

Country Journal

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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

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

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

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.

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

GRADUATES, page 10

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.

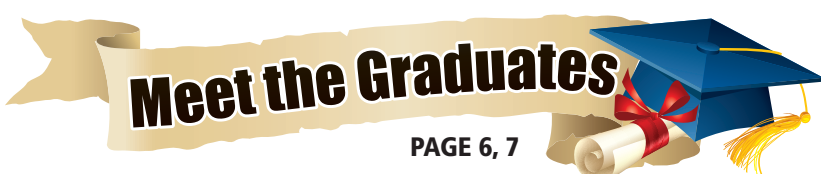
Kyle Mangini performed America the Beautiful and the Star Spangled Banner and Jon Berman played taps on his prized 1967 Henri Selmer saxophone. Maple Mangini and Aliviana Michalski pre-

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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BECKET

Becket Arts Center announce upcoming events

BECKET – On Saturday, June 6 from 10:30 a.m.-noon, the Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, will offer a “Becket Moving Freestyle” dance program with Delsie Dunn as the guest facilitator.

This opportunity to discover ways to move to music with intention and openness is guaranteed to warm up the body and lift the spirit. People should wear loose-fitting clothes, a towel, water bottle and indoor shoes or go barefoot.

Session fee is \$15 and \$10 for members. Walk-ins are welcome.

For registration and more information, people may visit becketartscenter.org. This class will also be offered on Saturday, June 13.

The Becket Arts Center announces a special program featuring two of the Berkshires’ most celebrated artists, photographer Gregory Crewdson and musician, Johnny Irion.

Their candid, in-depth conversation, focusing on how the life and landscape of the Berkshires inspire their creative work, will take place on Saturday, June 6 from 2-4 p.m. Crewdson’s photographs, cinematic, large-scale images of

American life, have been exhibited at museums and galleries worldwide.

Irion is a nationally acclaimed singer-songwriter, whose music weaves folk, Americana and storytelling. For tickets, \$15 per person and more information, people may visit becketartscenter.org.

On Saturday, June 6 from 4-6 p.m., the Becket Arts Center will host a free reception celebrating the live launch of the Becket Stories Project, a permanent interactive archive and public story trail developed by the Becket Arts Center in collaboration with more than 20 members of the community.

The story trail is open to the public and designed to deepen the connection between residents, visitors and the community that calls Becket home. For more information, please see becketartscenter.org.

On Saturday, June 13, from 2-4 p.m. the Becket Arts Center will host a free opening reception for the 2026 Berkshire LGBTQ+Pride Art Exhibit, “Amplifying Queer Creativity.” Participating artists: Ricky Barton, Tom Cassotta, Jacob Clayton, C. Willian Dunsay, Brian

Foley, James Jasper, Rachel Kaufmann, Jackie Luczynski, Pops Peterson, Autumn Phoenix, Saemi, Lucia Shuff-Heck, Lisa Slavid, Calyx Wildflower and Mike Zippel. The show will run from June 11 until July 5, though the Arts Center will be closed on July 4. For more information, people may visit becketartscenter.org.

BECKET ARTS CENTER

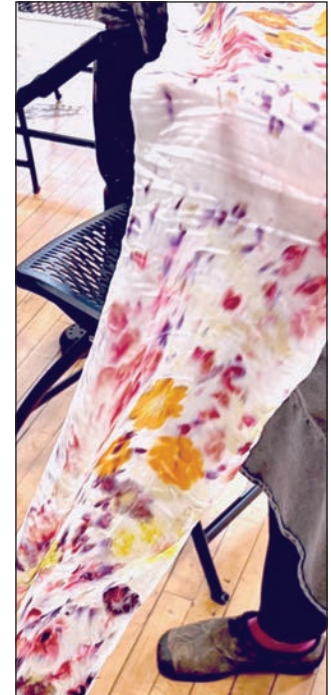
The Becket Arts Center announces that its outdoor summer music series will begin on Saturday, June 13 at 5 p.m. with the celebrated Wanda Houston Band. Its eclectic blend of classic jazz, R&B, and Rock and Roll has made the band one of the most popular musical groups in the Berkshires. This year the music series will take place in North Becket Park on Maple Street across from the Becket Washington Elementary school.. In

case of rain, the concert will move indoors. Part of the Becket Arts Center’s Music Brings Communities Together program, the performance is free, but donations are always welcome. For more information, people may visit at becketartscenter.org.

On Sunday, June 14 at 10:30 a.m. the Becket Arts Center will present a hands-on Eco-Printing workshop. Eco-printing or botanical contact printing is a sustainable art form where real leaves, flowers and bark are bundled with fabric or paper and steamed to release their natural pigments. Mallore Caron will guide participants in unlocking the colors and shapes of the natural plant surroundings and in creating a unique botanical print silk scarf to take home. No prior artistic experience is necessary, but space is limited. Workshop fee: \$80; \$70 to \$60 for members; \$40 for Card to Culture members and \$30 for students, grades 9 to 12 for materials.

The Becket Arts Center, in collaboration with the Guild of Berkshire Artists, will hold a Plein Air morning of painting, drawing and photographing outdoors in Becket on Wednesday, June

17 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. People should bring their oils, acrylics, watercolors, pastels, pencils, cameras or digital painting equipment and a lunch. Open to artists of all levels. \$10 per person; free for members of the Becket Arts Center and the Guild of Berkshire Artists. For reservations and more information, people may visit becketartscenter.org or register at berkshireartists.org/pleinair.



Becket Athenaeum lists events

BECKET – The Becket Athenaeum, 3367 Main St., will hold a book reading and discussion with local author Richard Sgaglio, on Thursday, June 11 at 6 p.m.

His book “When the Road Narrows” is set against the backdrop of the 1980s and the emerging AIDS crisis. This is a LGBTQ+ coming of age story that follows Nick, a young man struggling to reconcile his traditional upbringing with his emerging identity. People should RSVP to bwlbrary.org/road.

On Tuesday, June 23 at 11:30 a.m. there will be picnic and popsicle party with live music by Stacey Peasley to celebrate school’s out, summer’s on. This party is for all ages and will be held in North Becket Village Park, Maple Street. Popsicles are provided and people should bring a picnic lunch. RSVP is appreciated by visiting bwlbrary.org/summer.

Summer reading program, “plant a seed, read,” for all ages, takes place Tuesday, June 23 through Saturday, Aug. 22. People should visit bwlbrary.org/summer for more information.

NORTHAMPTON

FCU launches summer food drive

SPRINGFIELD. – Freedom Credit Union once again steps up to support local families by hosting a summer-long food and donation drive to benefit the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

From now through Monday, Aug. 31, community members are invited to visit any Freedom Credit Union branch to contribute nonperishable food items or monetary donations.

The drive is open to everyone, and donations can be made at all Freedom Credit Union branch locations across the region.

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts serves Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties for more than 40 years. The organization distributes more than 17 million pounds of food each year, which equates to more than 14 million meals.

Through a network of nearly 200 partner pantries, meal sites and shelters, the Food Bank works to ensure individuals and families have access to nutritious

food while also addressing the root causes of hunger.

The need is especially acute in the communities served by Freedom Credit Union. According to the most recent Food Access Report from the Greater Boston Food Bank and Mass General Brigham, the number of households experiencing food insecurity has gone up by as much as 54% in some counties since 2019. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts also reports that pantry usage has tripled since then, underscoring the growing demand in the region.

“Access to nutritious food is a basic need, yet a growing number of individuals and families in our region continue to face food insecurity,” said Glenn Welch, president of Freedom Credit Union. “We are proud to partner with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts to support their critical work. This annual initiative gives our members and the broader community a simple way to make a meaningful impact

this summer.”

In addition to distributing food, the Food Bank provides services such as SNAP enrollment assistance, nutrition education and advocacy efforts aimed at creating long-term solutions to hunger.

Freedom Credit Union encourages individuals, families and local businesses to participate by donating what they can throughout the summer months. Even small contributions can help make a difference for neighbors in need.

Originally chartered in 1922 as the Western Massachusetts Telephone Workers Credit Union and renamed in 2004, Freedom Credit Union is a nine branch, full-service financial institution. Freedom Credit Union has conveniently located Massachusetts branches in Chicopee, Feeding Hills, Greenfield, Ludlow, Northampton, Turners Falls, West Springfield and two in Springfield, as well as a Loan Production Office in Enfield, Connecticut.

Garden tour takes place June 13

NORTHAMPTON – On Saturday, June 13 from 10a.m.-4 p.m. the Forbes Library sponsors the 32nd annual Forbes Library Northampton Garden tour.

The event will be held rain or shine. Once again, lovers of gardens and Forbes Library may explore inspiring delightful home gardens.

Tickets provide garden locations along a 12-mile

route and parking guidance. Participants provide their own transportation to all gardens on the tour.

Tour tickets are \$20 if bought in advance; tickets are available through June 12 at Forbes Library, Cooper’s Corner/Florence, State Street Fruit Store/Northampton, Bay State Perennial Farm/Whately, Sugarloaf Gardens/Sunderland.

People may pre-pay by visiting online at forbeslibrary.org to reserve tour tickets for pick up at Forbes Library, 20 West St., the day of the tour.

Limited edition Northampton Garden Tour T-Shirts with original artwork by Rosemary Barrett will be available on the tour for \$25 or two for \$40.

Trustees of Forbes Library present award

NORTHAMPTON – The Trustees of Forbes Library will present the Gertrude P. Smith Trustees Award to both Debin Bruce and J.R. Greene for their extraordinary dedication and volunteer service to Forbes Library on Thursday, June 11 at 6:30 p.m.

This is a free event open to the public.

Following a brief award ceremony, Tracy Grammer and Jim Henry will perform on the Hess Performance Stage on the Forbes Library’s grounds.

While serving as a Trustee of Forbes Library, Debin Bruce worked tirelessly to advocate and support the needs of the library so that it could best serve the community. Among her accomplishments was chairing the Building and

Grounds Committee where she worked tirelessly to bring the library’s long standing dream of a performance stage on the library’s grounds to a reality.

J.R. Greene served as President of the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum Standing Committee for many years. Always very generous with his historical knowledge of Coolidge, he proved himself as a steadfast presence for the committee and a champion for the importance of the collection and the museum.

The Tracy Grammer and Jim Henry duo is synonymous with impeccable musicianship, perfect harmonies, a Jim Henry and Tracy Grammer with a green leafed tree in the background. diverse repertoire and the

kind of musical chemistry and humorous banter they’d expect from musicians who have been touring and playing around the world together for over 20 years.

A typical show includes a stage full of instruments (acoustic/electric guitars, violin, mandolin, Dobro) and a set list full of original songs, instrumentals, creatively reimagined covers and highlights from Dave Carter’s award-winning catalog. Both reside in the Pioneer Valley Henry lives in Shutesbury, where he also operates Rubytone Studios, and Grammer resides in Greenfield with her cat, Pickles. For more information, people may visit the artists’ individual websites at <http://www.tracygrammer.com> and at <http://www.jimhenry.net>.

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 on page 4 or 5.

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WORTHINGTON

Second grader wins trip to school in Fire Engine 1

WORTHINGTON – On Friday, May 22, one lucky student from R.H. Conwell Elementary School looked out the front door of her house to see a fire engine—not a yellow bus—arriving to pick her up for school.

Miss Ava Santoni, a second grader, was picked up at her house by Worthington's Engine 1 with a "kind and calm" Chief Mike DonDiego at the wheel. She and her older sister Liliana, a fourth grader, climbed aboard and took off.

Chief Dondiego reported that Ava was "over the moon" and "hopping" with excitement. Since a ride directly to school would have been much too short, the fire engine took a loop around town.

Ava and Liliana said they drove by "three storks (sand hill cranes) with cows behind them on the hill and by the Corner Store."

The fire chief chatted with them about their school year and they asked



Worthington Fire Department's Engine 1 arrives at R. H. Conwell Elementary School with two students on board.

him about how many structure fires he had been to in his life. He answered between 30 and 40.

The girls said the fire engine was really "tall" above the road and "louder than they thought it would be."

Ava added that she didn't want Chief to run the siren because "it was too loud." He agreed and

added that people might think there was an emergency happening.

Engine 1 and its precious cargo passed the Fire Station and the town pond before arriving at school where a group of teachers and students were waiting at the front door.

