

Country Journal

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BLANDFORD

Cemetery Commissioner responds to complaint

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Board member and Cemetery Commissioner Ted Cousineau responded to George Reichert’s complaints of the lack of cemetery maintenance in the town’s burial grounds.

Reichert spoke of broken headstones, headstones listing or fallen, and general care plus the removal of downed trees.

Cousineau said the downed trees were all dead or dying ash and threatened gravesites. Most of the headstones that are broken, were broken years ago because of inappropriate and improper attempts to correct listing stones.

At the time the approach was to cement the area around a stone, but frost heaves dislocated stones and they fell.

The stones need a deeper concrete foundation and some of the headstones weigh as much as a ton or more requiring special equipment the cemetery does not have.

Families of the deceased have been informed of needed foundation work and some families have provided funding for that purpose. Cousineau said this could be as much as a \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Reichert would like to see a plan outlining care and maintenance of the town’s cemeteries. He said he found only three meeting minutes for the commission during the last year with little or “no information.”

Reichert maintained, “work needs to be done” and he suggested asking for volunteers to help. “We do not have enough tax dollars to do what needs to be done,” he said and added that the cemetery commissioners “need to ask” for volunteers.

Cousineau reminded Reichert of the liability issue. “The families own the stones,” he said, and proposed a paid position for

COMPLAINT, page 7

CHESTER



Hero Marguerite opens the Chester Theatre Company’s 2026 season by reprising her role as Rory in the play, “A Hundred Words for Snow,” which opens June 23 at the CenterStage Theatre at the ‘62 Center for Theatre and Dance in Williamstown. The role earned Marguerite the Berkshire Theater’s Outstanding Actress in a Play award last year, for her performance at CTC.

Photo submitted

CHESTER THEATRE SHOWS ‘A Hundred Words for Snow’

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Chester Theatre Company opens their 2026 season with a production of “A Hundred Words for Snow,” a one-woman play by Tatty Hennessy, at Williams College’s ‘62 Center for Theatre and Dance as part of their Summer at the ‘62 Center performance series.

“A Hundred Words for Snow” follows a 15-year-old girl named Rory who, upon discovering that her father had been planning a trip for the two of them to the North Pole just before his unexpected death, decides to carry out his plan and embark on the journey herself. Layered, complex and as beautiful as snowfall, Hennessy’s play is an epic Arctic adventure about adolescence, grief, love and being an explorer in a melting world.

The production is directed by Chester Theatre Company co-artistic direc-

“So much of it reminded me of the ups and downs that so many of my teenage friends and I were navigating, but blown up to a scale that reflects how huge that time in your life feels.”
– Tatty Hennessy

tor Michelle Ong Hendrick and stars Hero Marguerite, who also happens to be Ong Hendrick’s daughter as Rory.

The mother-daughter duo, however, are not new to the play as “A Hundred Words for Snow” was staged at Chester Theatre Company last summer with the same creative team. The 2025 production was named as one of the 10 Best of the Year in the Berkshire Eagle and Marguerite, who is currently a student in the UCSD MFA Acting program, received Berkshire Theater’s Outstanding

Actress in a Play award for her role.

Upon first reading the script last year, Marguerite recalled feeling drawn to the play because of how much of herself she saw in her character.

“There’s a lot about Rory that reminds me of who I was at fifteen,” she said. “So much of it reminded me of the ups and downs that so many of my teenage friends and I were navigating, but blown up to a scale that reflects how huge that time in your life feels.”

She also felt that “this

script had the potential to allow audiences to talk about grief and loss in a way that is kind of taboo in a lot of western cultures.”

Being a one-woman show, “A Hundred Words for Snow” poses the fundamental challenge for the performer of juggling various elements, from learning a large amount of text and choreography to sharpening accents. Marguerite found that “the biggest challenge was really allowing [her] self to come through the character.”

“Rory feels very close to me in some ways, and at first I think I kind of resisted letting my own self through into the performance because it felt really vulnerable, like I was really letting people into my story, not just Rory’s,” she said. “But it just didn’t work and I kept bumping up against this feeling of sort of hiding inside the performance, so I had to let go of that fear.”

SHOW, page 2

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Committee hears racism allegations

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

About 20 members of the community attended the June 10 meeting of the Gateway Regional School Committee to speak about allegations of racism at Gateway Regional School.

The issue had reached a boiling point the previous week, when 2026 graduate Ashley Tacke described an incident she’d experienced while a student. She said she reported the incident to school administrators and said that nothing was done to the perpetrators, who she said were known to many students and included one person, who was already an adult.

Tacke had posted the incident on the Parents of Gateway Regional Students Facebook page, which resulted in a great deal of community controversy, disturbing content and the page administrator pulling the post. It was not available for review at press time.

Reportedly, the incident occurred during a class fundraiser at Red Robin in Holyoke, in March that Tacke drove herself to and attended.

As she drove to school the following day, she noticed writing on her back windshield. While nobody speaking at the school committee explicitly said what was written, it reportedly said “I hate (racial slurs).”

Ashley, who is Caucasian, said she reported the incident to Dr. William Sullivan, Principal who she said was appalled. A number of people were called to the office.

Tacke described the incident as a hate crime, part of an ongoing pattern of harassment from a group of her classmates that had happened to her over all four years and had been previously reported, and as actually endangering a child who was driving around Western Massachusetts with that language on her car.

Also speaking were her parents, Andrew and Carla, along with a number of other parents and current and former students.

Andrew said that the school said the event in question was not school-sponsored although the Principal had been among those attended. He said that disciplinary action either did not happen or was not reported to the community.

