed or what?

Cecropia moths, also known as giant silk moths, have no digestive system. They survive on the fat they stored as a caterpillar.

Imagine no concerns about where to find your next meal. They live in

the moth state for about 2 weeks. They are large moths with distinct coloring.

Their only defense as a moth is to remain perfectly still in the undergrowth. It is surprising how well they blend in among bushes and trees.

A female cecropia moth lays about 100 white, grain size eggs on tree leaves. The eggs will hatch into tiny black caterpillars. Most of these will be gobbled up by hungry birds raising chicks.

The surviving caterpillars will feast on tree leaves, just about any tree leaf will do. Interestingly they will usually stick to the tree leaf it first fed on.

The caterpillar will molt from a black caterpillar to a yellow one and lastly a green caterpillar about 5 inches long that resembles your worst nightmare with tiny spikes and balls and

black hair along the length of its body.

This ugliness scares away most predators but it is not poisonous. The caterpillar's next job is to spin a cocoon of silk that has three different densities.

This silk will repel rain and snow for the next 10 months while the caterpillar remains inside in a dormant state. The cocoon looks like a dried brown leaf, a la camouflage style.

Moth silk is pretty interesting to researchers. It is made of protein, salt and water with antibacterial properties. It has been reverse engineered by scientists to make silk scaffolding to hold human body organs together, to deliver drugs and it has been used as medical sutures for years. Now that is inspired by nature.

Female cecropia moths



Left, this photo shows male and female cecropia moths. The one with a larger abdomen is the female. Right, this is a cecropia cocoon.



Turley Publications photos by Deborah Daniels

release pheromones that males can detect up to a mile away. Males have large brush-like antennae for just this purpose.

They will fly in the direction of more densely concentrations of pheromone. The moths then attach at each other's abdomen and

mate for 24 hours. Both will die soon thereafter.

Female bola spiders produce a similar pheromone to attract a cecropia moth to dine on. If a cecropia moth flies within her range, she slings out her own sticky, single silk line that captures the moth using

a ball of glue on the end. That spider enjoys a delectable feast. Nature can be cruel but that is the law of survival.

Go forth you naturalists and keep an eagle eye out for a cecropia moth. The full moon beckons both moth and man.

EASTHAMPTON

bankESB promotes Meagan Barrett to senior vice president HR

EASTHAMPTON – bankESB announces the promotion of Meagan Barrett to senior vice president, human resources, based at the company's headquarters at 36 Main St.

Barrett of West Springfield brings nearly two decades of dedicated service to bankESB, having joined the bank in 2008 as a human resources assistant. Over the course of her tenure, she has steadily advanced through leadership roles, demonstrat-

ing a strong commitment to employee engagement, operational excellence, and organizational culture.

In her new role, Barrett oversees all Human Resources functions for the organization, including employee engagement, employee relations, talent acquisition and HR operations such as payroll, benefits, and compensation management.

She currently leads a team of 10 HR professionals

and plays a critical role in shaping and sustaining the company's culture.

"Meagan's leadership, vision, and deep understanding of our organization have been instrumental to our growth and success," said Matt Sosik, president and chief executive officer at bankESB.

Barrett has been a driv-



Meagan Barrett

ing force behind bankESB's award-winning workplace culture. She has played a key leadership role in maintaining and strengthening that culture through eight strategic mergers, supporting the expansion of bankESB's parent company, Hometown Financial Group's footprint to more than 730 employ-

ees across Massachusetts, northeastern Connecticut and southern New Hampshire.

Prior to joining bankESB, Barrett gained more than a decade of experience in human resources and operations, including serving as HR & Operations Manager at CompUSA.

She holds an associate degree in Liberal Arts from Holyoke Community College and pursued studies in psychology at Rhode Island College. Barrett also earned

her Professional in Human Resources certification in 2012 and maintains ongoing professional development. In addition, she holds certifications in employee engagement and Predictive Index.

Founded in 1869 as Easthampton Savings Bank, bankESB is headquartered in Easthampton. Through their charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, supports non-profit organizations and causes throughout Hampden and Hampshire counties.