Later, as Ava walked through the school hallway, her friends greeted her,

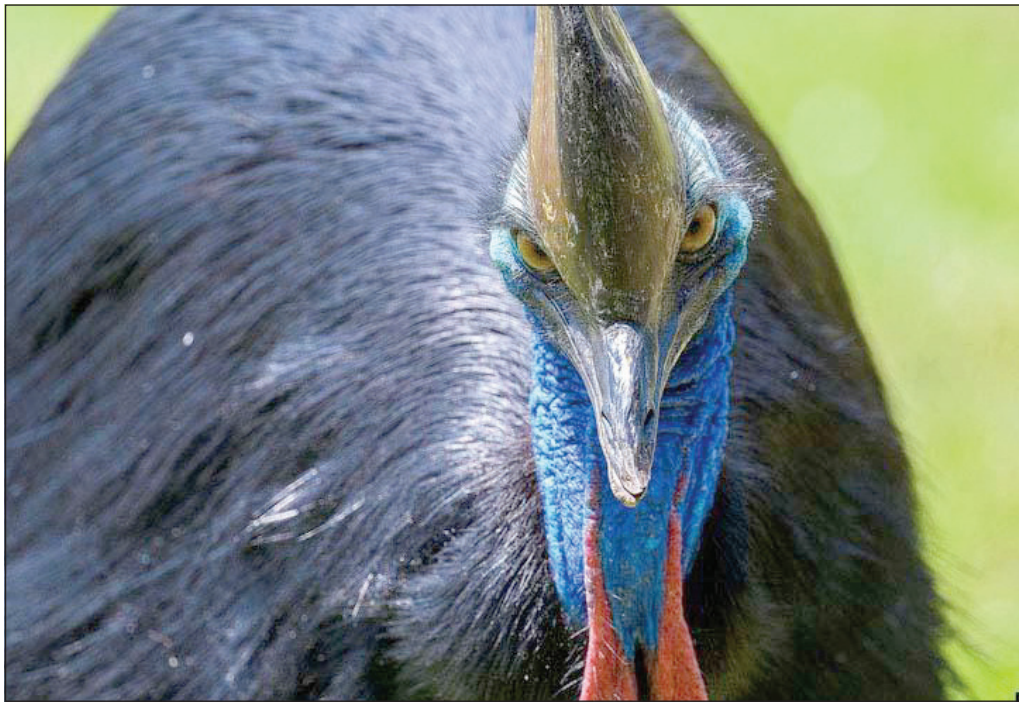
asking how the ride was and commenting that riding in a fire engine to school was "cool."

Another schoolmate added in a friendly manner that she "was jealous." Ava's ride to school was a prize awarded during the Student Awareness of Fire Education visit to the Worthington Fire Station earlier this year in October.



Submitted photos

Ava and Liliana Santoni disembark from WFD's Engine 1.



Submitted photo

Ed and Sue Lewis will present a program on their trip to Australia. The Southern Cassowary was just one of the interesting birds they saw.

COA lists upcoming events

WORTHINGTON – The Council on Aging coordinator announces on Monday, June 8 at noon there will be a potluck luncheon in the Town Hall.

Ed and Sue Lewis will present their trip to Australia. Highlights include many beautiful birds and astounding animals. For those, who want to come to the presentation only

should arrive at 12:30 p.m. All are welcome.

Other events include Bingo on Monday, June 22 at 1 p.m. in the Town Hall. This is a free event and multiple cards.

On Wednesday, June 24 at 1 p.m. there will be fall prevention program in the Town Hall.

Deb Dreschnack, a Ph.D gerontologist health service specialist, will give a presentation on the incidence and prevalence of falls in older adults. She has extensive experience in falls research and intervention. Participants will learn about strategies to prevent falls and maintain independence in mobility. All are welcome

Transfer Station lists new hours

WORTHINGTON – The Transfer Station summer hours are now in effect.

Hours are Wednesdays from 3-7 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

HILLTOWNS

PVPC holds Zoom meeting

The next regular meeting of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will be held on Thursday, June 11 beginning at 5:30 p.m.

The Zoom information and agenda will be provided approximately one week before the meeting.

NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

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GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor



I'm being released from Incarceration. What are my Social Security options?

Dear Rusty:

In a previous column, you wrote about people who filed for Social Security late in life.

I am currently incarcerated and will be filing for Social Security in the fall of 2029. I will be 74 years old in the first week of January 2029. Unless I read it wrong, could I be eligible to collect the previous six months?

If this is so, how would that work? Would I get that all at once or incrementally? According to the chart we once got in the mail, I should be collecting the maximum amount. I've worked all of my life and never collected Social Security before. Also, my ex-wife remarried and has since passed away. Do I qualify for part of her Social Security?

Signed, "D" in Danbury

Dear "D" in Danbury:

I'm afraid you cannot receive Social Security benefits while you are incarcerated, even if you are eligible for them prior to your release.

Thus, you cannot get retroactive Social Security benefits for any period you were still incarcerated. For clarity, although most who apply at a later age (e.g., in their 70s) do have the option to claim retroactive benefits, you cannot get any SS benefits for any month you were still incarcerated. Further, you will not get credit for delaying your application for SS benefits while you are incarcerated (you won't earn Delayed Retirement Credits during your incarceration).

Assuming (from what you shared) that you expect to be released from incarceration in the fall of 2029, you can apply for your SS benefits to start upon your release. Be aware, however, that it usually takes several months for your application for SS benefits to be processed and you can specify the month you wish your benefits start.

Your benefit amount will be based upon your average monthly earnings for the 35 highest earning years over your lifetime. But you cannot get retroactive SS benefits for time prior to your release from incarceration. Since Social Security does not pay benefits for partial months, you can file for your SS benefits to start effective with the month following the month in which your incarceration ends. Be sure you have your official prison release doc-

umentation (parole or discharge papers) in hand when you apply for your Social Security benefits.

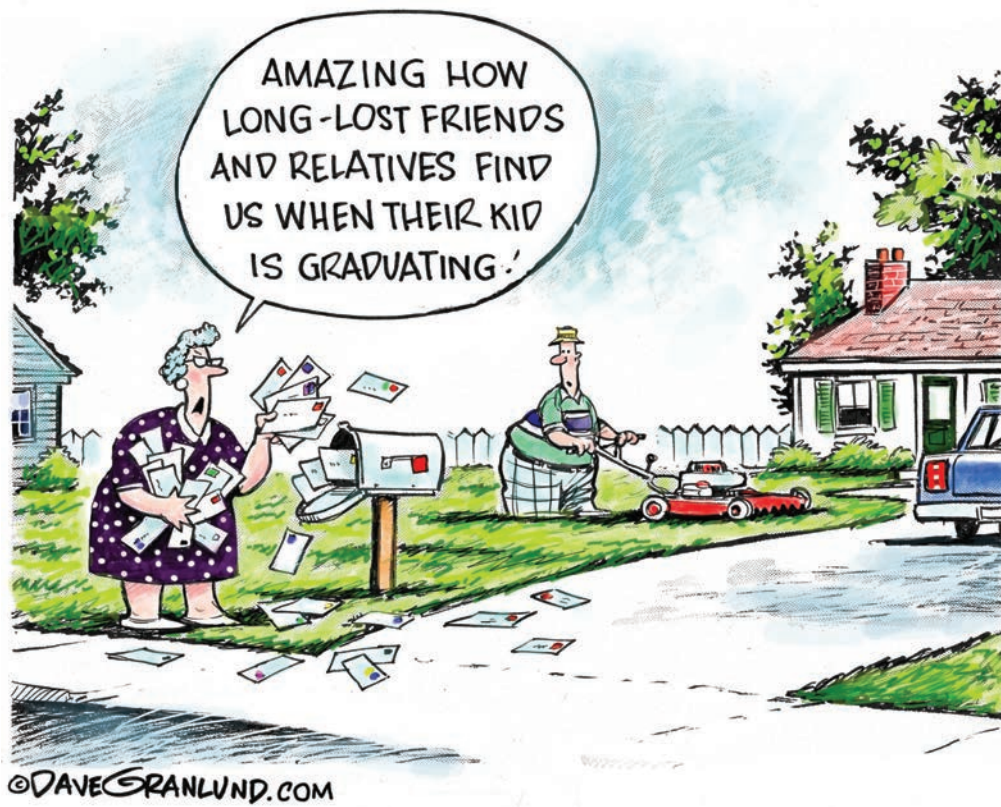
FYI, some correctional facilities have a "Prerelease Agreement" with Social Security, which may enable you to file for your SS benefits three to four months prior to your release from incarceration. Be sure to check with your facility to see if they have such an agreement with Social Security and, if so, use it to apply for your benefits in advance of your release. This will facilitate your SS benefits starting more quickly upon your release.

You did not ask about healthcare coverage, but since you will be eligible for Social Security, you will also be eligible for Medicare upon your release. When you apply for your Social Security benefits, you can also apply for Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient medical services), the premium for which will be deducted from your Social Security payment. FYI, Medicare Part A (coverage for inpatient hospitalization services) is free and automatic because you are also eligible for Social Security.

Finally, regarding survivor benefits from your ex-wife, you can only get a surviving ex-spouse benefit if you were married for more than 10 years and your own SS retirement amount is less than your ex-wife was receiving at her death. In other words, you can only get one SS benefit either your own or your deceased ex-wife's amount, whichever is higher.

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 ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

OPINION



GUEST COLUMN

A question and an answer?

Carole, who faithfully reads the column in the Wilbraham-Hampden Times each week, wrote in with this question for the Garden Lady:

"I am hoping you can provide me with some advice as to how to rid my garden of an incredibly invasive plant. It is called *Houttuynia cordata* or chameleon plant. I bought a single variegated plant about 25 years ago and now I literally have hundreds of them in my gardens and lawn. The plant is no longer variegated but reverted to green with red around the edges. For at least three or four years, I have been trying to dig them out one by one which has been extremely difficult due to the long roots – some can be over a foot long – which become intertwined with other plants, choking them. I have not been very successful, despite spending hours at a time. And I painstakingly try to get every piece of root out. I am not sure if they are spreading solely through the roots or also from the flower pod seeds.

I notice they also spread under my brick walkway even though they get no sun there. It's been very frustrating. For that reason, I am considering using a herbicide, but am concerned that it might poison nearby plants or may not be effective due to the long roots. Yet, at this point, I am open to the idea. I look forward to any suggestions you may have.

Incidentally, I just learned from the internet that it is considered to be a medicinal herb, which I find

with herbicide. To me that sounds like a smart plan to get the chemical right to the roots. Time consuming, but targeted.

I'll be curious to know how you make out trying to rid your landscape of this plant.

Diane, who gardens in West Chesterfield, had a possible solution for my hyacinths getting cut off at the soil line.

"We had a great disappointment this spring when something chopped off most of our cultivated black berries. When I was trying to prune what was left and save something I found the stalks laying on the ground but the tops were eaten. It looked like someone took a clean angle sweep with a hatchet to cut down the stalks. Then one evening at dusk we saw the culprit. It was about a 60 pound porcupine! He was chomping on our wild white rose bushes. He would bite the stalks off but since the rest of the bush wouldn't let the branch fall, he couldn't eat the top. What a mess. When I read your article I was thinking this might be the answer to the mystery."

Hmm, I will have to keep on the look out for a porcupine; you never know.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 34 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.

sometimes on the ground.

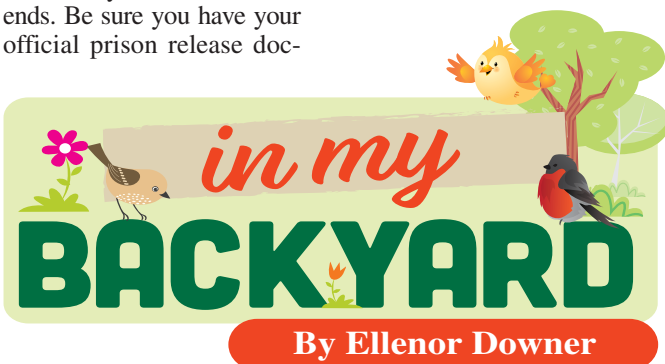
It is often very close to water, but it can be quite distant away. The nest is a platform of sticks. The male begins construction, then female builds while male brings materials.

Both parents also feed their young by regurgitation. Young begin to climb about near nest by 16-17 days after hatching, usually make first flight at 21-23 days.

They are fed by parents for a few more weeks. Young are reportedly capable of swimming well. These herons have one to two broods per year.

These herons forage mostly by standing still or stalking very slowly at edge of shallow water, waiting for prey to approach. Sometimes they use bait" by dropping a feather or small twig on surface of water to lure fish within striking distance.

BIRDS, page 5



John Kunhardt of Belchertown took this photo of a green heron catching a fish at Lake Wallace.

The green heron is solitary at most seasons and often somewhat secretive, living around small bodies of water or densely vegetated areas.

When seen in the open, it often flicks its tail nervously and raises and lowers its crest.

The small heron is about 16 to 22 inches long. The

green on this bird's back is an iridescent color and often looks dull bluish or simply dark.

They have orange yellow legs, chestnut neck, black crown feathers. Young birds are duller and brown with a striped neck.

Northern birds migrate as far as Panama and northern South American. Green herons in the most southern states do not migrate.

Green herons inhabit coasts and shorelines, forests and woodlands, freshwater



Green heron

Photo by John Kunhardt

wetlands, lakes, ponds, rivers and saltwater wetlands. Their call is a sharp "kyowk" or "skyow."

They nest in a wide variety of situations, including willow thickets, mangroves, dry woods and open marsh. The female lays three to five pale green or blue green eggs. Both the male and female incubate the eggs which takes 19 to 21 days.

The male chooses nesting territory and calls repeatedly from prominent perch in tree or shrub. Displays of male include stretching neck forward and down and snapping bill shut, pointing bill straight upward while swaying back and forth. Male and female may perform display flights around territory. Nest site is usually in shrub or tree 5-30 feet above ground, but

Country Journal

We Want to Hear From You

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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.

ELECTION LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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.

OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Former Town Administrator endorses Cara Letendre for Select Board

I am writing to strongly encourage you to support the re-election of Cara Letendre to the Select Board.

During my tenure as Town Administrator of Blandford from 2018 to 2021, I had the privilege of working directly with the Select Board while Cara served as Chair.

That experience remains one of the most meaningful and formative periods of my public service career. Working alongside Cara and serving the people of Blandford helped shape my own leadership approach as Mayor of Holyoke today and my strong respect for self-gov-

ernance and democracy.

So please understand I write this endorsement equally excited about how the town is coming together to discuss issues important to them and fully engaged in the democratic process.

Local government management is no small feat, yet alone governing a small town with mostly volunteers, limited staffing, and constrained resources. Steady and thoughtful leadership is incredibly important.

Cara has consistently demonstrated exactly that kind of leadership. She is a proud daughter of Blandford who deeply understands the community, respects her

neighbors, and always puts the long-term health of the town first.

That commitment reflects the very best of Blandford, the kind of citizen the good people of Blandford helped raise.

I am very aware of potential issues happening in the town that may have caused some divide. That is very normal and inevitable; problems will happen.

The true test of any leader is how they respond to navigate the issue when they do happen. Under Cara's leadership, the town successfully navigated several significant challenges which have offered her the necessary

experience for the job.

When the entire Blandford Police Department walked out in 2018, Cara played a key role in helping stabilize the policing needs while ensuring residents remained informed throughout the process. She helped guide the rebuilding and cleanup of the department with transparency and accountability.

She also supported important improvements to the town's financial management systems and strengthened accountability measures following the previous tax collector embezzlement scandal, helping restore public trust in local government.

At the same time, Cara focused on practical progress that directly benefited residents. During her leadership, the town advanced road improvements, upgraded highway and fire equipment, invested in the town library, expanded the playground for local families, and pursued grants and payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) to meet community needs without overburdening taxpayers.

Perhaps most importantly, she helped strengthen the town's financial position by ensuring timely audits, certification of free cash, and growing reserves while maintaining very low debt, leaving Blandford on strong

financial footing that continues to benefit the town today.

Cara brings institutional knowledge, a collaborative spirit, and a genuine commitment to public service. At a time when communities face tight budgets, competing demands, political distraction and increasing division, her level-headed leadership and respect for all her neighbors are invaluable assets to the republic.

I respectfully encourage the voters of Blandford to re-elect Cara Letendre to the Select Board so she can continue serving the town she knows and loves so well.

Joshua A. Garcia,
Mayor city of Holyoke

Couple supports Corinne Shartrand for SB

We are writing to strongly support Corinne Shartrand for the Select Board in Blandford.

Corinne represents the kind of practical, community focused leadership and strong financial stewardship our town needs.

Corinne is committed to protecting Blandford's future while preserving the values and services that make our town strong. She understands that residents expect local government to be both responsible and transparent, especially when it comes to how tax dollars are spent.

Her focus is on ensuring that town decisions are made with long-term stability in mind, balancing essential

services and infrastructure needs with the responsibility to keep taxes and spending under control.

She believes taxpayers deserve accountability, careful budgeting and clear communication about how public funds are used.

As costs continue to rise for families, seniors, and property owners, Corinne recognizes the importance of disciplined financial management, thoughtful prioritization, and avoiding unnecessary burdens on residents.

Her approach emphasizes efficiency, sustainability, and making sure every dollar spent provides real value to the community.

Corinne's leadership style is grounded in com-

mon sense and fairness. She believes residents should be informed, heard and confident that the town government is making prudent financial decisions on their behalf. Transparency and fiscal responsibility, in her view, are essential to maintaining trust between residents and their local government.

Corinne Shartrand brings integrity, practical judgment, and a strong commitment to responsible financial stewardship. Her leadership will help ensure Blandford remains stable, well-managed, and prepared for the future.

John and Sarah Malanson
Blandford

Resident concerned for our country

I was viewing my father's name on The National WWII Museum Honoree List.

He served during WWII in the Army then served in the Air Force and retired out at just over 26 years of service to our Country. I know if he were alive now he would be saddened by what is happening in our Country and angry at those who follow the concepts of Fascism, an evil he fought against.

I'm angry at the cowards and bullies trying to destroy the principles this country was founded upon.

I'm also angry with those so blinded by the lies they can't see they are actually destroying the freedoms we have enjoyed.

Freedoms bought with the blood of true patriots of the past and now in jeopardy due to this administration, their followers and those who seek profit from the misery of others. If we can't leave the world a better place for our children and grandchildren, then we have failed as a species.

I know there are good people in this world. Please stop the hate and listen carefully. Don't parrot what

you hear on the news, but check multiple sources of information.

Think about what you are doing before you act and consider what effect it will have on others.

During WWII Hitler's propaganda machine got people to hate their neighbors with lies. It targeted the Jews, gays, gypsies, the mentally ill, the media and so many others as a distraction to hide their evil. Please don't let history repeat itself in this the 21st century.

James M. Zimmerman
Chester

Residents supports Shartrand for Select Board

My name is Susan Webster.

I have lived in Blandford for 55 years. I raised my family here while running a business in Blandford.

I am writing to strongly support Corinne Shartrand for the Select Board in Blandford.

In a small town like ours, being a good neighbor is important. Corinne understands that community is built by people helping one another, being practical, and looking out for the town as a whole.

Recently, Corinne organized a horse veterinarian

visit for several local residents so we could share the road call expenses. That may sound like a small thing, but it speaks volumes about her common sense, financial responsibility, and willingness to help others save money whenever possible.

Along these same lines, she is gathering perennial flowers voluntarily from people who have them to share for Bicentennial Park, to spruce it up while saving costs.

She has also personally offered to come to my home to help me with things when I needed assistance. As

someone older, I appreciated not just the offer itself, but the kindness and generosity behind it.

Corinne is the kind of person who steps up quietly, helps neighbors without expecting recognition, and works to keep the strong sense of community that makes Blandford special.

I believe she would bring that same practical, neighbor-focused approach to the Select Board, and I encourage residents to support her candidacy.

Susan Webster
Blandford

from page 4

BIRDS

They eat mostly small fish, but will also eat crayfish and other crustaceans, aquatic insects, frogs and tadpoles. Other items include grasshoppers, snakes, earthworms, snails and small rodents.

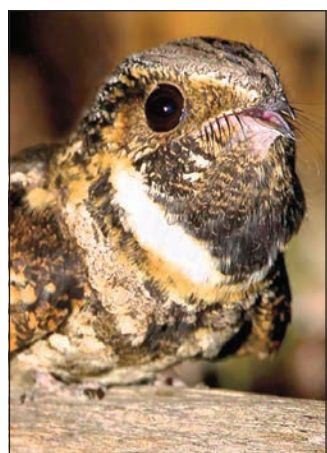


Black and white warbler

My daughter, Paula, saw a black and white warbler by the cross country trail at Quabbin Regional High School last week. As the name implies, the warbler has black and white feathers with black streaking on the breast and white wing bars, white eye line and white belly.

Red shouldered hawk

A Montgomery resident had a red shouldered hawk in her yard. She sent a photo of it in flight.



Whippoorwill

I received an email on May 15 from a Belchertown resident. She stated, "The whippoorwill is back in my yard again this year. The calls starts around dark and continue off and on till sunrise. She or he perches on the roof and calls all night. It can be very annoying as you are trying to sleep, but I still feel blessed or cursed."

Common Ravens

A Brimfield couple had common ravens in their yard last month. They stated in an email, "We mostly hear them and sometimes see them flying over a local feature called West Mountain that is about 1000' elevation and runs north/south about a half a mile east of our house."

They stated, "On a Thursday a raven was in the driveway where I throw

a seed mix daily for ground feeders. I saw the bird from inside the garage, my wife saw it with binoculars from inside the house."

They stated, "We both noticed the larger size, bigger than the American Crows that often feed in the same area. I noticed the wedged shaped tail when it flew away and my wife saw larger, heavier bill and the shaggy throat feathers." A few days later they saw three ravens.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005. The Palmer office has a new phone system and I will be getting an extension where messages may be left. I will publish the number as soon as it is set up.





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countryjournal@turley.com

Chester Baptist Church

Pastor Dan Herr
14 Middlefield Road
Chester, MA 01011
413-354-7743
Email: pastor@chesterbaptistchurch.org
Website: chesterbaptistchurch.org
Sunday School for all ages at 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship at 10:45 a.m.
Sunday Afternoon at 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday Evening Bible Study and Prayer at 6:30 p.m.

First Congregational Church of Blandford

Pastor Tom Crouse
91 Main St., Blandford, MA 01008
413-848-2052
Sunday service 10 a.m.

First Congregational Church of Chester

Pastor Susan Borsella
334 Skyline Trail, Chester, MA 01011
Service with Live Music: 10 a.m. - Sunday
Coffee and Sweets Social:
10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

First Congregational Church of Williamsburg

Rev. Jack Kraaz
4 North Main St., Williamsburg, MA 01096
413-268-7557
burgychurch@gmail.com • burgychurch.org
Facebook:
First Congregational Church of Williamsburg
YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyH1EA-fduamqHYeekxw5w
Office Hours: Tues. - Fri. 9 a.m. - 12 noon
Days and Hours of Services: Sun. at 10 a.m.

Hilltown Community Church

Dr. Robert Perreault, Senior Pastor
55 Main St., Russell, MA 01071
413-275-3232
Office: 413-862-3341
hilltownchurch3341@gmail.com
hilltowncommunitychurch.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/p/Hilltown-Community-Church-61580281487624/
Sunday Mornings 10 a.m.

Holy Family Parish

Rev. Ronald F. Sadlowski, known as Fr. Ron
5 Main St., Russell, MA 01071
413-862-4418
Office Hours: No set times.
Please call, leave a voice message or email: holyfamilyrussell.org
parish@holyfamilyrussell.org
Saturday Vigil: 5 p.m.
Sunday Masses: 8:15 a.m. & 11 a.m.

CHURCH DIRECTORY



Your Community Church

New Boston Congregational Church

Pastor Eric Kriebel
4 Sandisfield Rd., PO Box 81
Sandisfield, MA 01255
Services held twice monthly, check website:
www.newbostoncongregationalchurch.org

Pioneer Valley Assembly of God

Pastor Javier Melendez
63 Old Chester Rd., Huntington MA 01050
413-667-3196
pvagliffe@gmail.com
www.pioneervalleyag.org
Facebook: Pioneer Valley Assembly of God
Sunday service: 10:30 a.m.

Pioneer Valley Mennonite Fellowship

Deacon Jerald Reinford
400 Huntington Rd., Russell, MA 01071
(413) 297-6037
Sunday worship at 10 a.m.
Visitors appreciated

Westhampton Congregational Church, UCC

Pastor Carol Smith
1 Tob Rd., Westhampton, MA 01027
(413) 527-4204
Sunday Worship at 10 a.m.



GATEWAY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2026



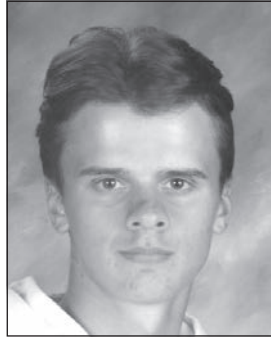
Jeffrey Antonellis



Savahna Audet



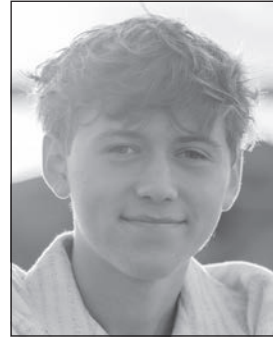
Bow Briggs



Andrew Chepurenko



Calvin Crevier



Theodore DeAngelis-Page



Lucas Gilbert



Kathryn Harding



Ana Holmes



Liam Hourihan



Shelby Jackman



Elizabeth Kadzik



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GATEWAY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2026



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Jake Marchbanks



Rylan McCaul



Lilliana Mitchell



Eliza Mueller



William Paterson



Lily Peloquin



Max Plumley



Hannah Primack



Grace Renaud



Jayliana Rivera



Justin Rucki



Ashley Scheinost



Desmond StMartin



Ashley Tacke



Isabella Vera-Ortiz



James VonDeck



Cameron Wade



Michael Whitaker



Symbols of graduation ceremonies explained

After many years of time spent toiling classrooms and study halls, many students welcome graduation. Graduating high school or college is a major milestone. It is associated with many symbols that have endured for some time. As graduates prepare to receive their diplomas or degrees, they might be curious to know what's behind some notable symbols of graduation ceremonies.

Gown

The gown is a customary garment worn on graduation day. Gowns historically were heavy robes worn by medieval scholars for warmth in the largely unheated universities. Today, graduates don gowns

not for warmth (as most graduation ceremonies take place in the spring and summer), but to symbolize the level of degree being conferred.

Cap

A cap, also known as a

mortarboard, often goes hand-in-hand with a graduation gown. Historians surmise the flat, square shape represents either a mason's mortarboard to symbolize hard work. Others say it may be the shape of

a book to signify academic achievement.

Tassel

The turning of the tassel is a relatively modern tradition. The tassel, which is attached to the mortarboard, ini-

tially was an ornament but has since evolved into a traditional element. The Honor Society says the practice of moving the tassel from one side of the cap to the other symbolizes completion of this important

academic milestone. Typically, graduates move the tassel from the right to the left. The right side represents the student being a candidate, while the left means he or she is now a graduate.

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Wishing You a **Picture-Perfect Graduation Day**

Here's hoping your graduation celebrations are blessed with friendship, family and fun! Today and always, we wish you health, happiness and good fortune as you continue to work hard and reach your dreams.

Congratulations, Class of 2026!

Country Journal

Send us your graduation day photos to share in the Country Journal.

Email: countryjournal@turley.com

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Gateway announces Golden Achievement Award finalists

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – Principal William Sullivan has announced the five finalists for Gateway Regional School's Golden Achievement Award, to be awarded at the Senior Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, May 27.

In alphabetical order, the finalists are Jeffrey Antonellis, Theodore DeAngelis-Page, Eliza Mueller, Lily Peloquin and Grace Renauld.

Members of the senior class nominate five of their peers for this prestigious award. The top five nominees are announced and forwarded to the GRS, staff who then vote.

The Golden Achievement award is given to the member of the senior class, who best exemplifies outstanding academic achievement, outstanding leadership to school and community and outstanding service to the school and community.

All five are members of the Dana O. Weber Chapter of the National Honor Society and have volunteered with numerous community service projects such as the Senior Citizen Brunch and Concert and Holiday Boot Drive to raise funds for the Hilltown Family Center's holiday gift program.

Jeffrey Antonellis comes from Blandford, is a member of the National Honor Society and a recipi-

ent of the Bennington Young Writers Award and the Young Writers USA Award. He has also been recognized for Excellence in Studio Art.

Antonellis demonstrated a strong ability to balance athletics, music and academics through involvement with the Cross Country team, Jazz Band and Concert Band. In the community, he volunteers at the Porter Memorial Library in Blandford and provides household and yard assistance to elderly residents.

His strong foundation in writing and the arts will continue to be developed as he majors in creative writing at Bard College in the fall.

Theodore DeAngelis-Page grew up in the towns of Russell and Montgomery, is an Advance Placement Scholar with Honor and received the Dartmouth Book Award and the Scott McCleenna Award.

He earned first honors all four years of high school and volunteered with the Montgomery Council on Aging, assisting elderly residents with tasks such as stacking wood and shoveling snow.

He has been on hand at numerous community events including the Empty Bowls fundraiser for the Huntington Food Pantry at the Pioneer Valley Assembly of God Church; Gateway Education Foundation Trivia Night and the annual Parade of Lights in Russell.

DeAngelis-Page is a member of Student Council and served for two years as



Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long

The 2026 nominees for Gateway's Golden Achievement Award are Jeffrey Antonellis, Theodore DeAngelis-Page, Lily Peloquin, Eliza Mueller and Grace Renauld.

the Student Representative to the Gateway Regional School Committee. He has also been a dedicated athlete on both the Varsity Baseball and Varsity Soccer teams. This fall, he will attend Northeastern University to study civil engineering and architectural studies.

Eliza Mueller from Russell also earned first honors all four years and previously received the Gateway Regional Kindness Award, Suffolk University Book Award and Hue Lamb Showmanship Award. She was a 2025 Massachusetts Girls State delegate and also advocated for Rural School Aid at the Massachusetts State House earlier this spring.

She has over 100 hours of volunteer hours as a Patient Ambassador at

Baystate Noble Hospital, and also supports the Free and Sustainable Store and Church of the Atonement.

She has been on Student Council and was elected President her senior year and served as a Barr Foundation Student Representative. She was on the Varsity Cross Country team from grades 6-12 and JV/Varsity Basketball team (8-12) where she was co-captain. She will attend St. Anselm College to study nursing with an interest in emergency or pediatric medicine.

Lily Peloquin of Huntington is a Skills USA Massachusetts gold and silver medalist, was a delegate to Massachusetts Girls State, a Girls Basketball All-Stars honoree and co-captain. She volunteered with the Whip

City Animal Sanctuary, Montgomery Council on Aging, Littlefield Field Day and Assistant Teacher program and Chester on Track.

She has served as a middle school math tutor and volunteer counselor at Westfield State University's College for Kids summer program. She is Vice President of Student Government and Secretary of Student Council. She also worked as a hostess at Listons Bar and Restaurant, as a babysitter, and assistant teacher at Tiny Toes Learning Center. Peloquin will attend the University of New England where she plans to double major in middle and secondary education and mathematics.

Grace Renauld had a distinguished athletic career at Gateway. She was named

a PVIAC All-League basketball honoree and was recognized by MassLive as one of Massachusetts' top women's success defenders, along with selections to All-Star soccer and basketball games. She captained the Varsity Soccer, Varsity Basketball and Varsity Softball teams, was Vice President of Student Council and President of the Class of 2026. She has volunteered at the COA Veterans Dinner, the Village Closet, served as a soccer referee and basketball and softball coach with the Gateway Youth Athletic Association and volunteered at Littleville and Chester field days. She has been accepted into the Honors Program at Sacred Heart University where she plans to study nursing with a specialty in pediatric oncology.

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.



Schools prepares for cell phone ban

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – As Massachusetts moves toward potential new statewide regulations on student cellphone use in schools, including the possibility of a "bell-to-bell" cellphone exclusion, Gateway has been working proactively to prepare for this transition.

"Over the past several years, we have implemented increasingly structured expectations around cellphone use," said Dr. William Sullivan, principal. "Prior to this school year, students in grades 6-8 were not permitted to use their phones during the school day with the exception of Grade 8 students during lunch. In grades 9-12, students were permitted limited use of cellphones in hallways and during lunch and during classes if for educational reasons."

Beginning April 1, those

expectations were further refined, limiting 9-12 student cellphone use to the cafeteria and hallways only. Classroom use has remained restricted with phones permitted only sparingly for approved instructional purposes, Sullivan explained.

Looking ahead, Gateway is piloting a full cellphone exclusion beginning June 1, in which students will not be permitted to use cellphones at all during the school day.

As part of this transition, the school is exploring additional supports and systems including apps that can restrict device usage during the school day as well as potential carrier-based solutions to limit access.

"We recognize and have heard family concerns regarding communication during the school day, emergency contact procedures and how consequences will be handled. These are

important considerations as we refine our approach," he said.

To support this work, they have established a Cellphone Planning Committee comprised of administrators and teachers to help guide and facilitate a smooth and thoughtful implementation process moving forward.

They offered an informational meeting on Wednesday, May 20 to field questions from families. No parents attended; however, the school had spoken with a number of concerned parents by phone when the ban was first announced.

"We remain committed to ongoing communication with families as this work continues," Sullivan emphasized. "Overall, we have received strong support from families and staff and we are encouraged by how well students have responded to clear expectations."

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HONORS

Point Average, edging out DeAngelis-Page who took Salutatorian. Dr. William Sullivan, Principal announced that the two had battled for the top GPA all four years of high school and the margin of victory was a few thousandths of a point.

Peloquin also received the school's prestigious Golden Achievement Award, which is awarded on the basis of academic achievement and service to the school and community.

Sullivan opened the event by welcoming families, friends, staff, students and the senior class.

He thanked Carms Restaurant in Chester for providing breakfast to the senior class and their families, Emily Johnson and Michelle Laurin from the Guidance Office for their hard work in pulling the ceremony together and Assistant Principal Valerie Zeh for her "partnership, leadership, and unwavering support of our students

each and every day."

Sullivan concluded, "Today is not simply about awards or certificates; it is about recognizing growth, resilience, dedication, leadership, kindness, and the countless moments, both big and small, that have shaped the journey of the Class of 2026. We are proud of the people you have become, excited for the paths ahead of you, and honored to celebrate YOU this morning."

Grace Renauld, President of the Class of 2026, welcomed families, friends, staff and administration to the ceremony. Her speech closed with, "Every day I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude that I have had the privilege to see my peers grow into strong, confident individuals who strive in school as well as becoming morally intelligent. As much as I would love to continue bragging about my wonderful class, I'm going to wrap things up so we can get this

ceremony started."

Students were then called to the stage to be recognized for academic, athletic and club accomplishments.

One of the most poignant moments of the ceremony was when Sunrise Academy teacher Liz Lewis gave the Hero Award to a student, who had overcome challenges during high school.

In announcing the award to William Patterson, Lewis said that not all heroes wear capes. But when Patterson went on stage to shake the principal's hand and receive the award, he was gifted a bright silky cape with a large W embroidered on it, which Sullivan wrapped around the student.

This was met with warm and thunderous applause from the assembly. Patterson also received the Outstanding Work Study Award.

Three senior writers were honored for completing capstone projects in English Language Arts. Jake

Marchbanks was honored for Best Cult Horror Screenplay; Jeffrey Antonellis with a Hugo Award and Shelby Jackman with a Frida Award.

In announcing the nominees and winner of the Golden Achievement Award, Zeh explained that members of the senior class vote to nominate their peers. The top five nominees are announced and the Gateway Regional School staff vote to determine the winner. The award is given to the member of the senior class who best exemplifies outstanding academic achievement, outstanding leadership to school and community, and outstanding service to the school and community.

The five nominees were Jeffrey Antonellis, Theodore DeAngelis-Page, Eliza Mueller, Lily Peloquin and Grace Renauld with Peloquin winning the prestigious honor.

Sullivan explained how the class rank is determined

for the Valedictorian and Salutatorian honors. He said that students are evaluated across a wide range of core academic disciplines: mathematics, science, social studies, English language arts and world language courses.

"The selection of this year's Valedictorian and Salutatorian was especially competitive, with the academic race between the two students remaining remarkably close throughout their high school careers. In fact, the final distinction came down to only a few thousandths of a point, highlighting just how extraordinary the accomplishments of both students truly are. Both students consistently pushed themselves to achieve at the highest level and approached their studies with determination, discipline, and integrity," Sullivan said.

He then announced Theodore DeAngelis-Page as the Salutatorian and Lily Peloquin as Valedictorian.

Taking the stage to close the awards ceremony was the Class Vice President, Valedictorian and Golden Achievement Award winner, Lily Peloquin.

She thanked the Gateway faculty, underclassmen and families at the assembly for their everlasting support, encouragement and commitment to their success. She reminded her classmates of the lowlights marking the beginning and end of their time in the building.

"We've had countless curveballs thrown at us since the day we entered this building, first by the abrupt ending of sixth grade as the result of Covid, and then by the recent cancellation of our last day of school," Peloquin said. The seniors last day of school was abruptly cancelled due to a lack of water at the Gateway complex.

A complete listing of senior awards is published in this issue of the *Country Journal*.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Gateway Regional High School lists Class of 2026 Senior Awards

Below, please find an alphabetical list of the awards granted to the Gateway Regional School's Class of 2026, at their Sr. Awards Ceremony held May 26. Academic "G" awards were granted to students who never received a quarter grade below an 80 and maintained a 3.5 GPA throughout high school.

Jeffrey Antonellis: Golden Achievement Nominee, National Honor Society, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Mural Painting, Future Author Award, Hugo Award, Excellence in Business Math I, Excellence in Ecology, Excellence in Jazz Band, Excellence in Visual Arts, and the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

Bow Briggs: Welding 500 Hours Certificate, Boys Soccer MassLive All WMASS Class D 1st Team, PVIAC All-League

Andrew Cherpurenko: Boys Soccer MassLive All WMASS Class D 1st Team, PVIAC All-League.

Calvin Crevier: Welding 500 Hours Certificate

Theodore DeAngelis-Page: Salutatorian Class of 2026, National Honor Society, Golden Achievement Nominee, Student Council, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in AP English, Excellence in AP Calculus, Gateway Math Award, Excellence in AP Physics, Civic Action Award, Louis Armstrong Jazz Award, Baseball PVIAC All-League, Alice and Henry Euler Memorial Scholarship, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, George A & Genevieve E Schenna Scholarship, Jurgen G. Igel Memorial Scholarship, Richard D and Claire A Carmel Memorial Scholarship, Walter S. Barr Scholarship, Nate McKinney Memorial Scholarship

Lucas Gilbert: Excellence in Business Math II, Completion of Four Years of Spanish, Outstanding Crafter Award

Kathryn Harding: National Honor Society, Student Council, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Contemporary Issues, Completion of Four Years of Spanish, Yearbook Senior Editor, Girls Soccer PVAIC All-League, Richard D and Claire A Carmel Memorial Scholarship

Ana Holmes: National Honor Society, Trivia Club, Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Jazz Band. Excellence in Wood Technology, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

Liam Hourihan: Excellence in CP English, Excellence in Business Math II, Excellence in Concert Band, Cross Country MassLive Unsung Hero

Shelby Jackman: Best Buddies Exemplary Friendship Award, Honor Roll 3 Terms, Frida Award, Excellence in CP Pre-Calculus, Professional Qualifications Certificate Eligibility

Elizabeth Kadzik: National Honor Society, Excellence in 4H, Honor Roll 3 Terms, Professional Qualifications Certificate Eligibility

Kate Lewis: Honor Roll 3 Terms, Professional Qualifications Certificate Eligibility

Andrew Lord: Welding 500 Hours Certificate

Erica Madru: MIAA Military Appreciation Award, Excellence in Contemporary Issues, Girls Soccer Senior All Star

Jake Marchbanks: National Honor Society, Yearbook Senior Editor, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Trivia Club, Best Cult Horror Screenplay, Excellence in Contemporary Issues, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

Rylan McCaul: Honor Roll 3 Terms, Kindest Classmate, Outstanding Crafter Award, Excellence in Physical Education, Cross Country MassLive Unsung Hero, Professional Qualifications Certificate Eligibility

Lilliana Mitchell: Excellence in Business Math I, Excellence in Algebra II, Excellence in Psychology, Excellence in Visual Arts

Eliza Mueller: National Honor Society, Student Council, Class Officer-Fundraising Coordinator, Trivia Club, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in AP English, Excellence in AP Calculus, Robert Shipman Social Studies Award, APA TOPSS Award in Psychology, Excellence in Honors Spanish IV, Completion of Four Years of Spanish, Excellence in Concert Band, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, Hillside Agricultural Society Scholarship, Richard D and Claire A Carmel Memorial Scholarship, Walter S. Barr Scholarship, Spirit Trophy, Golden Achievement Nominee

William Paterson: Sunrise Hero Award, Sunrise Academy Outstanding Work Study Student, Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Visual Arts

Lily Peloquin: Valedictorian Class of 2026, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award, Golden Achievement Award 2026 Winner, Golden Achievement Nominee, National Honor Society, Class Officer- Vice President, Student Council, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in AP English, Excellence in AP Calculus, Gateway Math Award, Excellence in AP Physics, Hank Henderson Award, APA TOPSS Award in Psychology, Professional Qualifications Certificate Eligibility, Girls Basketball Senior All Star, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, Karen May Hart Memorial Scholarship, Richard D and Claire A Carmel Memorial Scholarship, Gateway Teacher Association Scholarship

Hannah Primack: Excellence in Business Math I, Excellence in Art History, American Government Award, Outstanding Crafter Award

Grace Renaud: National Honor Society, Golden Achievement Nominee, Student Council, Class Officer-President, Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Honors Physics, Completion of Four Years of Spanish, Girls Basketball Senior All Star, Girls Soccer Senior All Star

Jayliana Rivera: Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in CP Pre-Calculus, Professional Qualifications Certificate Eligibility, Outstanding Crafter Award, Girls Soccer MassLive All WMASS Class D 2nd Team, PVIAC All-League

Justin Rucki: National Honor Society, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Honors English IV, Excellence in Psychology, Excellence in Concert Band

Ashley Scheinost: English IV Perseverance Award

Desmond St Martin: National Honor Society, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Honors English IV, Excellence in AP Calculus, Excellence in AP Physics, Excellence in Psychology, Excellence in Fit for Life, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

Ashley Tacke: National Honor Society, Class Officer-Secretary, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in Honors English IV, Welding 500 Hours Certificate, Richard D and Claire A Carmel Memorial Scholarship

Isabella Vera-Ortiz: Excellence in Forensics, Excellence in Jazz Band, Outstanding Crafter Award, Excellence in Physical Education

James Von Deck: Honor Roll 3 Terms, American Government Discourse Award, Welding 500 Hours Certificate, Excellence in Physical Education

Cameron Wade: Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in CP English IV, Excellence in Business Math I, Excellence in Business Math II, Welding 500 Hours Certificate, Excellence in Health, Excellence in Physical Education

Michael Whitaker: National Honor Society, Academic "G", Honor Roll 3 Terms, Excellence in AP Calculus, John Philip Sousa Award, John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, Band Booster Scholarship, Richard D and Claire A Carmel Memorial Scholarship

Congratulations
Class of 2026

COLLEGE NOTES

Colleges and universities announce graduates

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

Bridgewater

Bachelor's degree

Emily E. Bradford of Pittsfield
Michael Angelo Losardo of Pittsfield
Ian Francis Bacon of Westfield
AidanM. Gall of Westfield
Mia Delaney Howell of Williamsburg
Abigail Elizabeth Camerlin of Worthington

BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

Bridgewater

Graduate degrees

Kaitlyn Silva of Easthampton
Patrisa Brie Nulph of Southhampton
Aaliyah Joanna Mercer-Seal of Westfield
Joseph De'jon Seal of Westfield

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Worcester

Olivia Lawry of Westfield *Magna Cum Laude*
Lilly Patton of Washington *Magna Cum Laude*

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Fitchburg

Samantha L. Bliss of Lee, *MED special education*
Rebecca Elizabeth Hahn of Northampton, *MED elementary education*
Owen T. Bonney of Pittsfield, *BS communications media*
Benjamin Kenneth Adams of Southhampton, *BS communications media*
Irene Chetambe of Westfield, *BS nursing RN to BS*

HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Holyoke

Associate Science Degree in nursing

Rebecca Boisseau of Chester
Elishama Jean of Easthampton
Nicole Lapointe of Easthampton
Jordan Panniello of Montgomery
Jill Krueger of Westfield
Aimee Williams of Westfield
Anna Hlava of Westhampton

Jessie Paradis Stern receives senior prize

CLINTON, NY – Charter Day, held on May 12, Established in 1950, the event combines the traditional Class Day celebrating the end of class-college's annual Class &

tion of the granting of the College's charter on May 26, 1812. The Senior Prize in Environmental Studies is awarded to the outstanding senior environmental studies major.

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

GRADUATES

from page 1

one of the core people who will make leaving in the fall so hard.”

Senior members joined the band in performing “Highlights from How to Train Your Dragon” by John Powell/arranged by Johnnie Vinson.

Sullivan shared his reflections on the class, who were freshmen when he first arrived at Gateway as an Assistant Principal.

“And before I had really even finished introducing myself, someone asked the question that would somehow follow me for the next four years: Are we your favorite class?”

After reviewing the roller coaster ride that represents the four years of high school he answered the class’s original question. “I guess my answer has evolved a bit over time. Because the truth is, I have been incredibly fortunate and deeply honored to spend the last four years with you,” he said.

In his remarks, Salutatorian Theodore DeAngelis-Page concluded, “Although I stand before you with this medal around my neck, I am not here to offer you advice. I’m sure all of you are quite capable, smart, and funny. I wanted to speak to you, directly, about my experience as a human being, a son, a teammate, a boyfriend and a student. But I hope that you leave here today with something to think about, something to cause your brain to take a little longer falling asleep tonight.”

Valedictorian Lily Peloquin spoke about the class receiving letters last week from their seventh, eighth, and ninth grade selves. “Reading them, I felt a little disappointed, knowing some of the things I had talked about then had faded, but also proud that many of my goals had been accomplished. I wanted so badly to reach back in time and tell that version of myself that everything was going to work itself out. More than that, though, it made me realize that every single one of us sitting here today carries the hopes of the kids we used to be.”

She continued, “We are the answers to our own past questions.”

Senior Ana Holmes joined the Gateway Choir in performing Harry Styles’ “Song of the Times.”

Long serving social studies teacher James Duggan had been selected by the class as their guest speaker. He opened by telling the class how extraordinary and very special they were.

“Even after some challenging days, you would always give me that extra lift and restore my faith in humanity... I sometimes wondered if I should be paying the school district to have the privilege of working with you and not the other way around.”

He also reminded the group of their civic engagement projects including studying the history of the waterways in the school district and then working with Helena Alves of the Huntington Conservation Commission to write editorials that encouraged compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act.

Another group had researched the history of Gateway’s legend as being built on land used as part of the Underground Railroad, to assist fugitive enslaved people in escaping to Canada.

While they were unable to outright confirm this, they determined it was probable. Student advocacy led to the placement of a plaque at the entrance of Gateway Regional School honoring the district’s name for the area’s role as a “gateway to freedom.”



Turley Publications photos by Wendy Long
Graduate Andrew Chepurenko, shown here with his aunt and a bouquet of fabulous balloons.



Junior Marshals for graduation were Charlotte Hansen and Cailin McKellick.



Senior members rejoin the band for a performance of “How to Train Your Dragon.”



Erica Madru, wearing a stole noting her future in the U. S. Army.



Last but not least, Michael Whitaker becomes the 33rd and final member of the Gateway Regional School Class of 2026 to receive his diploma.



Bow Briggs honored the country’s 250th anniversary with a patriotic stole.

with roles in the district, stepped forward to give their children their diploma and an embrace. They included Littleville Elementary Principal Melissa McCaul and daughter Rylan and School Committee members Jeanna Briggs with son Bow and Nicole Daviau with son, Jeffrey Antonellis.

Matarazzo and Renaud then led the graduates in their last act as students of the district: moving their graduation tassel from one side, over the heart, to the other.

The class marched out to the song “Where Did the Time Go?” by Dr. Dog, to reunite with families and friends on Booster Field.

Then came the awarding of diplomas, granted to Jeffrey Antonellis, Savannah Audet, Bow Briggs, Andrew Chepurenko, Calvin Crevier, Theodore DeAngelis-Page, Lucas Gilbert, Kathryn Harding, Ana Holmes, Liam Hourihan, Shelby Jackman, Elizabeth Kadzik, Kate Lewis, Andrew Lord, Erica Madru, Jake Marchbanks, Rylan McCaul, Lilliana Mitchell, Eliza Mueller, William Paterson, Lily Peloquin, Max Plumley, Hannah Primack, Grace Renaud, Jayliana Rivera, Justin Rucki, Ashley Scheinost, Desmond St Martin, Ashley Tacke, Isabella Vera-Ortiz, James Von Deck, Cameron Wade, and Michael Whitaker.

Most diplomas were handed to students by School Committee Chairman Jason Fergie and Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo; however, several mothers on the dais,



Three district officials had children graduating and were able to confer their diplomas. Left to right: Littleville Elementary School Principal Melissa McCaul (daughter Rylan) and School Committee members Jeanna Briggs (son Bow) and Nicole Daviau (son Jeffrey Antonellis).

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Gateway Alumni emphasize grit and ability to pivot

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – A group of seven alumni gathered to speak with current juniors and seniors at Gateway Regional School in Huntington on Thursday, May 21.

Dr. Will Sullivan, the principal, asked the panelists a series of questions and the alumni shared the life wisdom they've gained since leaving Gateway.

Before the event started, Gateway senior Lucas Gilbert agreed to be interviewed for this article. He plans to attend college and will go to HCC this fall to study acting and social work.

The two year start, he said, is to save money and because he didn't get serious about academics until later in high school. By working hard at HCC, he expects to open up good transfer and scholarship opportunities for finishing his Bachelor's degree.

Dr. Kelly Sudnick graduated in 2002 in a class of 82 students after serving as class president all four years. She said she went into her senior year with a fully formed plan: join the military and be trained to become a nurse.

When 9/11 happened in the fall of her senior year, joining the military didn't seem like the best option anymore. She was the oldest in her family and neither she, nor her parents, knew much about college financial aid. She decided to attend Elms College and graduated as a nurse who was carrying \$110,000 in college loans, even though she saved two years of room and board charges as an RA.

Her solution was to enlist to be an active duty nurse in the U. S. Navy. As an officer, she enlisted for eight years and watched as paycheck after paycheck went to paying off those loans.

By the end of her military service, she was debt-free and had qualified for the GI Bill to continue her education, which covered her Master's degree and a Doctoral degree in medical research.

"I felt that I could do things because no one at Gateway told me I couldn't,"

Sudnick said. "I just want you all to know that you can do hard things. And it probably won't be as hard as you think it will." Sudnick now serves as the Nurse Leader for Gateway Regional School District.

That concept of "pivoting" as you start to pursue your adult life was also shared by other alumni. Abigail Madru is a 2024 graduate currently attending St. Louis University in Madrid, Spain and majoring in international business.

While she said it was her dream to study overseas, she told the current students that the common axiom that the first three months of college are the toughest rang true for her. So were the second three months. By second semester, the pressure and anxiety of studying overseas overwhelmed her and she truly benefited from returning home for three months to rest and restore.

When she returned to school in the fall of 2025, she knew what to expect and began to thrive overseas. "Sometimes it can feel like you can't branch out into the world coming from a small school," Madru said. "But you absolutely can."

Casey Pease (2015) also found himself pivoting from his own plan due to two unexpected events. As a freshman majoring in political science at the University of Massachusetts, Pease had the opportunity to meet presidential candidate Bernie Sanders on campus.

Sanders hired him for his 2016 presidential run and Pease became the youngest paid staffer on the campaign. That was a good unexpected event. A negative unexpected event was having to later drop out of college for financial reasons. Pease went on to work for other political campaigns, ran for a Massachusetts House of Representatives seat (coming in third in a crowded field) and is now working as the Director of Communications for Massachusetts Senator Paul Mark.

He has also resumed working toward his Bachelor's degree. Pease said that it can feel as though students from other, larger, better-resourced schools might



Gateway alumni Casey Pease ('15), Mia Griffin ('20), Jackson Harding ('24), Abigail Madru ('24), Liz Lewis ('93) and Dr. Kelly Sudnick ('02) shared their college, career and life lessons with juniors and seniors at Gateway Regional School.

have an advantage over those from Gateway.

"But I think there's a certain grit you get from growing up in the hilltowns," Pease said. In his role of screening and hiring interns for the Senator's office, Pease said he knows that when he selects a Gateway student he's getting someone who is dependable and resourceful.

He said that being supported by the teachers and staff in the Gateway schools also shaped him. "It's because I come from this community and this school that I am where I am today."

Natalie Saloio, Gateway Class of 2011 agreed. "Great resilience happens when you come from a place not well-known and not well-resourced. Take the fact that you come from someplace different and interesting and use it to your advantage," she said, adding that it can help you stand out from the field in everything from essays to job interviews. She also paid her way through college opting to attend law school at Northeastern University. She is now an attorney in the Public Defender's office alongside many who attended law school at Western New England University, which would have been far less expensive and gotten her to the same point. She accrued greater debt and chose a field of law that isn't as lucrative; however, public service loan forgiveness will qualify her for some debt reduction. Another piece of advice was taking the opportunity

to work in a field before pursuing a graduate degree. She worked as a para legal for three years to make sure that law school was right for her before making that investment. "It's important not to put yourself in a box," Saloio said, adding she had no regrets. "It's good work. It's important work. And I love doing it."

Sullivan asked the alumni about a typical day in their lives.

Mia Griffin ('20) had literally graduated from Westfield State University the day before as an art major. She noted she'd been very involved in art classes as a Gateway student confiding, "I'm the one you can thank for those big wooden bathroom passes. Sorry."

Griffin said she rarely slept as a college art major and was often in the art studio when others went home for holidays and vacations.

She advised people going to college to also try classes outside of their major, because it is a great opportunity to broaden your knowledge. "I've been in school since I was old enough to go to school," Griffin said. Her current plan is to create and sell ceramics and pottery and she will continue taking college classes this fall. Even though she has already earned her degree, she said she is not ready to stop learning.

Jackson Harding graduated with Madru in 2024 and is majoring in aqua culture at the University of New England in Biddeford, Maine.

He said that he has a lot more liberty to arrange his life in college, adding that last semester his earliest class started at 11 a.m. This was met with oohs and ahhs from the high school students, whose day at Gateway this year begins at 7:05 a.m.

Harding said he has been focusing on finding a work-life balance and has found that beneficial.

Elizabeth Lewis ('93) is a special education teacher at Gateway. She works full time, is a full time parent and has also returned to college. Her advice? "There is never a bad time to do what you want to do."

At this point, current senior Lucas Gilbert leaned over to report that his mother is also finishing up college work for a second career as an occupational therapist. "I am so proud of her," Gilbert said.

Sullivan asked the alumni for their best piece of advice. Sudnick and Saloio both said to research college financing options, understand how to best select your repayment options and interest rates and know what the career you're training for will pay you when you graduate.

At the same time, both emphasized that doing work you love is more important than making a higher salary doing something else you've qualified for.

Lewis advised students to not wait to do things you like. "Pursue your dreams," Lewis said. "Life goes much faster than you can imagine."

Madru reminded stu-

dents that the first three months of college can be tough, but encouraged them to stay with it. "Pivot when you need to. But push through," she said.

Jackson, the other full time college student, told them to find what they love to do but figure out how to find and keep a work-life balance.

Pease repeated Saloio's advice to look into early career (in her case, para legal work) or internship opportunities. "Create them if you need to," Pease said. It can be wise to gain experience in a field as or before you invest in a college education.

Sullivan reflected on the event afterwards. "Alumni Day was a powerful reminder of the impact of the GRS experience, as we welcomed back both recent and past Gators to speak with our students about the paths they've taken since graduation. Hearing them reflect on how the grit, skills, and accomplishments they developed during their time at GRS helped shape their success was truly inspiring and meaningful for our school community," Sullivan said.

Gilbert also shared his impressions of the alumni event. "It was super interesting and I loved the different perspectives and career paths. They are all so successful," he said. "There is such a stigma against Gateway because it is so small and has few resources. But we can be proud despite these hardships. We still thrive."

PITTSFIELD

First Fridays Artwalk takes place June 5

PITTSFIELD – The First Fridays Artwalk in downtown Pittsfield continues its five-month season May through September on Friday, June 5 from 5-8 p.m. as part of the city of Pittsfield's First Fridays at Five.

Participating venues on Friday, June 5 include Clock Tower Artists, Framework by Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., Hotel on North, Indie Readery and Records, Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, Pittsfield's City Hall, Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds, Sanctum Gallery, Solarium Plant Shop and the Soda Chef.

Download the Downtown Pittsfield App in the App Store or on Google Play to follow a virtual walking tour of art on a cell phone.

Indie Readery and Records, 314 North St., will feature a collection of collage and painting on unconventional surfaces by Brent Ridge for the June Artwalk. Stop by during the June 5 First Fridays Artwalk from 5-8 p.m. to take a look.

The exhibition features work by 39 artists in a range of media. OLLI at BCC is a volunteer-driven, inclusive learning community of adults 50+ offering diverse educational programs, social interaction and community engagement. There will be an

opening reception on Friday, June 5 from 5-8 p.m.

Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds, 119 Fenn Street, will feature artists from the Cosmic CoArt Cooperative including nature sketches by Matt Brinton, creations by Nicole Fecteau, art by Rochely DeJesus Melendez, and poetry by Ashley Sposato.

There will be a reception with the artists on Friday, June 5 from 5-8 p.m. including a poetry reading from 6:30-7:30 p.m., snacks and a table for children to make art.

The Clock Tower Artists at 75 South Church Street are excited to introduce rotating 2 to 3-person pop-up exhibits in their West Studios Lobby alongside their regularly scheduled open studios bringing even more variety and creative energy to every visit.

Pittsfield's City Hall, 70 Allen St., will feature "How Shall We Live? Berkshire Youth Artists Explore Their Relationship with the Earth in the Time of Climate Change" now through June 5.

Organized by Living the Change Berkshires, The Clark Art Institute, and Cooler Communities, this traveling show spotlights how local students experience climate change and share their resilience and love for the earth.

60+ Berkshire County High School Artists will be featured in the exhibit. There will be a reception on Friday, June 5 from 5-8 p.m. with opportunities for the public to learn about and take climate action.

Berkshire Art Center is hosting their summer Faculty Artist Show at Framework by Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. located at 437 North St.

The show will be on view during the June 5 First Fridays Artwalk from 5-8 p.m. as well as Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. now through June 25 by visiting the Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. offices at 431 North Street, or by appointment.

Download the Downtown Pittsfield app in the App Store or on Google Play to follow a virtual walking tour of art on your cell phone. Direct link: <https://downtownpittsfield.stqry.app/list/61485>

First Fridays Artwalk and "Art in the Park" are supported in part by a grant from the Mass Cultural Council and a grant from the Pittsfield Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

First Fridays Artwalk and "Art in the Park" are also supported in part by The Feigenbaum Foundation.

Hikers to hold group hike June 13

PITTSFIELD – Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers plan a group hike to the Azalea fields in the Pittsfield State Forest on Saturday, June 13 at 10 a.m.

Participants will park in the Berry Mountain Vista Lot Main Entrance, 1041 Cascade St. They should continue straight through the main entrance gate onto Berry Pond Circuit Road, road bears left and up the mountain continue until they see a large vista and parking lot on the right.

The high is rated a moderate 3.5 mile ridge line hike with 600 feet of total elevation gain.

DCR Interpretive Coordinator Alec Gillman and special guest Bob Rando on one of the most beautiful mountaintops to experience the best the Taconic Ridge has to offer sixty five acres of wild azaleas.

Berry Hill named

for William Berry, a Revolutionary War veteran who owned land here, is filled with the sweet smell of blooms of many varieties of the pink wild flowers and at 2,060-feet, Berry Pond is the highest natural water body in Massachusetts.

They will hike the Berry Pond shoreline and then follow the Taconic Crest Trail to Tower Mountain then return on the Pine Mountain Trail to visit Tilden Swamp with its bog vegetation. The hike will start at the dirt parking lot known as the New York Overlook with commanding views of the Catskills and Albany.

Berry Hill is also a well-known hawk watching site and many different varieties of wildlife can be seen here at this high elevation. This is a hidden gem on the New York Massachusetts border and one of the greatest state forests filled with the most exciting trails and

grand vistas

People should Register per vehicle by visiting www.hilltownhikers.com under events. Maps and bottled water are provided.

Well behaved dogs are welcome. This event is volunteer lead. Suggested donation is \$15. People should email westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com or call/text 413-302-0312 if they have any questions.

As always hikers should be prepared for rocks, mud and roots, bring trekking poles and a snack.

Those who want to hike every weekend year round should consider becoming a member of Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers.

Tees, hoodies, hats, patches, water bottles and safety vests will be for sale by donation at the event. People may see all events, maps, blog and photos at www.hilltownhikers.com.



Send Us Your Photos!

countryjournal@turley.com

BLANDFORD

Highway Dept. receives grant

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – Highway Superintendent Ray Hultay told the Select Board at the Tuesday, May 26 meeting that he had a successful grant application through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Highway Division.

MassDOT awarded the Blandford Highway Department \$199,500 under the Unpaved Roads Grant Program for the pur-

chase of a dirt roller. This equipment has been an essential need for maintaining the town's dirt roads.

Hultay explained that there "is a process" for maintaining the dirt roads. First the road surfaces are turned over with the grader; then the roadways are raked to remove any large rocks.

After an application of calcium for firmness, which is a new process this year, the roads are rolled out for adequate compaction creating a uniform surface.

The board reviewed again the personnel policy with concerns from the Highway Department, which included sick time and vacation time accrual and limits thereof.

Chair Jackie Coury met with Hultay Thursday morning, May 28, to continue the discussion. She said the Board wants the policy to go into effect July 1.

The board approved an expenditure of \$1,829.03 to maintain the town's reverse 911 capabilities.

Bicentennial Park clean up seeks volunteers

BLANDFORD – George Reichert organized a clean-up, dress-up Bicentennial Park to coordinate with the town's 250th celebration.

He and Corinne Shartrand are looking for any and all comers to help spruce up the gardens with fresh plantings about 75 plants. The planting will be Saturday, June 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"Help as long as you can," said Reichert. Volunteers can call him at 413-348-9909 to sign up or with any questions.



Blandford Historical Society... Did You Know?

Levi Pease
(1739-1824)

Hilltown history is filled with familiar family names, and few are more recognizable than Pease.

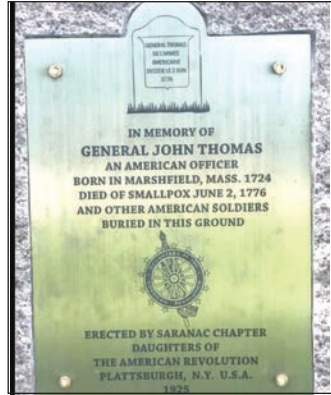
What many people don't realize is that one member of that family, Levi Pease, spent six years operating a tavern in the center of Blandford while quietly participating in some of the most important events of the American Revolution and later, building a new nation.

The story begins with Levi's father, Nathaniel Pease, who moved to Blandford from Enfield, Connecticut, in 1759 and purchased the corner tavern beside today's Old Burying Ground, across from the Blandford Historical Society.

In 1770, Nathaniel sold the tavern to Levi, who operated it until 1776, serving travelers by day while carrying military dispatches for the Revolutionary cause. A later newspaper account reported that Pease also commanded a company of minute men and "drilled them in secret places."

A Legend

Pease's reputation for courage, discretion and honesty became legendary. He served as a trust-



This plaque is in memory of Gen. John Thomas.

ed courier for General John Thomas, commander of the Northern Army and one of George Washington's most respected officers. Thomas commanded the forces that seized Dorchester Heights in March 1776, forcing the British evacuation of Boston.

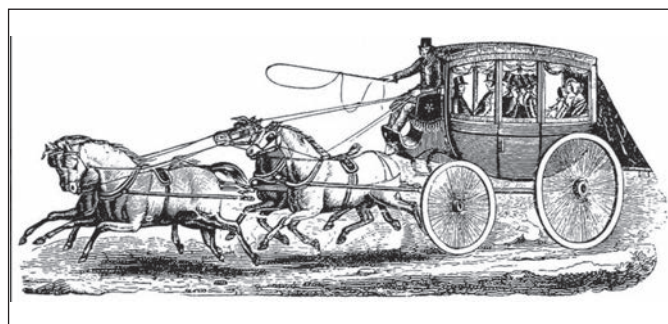
Pease was reportedly at Thomas's bedside when he succumbed to smallpox months later in Montreal. Not a single dispatch entrusted to him was known to have been lost.

One military officer later remarked that Pease could be trusted with a saddlebag full of money for army provisions without even requiring a receipt.

After General Thomas' death, Pease sold the tavern to his brother and devoted himself fully to the Revolutionary cause. He helped coordinate



Pease Tavern bordered the Old Burying Ground. Courtesy photos



This is a drawing of an early stage coach.

the movement of horses, supplies and equipment for the Continental Army, supporting operations that culminated in the American victory at Yorktown in 1781.

Chief Innovator

After the war, Pease turned his knowledge of roads, logistics and communication toward connecting the young nation.

He established one of America's earliest stagecoach lines, linking Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Hartford and New York. He

later expanded into mail delivery, dramatically reducing travel times between Boston and New York to about 36 hours.

Later, Pease successfully petitioned the Massachusetts legislature to charter one of the state's first turnpikes, earning the titles Father of the Stagecoach and Father of the Turnpike.

A Hub of Revolutionary Activity

Pease's story also intersects with other famous names from local histo-



This plaque honoring Levi Pease is located in Shrewsbury.

ry. Were they in subterfuge cahoots?

We can't say for certain. But the circles of trusted patriots in Revolutionary New England were legendary.

For example, records show Pease conducted business in town with Samuel Sloper, who participated in the Boston Tea Party in 1773 before settling in Blandford.

Additionally, the cannons Knox hauled from Fort Ticonderoga were later placed under General Thomas's command, the very officer for whom Pease carried secret dispatches at the time.

No official records confirm it, but Pease's Tavern was

perfectly situated along the colonial highway, making it an ideal rest stop for Knox and some of his men, who stayed for a couple of days while figuring out how to navigate the Devil's Staircase.

Today, visitors standing beside the Old Burying Ground may not realize that one of the Revolution's most trusted dispatchers once worked just a few feet away, helping move information, supplies and countless secrets through a nation fighting for its independence.

It's another reminder that Blandford is a small town with a big history, one that reaches far beyond its borders.

VETERANS

sented their words on the significance of Memorial Day and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

E1 U.S. Air Force Amber Stearns escorted U. S. Marine Sgt. Michael Wojcik and U. S. Army Sgt. Tom Huntoon to place the memorial wreath on the Gen. John Knox marker. She again escorted the two Vietnam Veterans to raise the American flag from half-staff to the top of the pole.

At the conclusion of the town's Memorial Day observances everyone went to Watson Park and the playground area adjacent to Town Hall for traditional cookout fare. Grilling were Bruce Benson, his uncle Charles "Chuck" Benson, Pamela Dirschka and Magdalena Zajko. The Recreation Committee provided an extra treat: "Mr. Whippy" Ice Cream Truck with Karen Maratea from West Springfield.



Memorial Day program organizer and emcee Technical Sgt. Of the U.S. Air Force Douglas Emo at the podium.



Aliviana Michalski and Maple Mangini led the Pledge of Allegiance.



Turley Publications photos by Mary Kronholm. Carrying the town of Blandford Banner are Gibson and Maple Mangini.



E1 U.S. Air Force Amber Stearns stands with U. S. Marine Sgt. Michael Wojcik as U. S. Army Sgt. Tom Huntoon raises the flag to the top of the pole.



Select Board Chairman Jackie Coury, left, board members Cara Letendre, center with Neumann, a two-year-old Landseer Newfoundland and T.J. Cousineau flanked by Police Chief Jennifer Dubiel and Fire Chief Adam Dolby.

from page 1

250 from page 1

animals and local children representing the town's future.

From noon-3 p.m. under the fairgrounds pavilion, the community celebration will feature the National Anthem sung by Alyssa O'Neil, music with a DJ, family games and a free community cookout with hamburgers, hot dogs, chips and drinks.

One of the highlights of the afternoon will be a special mini-performance by the Blandford Historical Society titled "The Ghosts Are Back." The historical reenactment introduces visitors to a 1776 Blandford patriot and his family as they recall what life was like in Blandford 250 years ago during the birth of the nation.

Town officials will also offer remarks during the afternoon celebration.

Organizers say the event is intended to celebrate not only America's founding, but also the spirit of small-town community that continues to define Blandford today. Admission to all events is free.

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CHESTER

SHAEC offers free wild foraging walk and talk to be held June 10

CHESTER – The Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center offers a free wild foraging walk and talk by local wild edible expert, Felix Lufkin.

The class is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10 at 6p.m. and will meet at SHAEC's Chester classroom at 26 Main St.

There will be a guided foraging walk exploring the edible and useful plants growing right in the neighborhood. Participants will learn how to identify, harvest responsibly and use a variety of seasonal wild foods, focusing on the spe-

cies that are abundant at the time of the walk.

Along the way, they'll discuss sustainable foraging practices, plant ecology and how to deepen their connection with the local landscape.

Whether they're new to foraging or looking to expand skills, they'll leave with practical knowledge and a fresh appreciation for the abundance growing around them.

People can sign up by visiting www.shaec.org or by emailing Southernhilltownsaec@gmail.com. People should

include their name, the number in their party and a number to contact them. They may also call 413-354-1055 with any questions.

Volunteer Felix has taught nature awareness plant ecology to adults and children of all ages throughout the Valley since 2003, including after school programs, public workshops and organizations. He also directs Help Yourself, Inc. He is a father and runs Turtle Bend Farm in Montgomery with his wife, Maggie. People will learn more by visiting <https://www.turtlebend.farm/>.

Chester High Alumni hold 123rd reunion

CHESTER – The Chester High School Alumni will be coming home to Chester this year for their 123rd annual reunion and meeting on Saturday, June 27.

The meeting draws a large group associated with the former Chester High

School including Chester residents who graduated from Gateway after Chester High School closed in the late 1960s.

This year's festivities begin with a social hour at 1 p.m. at the Chester Railroad Depot and continue informally throughout the entire

weekend as "Blue Devils" and "Quarriers" wander around town visiting old friends and relatives.

The association's annual business meeting will be held on Saturday, June 27 at 2 p.m., and officers and board members will meet at noon.



Submitted photo

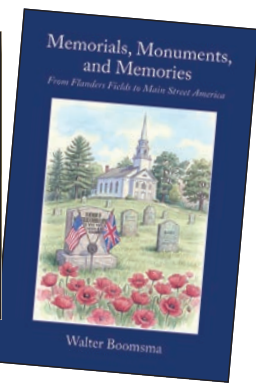
This photo of Harriet Kelso Gilman, Class of 1939, oldest member present, was taken at last year's Chester High School reunion. This year the reunion is on Saturday, June 27 at 1 p.m. in the Chester Railroad Depot.

Walter Boomsma writes Memorial Day book

ABBOT, ME – Abbot Village Press announces the May 2026 release of "Memorials, Monuments, and Memories: From Flanders Fields to Main Street America," a new book by



Walter Boomsma



Maine author and essayist Walter Boomsma.

Boomsma is a former resident of Chester. Drawing on more than a decade of annual Memorial Day writings, the book invites readers to rediscover the deeper meaning of the holiday – one memory, monument and human story at a time.

Boomsma's connection to Chester and Memorial Day run deep. His father, a Navy veteran and proud honor-guard sergeant, died when Walter was seven. The traditions they shared: cleaning the flag holder at his grandfather's grave, polishing rifles for the honor guard, standing at attention as taps was played shaped a lifelong commitment to remembrance. The book's essays, originally shared one per year, trace those memories alongside wider reflections on what it means to preserve the past for those who come after.

"Nothing is ever really lost to us as long as we remember it," Boomsma writes, quoting L. M. Montgomery – a sentiment that anchors the entire collection. The essays range from visits to the Normandy American Cemetery to a small-town Maine parade growing shorter each year;

from the history of the poppy tradition to the quiet work of cleaning forgotten grave-stones. T

The collection is organized chronologically, spanning Memorial Days from 2012 through 2025, with each essay bearing the year it was first written. Two classic public-domain poems: John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields" and Moina Michael's response, "We Shall Keep the Faith" open the book as touchstones for return visits. A closing section, "Beyond Memorial Day," celebrates the human connections the holiday inspires, including an award-winning fishing story about Boomsma's father that has been called a moving meditation on grief, independence, and love.

Boomsma is also the author of "Small People – Big Brains" and "Exploring Traditions: Celebrating the Grange Way of Life." A former consultant in individual and organizational development, he lives with his wife, Janice, in rural Maine. His writing career began, by his own account, with letters to his grandmother.

His book is available from major retailers including Amazon or ordering options at wboomsma.com.

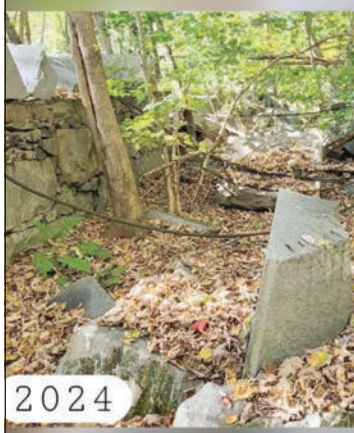
Granite saw before and after photos

CHESTER – It has been 2 1/2 years since the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers purchased this historic stone cutting mill lot.

During that time, the Hilltown Hikers cleared the lot of leaf litter, dead trees, brush and more. Here are some before photos from 2022, 2023 and 2024 and after photos in 2026.



2023

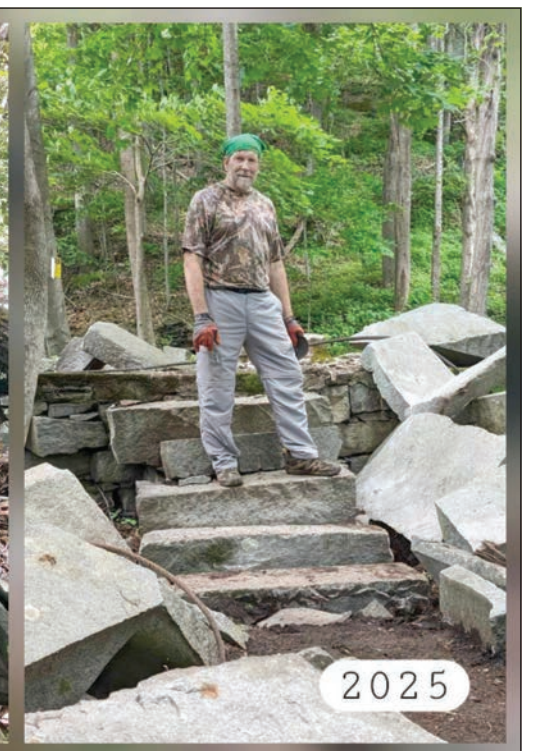


2024

This side by side photo shows the railroad siding in 2024 and 2026.



Here is a side by side photo of the loading dock stairs.



2025

Submitted photos



2022

This side by side photo shows the Prospect Street entrance in 2022 and in 2026.



2026

2023

This is a side by side photo of the polishing machine.

Hamilton Library lists upcoming events

CHESTER – Story and fun time meets every Thursday at 11a.m. in the Hamilton Memorial Library, 194 West Main St.

Children will gather for a story followed by a craft or other fun activity. This is a great opportunity for little ones to socialize, learn new skills and have some fun.

On Thursday, June 11 at 11 a.m., staff from the EcoTarium of Worcester will offer a special science discovery program during the regular story time. This program is sponsored by the Hilltown Family Center.

Read with Monster, the library has a special upcoming program for children, who would like to practice their reading skills in a fun, unique way. Monster, a bright Spot Certified Therapy Dog and his handler, Cara Pease, will be coming to the library on Thursdays, June 16 and July 21 at 3 p.m. This is part of the summer reading program.

Children who sign-up, will have the opportunity to spend quality time reading to this furry friend in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Parents may call the library at 413-354-7808 to register their child for either session.

Book club meets the third Wednesday of each month at 4:30 p.m. on June 17. In June, the club will be discussing "Olive Kitteridge" by Elizabeth Strout.

This Pulitzer Prize winner is a story about a retired schoolteacher, who deplores the changes in her small town and the world at large but doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her. There will be snacks and a lively discussion. Extra book copies are available.

Family movie, "How to Train Your Dragon," will be held Tuesday June 23 at 4 p.m. There will be snacks offered at this PG rated, live action movie. Children may sign up for the summer reading program. This year's theme is "Plant a seed, read." This is an opportunity to learn, encourage continued reading skills and meet new friends



Submitted photos

This youngster reads to Monster, a local therapy dog at the Hamilton Memorial Library in Chester.



The young boy reads to Monster, a local therapy dog, who visits the Hamilton Memorial Library in Chester.



These children get ready to release a butterfly that recently hatched at the Hamilton Memorial Library.

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WESTFIELD

Alzheimer's Association support group meets June 24

WESTFIELD – On Wednesday, June 24 at 6 p.m. the Alzheimer's Association hosts a support group in Armbrook Village Senior Living and Memory Support Community, 551 North Road.

Caregivers and family members are invited to enjoy light refreshments

and to share their personal experiences and strategies for communicating with their loved ones. The [public is welcome.

To join this group, people may call 413-568-0000 or email reception@armbrookvillage.com. Support groups are held on the last Wednesday of the month.

WRWA hosts six-mile river paddle on June 13

WESTFIELD – On Saturday, June 13, the Westfield River Watershed Association will sponsor a scenic six-mile paddle from the Great River Bridge in Westfield to Robinson State Park in Agawam.

For those used to seeing the river only in glimpses from the road, the family-friendly canoe and kayak cruise offers a new, close-up view of the waterway.

"We're excited to be on the river this year for our annual Cruise. This is a fun section of river to paddle for anyone who enjoys being on the water and it is ideal for beginners looking to develop their skills," says Mark Damon, WRWA Board president.

"Nature enthusiasts will enjoy the early summer vegetation and birdlife. Perhaps you'll spot some of the more charismatic animals such as bald eagles, beavers or snapping turtles," adds Damon. "We hope you can come out

and join us." In the past, participants paused paddling to watch a pair of nesting eagles as they soared and landed in a tall tree along the river.

"People are amazed that the pollution is now gone and the river is really clean. You don't see any of the commercial businesses near the river while paddling, just birds, wildflowers, even beaver dams and animals native to our area," states Phil Sousa, who is a long-time member of the river organization.

He encourages paddlers to come and says "This cruise is suitable for people with at least a little paddling experience. The water is mostly flat; we guide folks around any really fast spots."

Participants need to bring their own canoe, kayak or paddle board and their own paddles and personal safety devices, as well as sunscreen and drinking water. Organizers recommend that participants have some experience paddling,

given that river conditions may be unpredictable.

Children under 18 must be supervised by a parent or guardian. Children under 14 must paddle in the same boat as an adult. Other suggestions for what to bring include snacks for before and after the cruise, a picnic for an early lunch for the second wave of registrants or possibly a late lunch for the first wave of registrants for once they reach Robinson State Park, as well as easy snacks for munching along the way. The cruise typically takes 2-3 hours.

A participation fee of \$20 per person and \$15 for WRWA members will help cover shuttle service, insurance and light refreshments. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and continues to about 10 a.m. in the municipal parking lot off Meadow Street near the Great River Bridge in Westfield.

Participants will register, unload boats and gear, drive

their vehicles to Robinson State Park (parking fees apply) and return by shuttle to the launch area. Staggered Cruise departures will begin around 10:30 a.m.

Parking fees at Robinson for the Canoe Cruise are for Massachusetts residents are \$, \$10 for a Lifetime Senior DCR Pass and \$20 for out-of-state vehicles.

"Signing up in advance helps us plan more effectively. For the past couple years, water conditions/ severe weather have requires us to cancel," adds Heather Aieta, another Board member working on the Cruise.

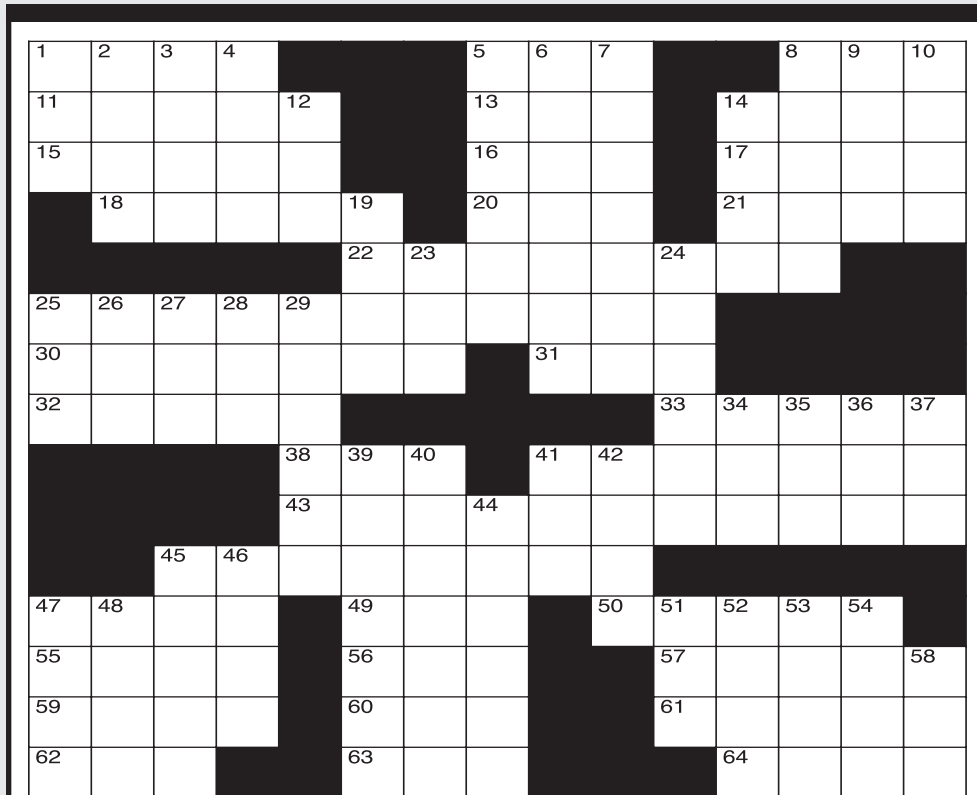
"If you plan to participate and would like to receive a cancellation notice by email the evening before the Cruise, email info@westfieldriver.org and put the word 'Notify' in the Subject line. WRWA will also post the cancellation on its Facebook page and website, www.westfieldriver.org the evening before."

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 (with a word limit of up to 500 words) 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

- 1. Egyptian bull-god
- 5. A young canine
- 8. Cologne
- 11. Fictional British P.I.
- 13. Midway between northeast and east
- 14. A place to shop
- 15. Minneapolis suburb
- 16. Single lens reflex
- 17. NY Mets great Tommie
- 18. Informal loan clubs
- 20. Habitual twitching
- 21. Holm oak
- 22. Willing to consent or submit
- 25. In an early way
- 30. Made possible
- 31. Language in Ghana
- 32. Relating to one's birth
- 33. Deep-bodied fishes
- 38. Defunct European currency
- 41. Small American songbird
- 43. One from L.A.
- 45. After tenth
- 47. Hillside
- 49. Red deer
- 50. Partner to "oohed"
- 55. Indian musical pattern
- 56. Israeli city ___ Aviv
- 57. Golden peas plant
- 59. Breezed through
- 60. Midway between east and southeast
- 61. Frameworks
- 62. Danish krone
- 63. Fall back
- 64. Influential Korean leader
- 2. Expression of sorrow or pity
- 3. Large, stocky lizard
- 4. Turkish leader title
- 5. Nag
- 6. Blank
- 7. Closely woven cotton fabric
- 8. A nice shot in golf
- 9. Away from wind
- 10. Evergreen shrub genus
- 12. Large African antelope
- 14. Something you receive
- 19. Satisfy
- 23. Wet dirt
- 24. No longer here
- 25. Writing utensil
- 26. Ribonucleic acid
- 27. Consume food
- 28. Licensed for Wall Street
- 29. Alternative forms of a gene
- 34. Buddy
- 35. We all do it
- 36. Chicken
- 37. No seats available
- 39. Yearned to possess
- 40. Ineffectual
- 41. Explosive
- 42. Turkish title
- 44. Worn near the foot
- 45. Impatient
- 46. Set an example for others
- 47. Actor Pitt
- 48. Instrument of torture
- 51. Swiss river
- 52. Grayish white
- 53. A way to print
- 54. Storied college hoops program
- 58. Midway between south and southeast

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Bridge building degree

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Your energy is infectious this week, Aries. This is the perfect time to launch a passion project. Expect a surprise compliment from someone you admire.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, treat yourself to a little luxury. You have earned a slow morning of coffee and a crossword puzzle. A cozy discovery brings you a smile.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Your social calendar is buzzing with exciting new connections. Use your natural wit to spur the conversation and you'll be the star of every chat you have with others.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Creative inspiration hits you mid-week, Cancer. Be sure to keep a notebook handy. Your intuition is very sharp right now, leading you to a special breakthrough.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Whether you are looking for it or not, the spotlight is finding you, Leo. Shine bright and share your ideas. The world is ready to applaud your vision.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

Organization will be your superpower this week, Virgo. Everything finally clicks into place. Examine the small details around you. You will find peace in them and productivity.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, balance will come easily as you blend work and recreation in perfect ways. An invitation to a local event adds some sparkle to your weekend.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

Your magnetism is at an all-time high, Scorpio. Exciting opportunities are being drawn toward you, so you will need to trust your gut on a new venture.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

Adventure is calling your name this week, Sagittarius. An optimistic outlook can turn a minor detour into a grand adventure. Get ready for some exciting days ahead.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Take a moment to celebrate your wins with a favorite treat or a good book, Capricorn. You have been hitting your stride and smashing goals with impressive ease.

AQUARIUS

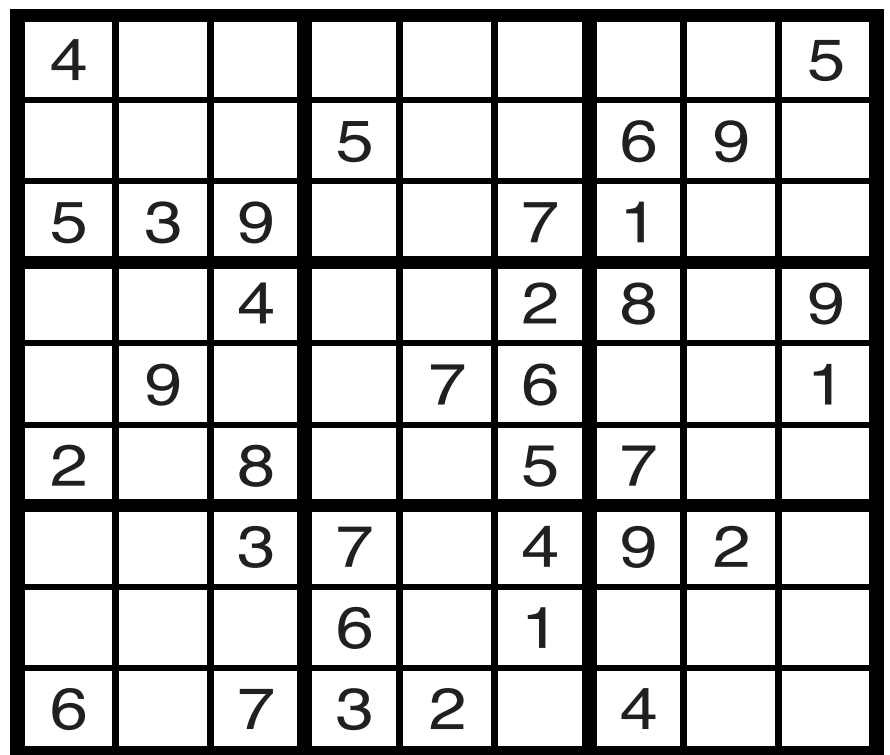
Jan 21/Feb 18

Your big ideas are drawing some attention. Many people are ready to help you build on them. Stay curious and open to a clever suggestion from a friend.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Your imagination is taking the driver's seat this week, Pisces. A heartwarming moment with a loved one reminds you how much others care.



SUDOKU

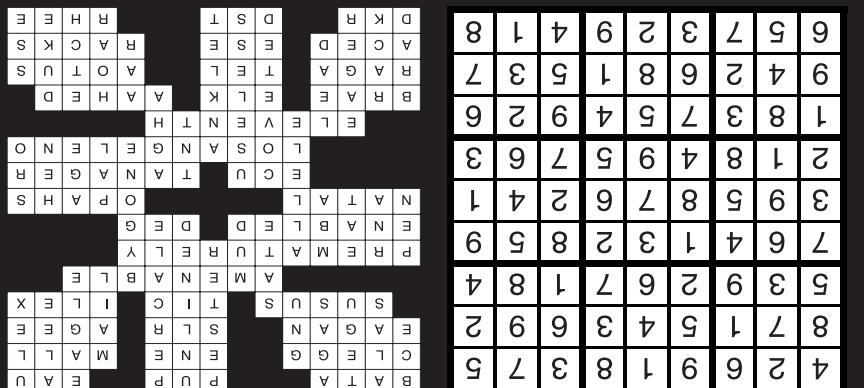
Here's How It Works:

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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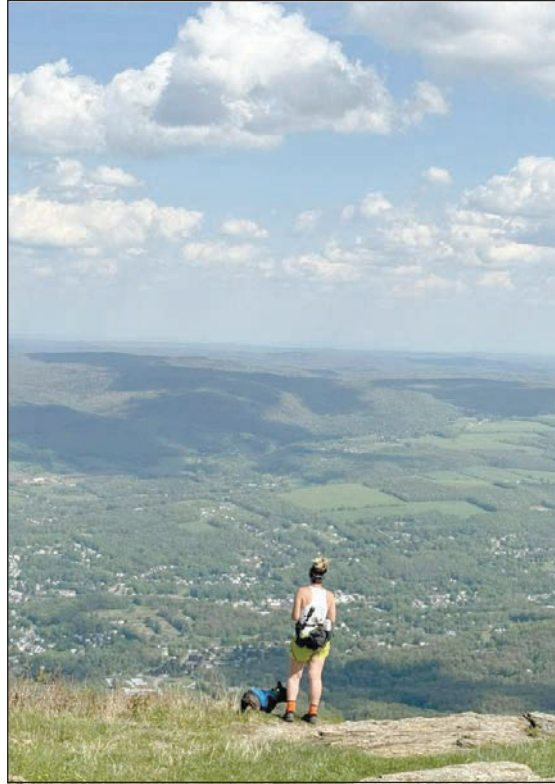
HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



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.