He said that he had reported the inci-

RACISM, page 8

BLANDFORD

Shartrand wins Select Board seat, Jemiolo takes Water Commissioner slot

Corinne Shartrand won the contest for Select Board member with 194 votes in a three way race.

The town election took place Saturday, June 13 with 405 ballots cast.. Cara Letendre, incumbent, received 182 votes. Third candidate for the slot, Bradley Curry, received 29 votes.

Shartrand said, “Thank you, Blandford. I’m honored by your trust and committed to working for every resident. Now, let’s move forward together.”

The second



Corinne Shartrand



Stephen Jemiolo

contest on the ballot was for Water Commissioner and that slot was won by Stephen Jemiolo with 220 to Bill Levakis’s 131 votes.

Kim Bergland received 11 write-in votes for the Planning Board.

All other positions were uncontested. They included Assessor

Stephen Jemiolo; Board of Health Pat Lombardo; Cemetery Commissioner Pete Sparks; Library Trustee Byam Stevens; Municipal Light Plant Peter Langmore; Planning Board Scott O’Connor; School Committee Katherine McDonough; and Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo.



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CHESTER



During a recent visit by EcoTarium staff to the Hamilton Public Library children test their balance as part of the program.



Hamilton Library lists events

Submitted photos
Children listen to EcoTarium staff at a recent program held at Hamilton Memorial Library.

CHESTER – Hamilton Memorial Library, 15 Middlefield Road, Suite 7, hosts family movie on Tuesday, June 23 at 4 p.m.

They will serve snacks and show “How to Train Your Dragon, rated PG. Children may sign up now fro the Summer Reading Program entitled “Plant a Seed, Read.”

This is an opportunity to learn, encourage continued reading skills and meet new friends. More information will follow.

People may visit the website for more information at chester.cwmars.org.

from page 1

SHOW

That vulnerability clearly translated, though, as audiences resonated with the show in a way that surprised even Marguerite.

“Something that has been profoundly moving about this piece that I wasn’t expecting was how many people would come up to me afterward or reach out to me to tell me about a loved one that passed and the way that this play touched them,” Marguerite said. “We don’t talk about grief enough, and how profound it is, and I didn’t really realize that until the show had opened.”

Marguerite added that she believes part of the reason the show has this power to bring people together is because live theater requires people to be in the same “physical space” as “other people going through [the same experience]” while “witnessing a performer go through that journey in real time.”

“You have to share breath with other people,” she said. “That presence is

why this play works at all. No one would be interested in seeing me talk for 100 minutes to the camera.”

In the year since Marguerite first immersed herself in the world of the play, her personal experiences have also given her a new perspective on the show and its themes.

“My acting program lost a member of the class above me this year right around the time I started reviewing this show, so grief and the ways we navigate it and the absolute necessity of having community in those times is fresh to me in a way that it wasn’t last year,” she said.

Although this upcoming remount is essentially the same as last year’s production, with blocking and design elements all preserved, it will also be slightly different due to having to adapt to a new theater, as well as the fact that Marguerite is “a different actor than [she] was last summer.”

“Within the container

of what we created last year, there’s room for new discoveries,” she said. “I think audiences who loved it last year will get to see all their favorite moments ... but will also have new colors and depths to be surprised by.”

As this year’s production approaches, Marguerite said that she hopes audience members take whatever they need with them from the show.

“If it lights a fire under your belly to get more involved in your local climate activism group, wonderful,” she said. “If it gives you the push to call your mom, hurrah! If it makes you feel seen in your grief or gives you the courage to share your grief with someone, amazing.”

“A Hundred Words for Snow” runs June 23-27 at the CenterStage Theatre at the ‘62 Center for Theatre and Dance, 100 Main St, Williamstown. Tickets can be purchased by visiting www.chestertheatre.org or by calling 413-354-7771.

WORTHINGTON

Worthington roadwork continues in June

WORTHINGTON – Roadwork continues in town for the month of June.

Morais crew # 1 continues constructing a new concrete retaining wall west of Bashan Hill Road the week of June 15.

Morais crew # 2 continues with new drainage from River Road to the Peru town Line through Monday, June 22 through Friday, June 26.

Work hours are 7 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. One-way alternating traffic will be in place with traffic officers directing traffic.

A temporary traffic signal allowing one-way alternating traffic for approx. 400 feet has been installed and working at the new concrete retaining wall construction site West of Bashan Hill Road.

The crews will be working on Friday, June 19, the Juneteenth Holiday.

BECKET

Becket holds oak tree planting event

BECKET – The town of Becket holds an oak tree planting ceremony on Wednesday, July 1 at 6 p.m. on the Revolutionary War Parade Grounds, corner of Route 8 and YMCA Road.

The Select Board sponsors this event. All are invited to attend this celebration of planting an oak tree at the parade grounds.

The oak serves as a lasting tribute to this nation’s founding. Light refreshments will be served.

NORTHAMPTON

Forbes Library kicks off summer reading program with party

NORTHAMPTON – Forbes Library, 20 West St., kicks off their summer reading program on Saturday, June 20 from 10 a.m.-noon.

Participants will enjoy some live music, hula hoop on the lawn, have a popsicle and sign up for the Summer Reading program.

The Grumpytime Club Band performs from 10-11a.m. and hula hooping on the Lawn with Wildkat Hoops is from 11 a.m.-noon.

Curran & Keegan Financial sponsors the Summer Reading Kickoff Party for all ages.

Birds of Prey with Tom Ricardi takes place Saturday, June 20 from 2-3:30 p.m.

People will learn about birds of prey from wildlife rehabilitator and wildlife biologist Tom Ricardi, founder of Massachusetts Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Facility featuring various birds of prey.

This event provides a unique opportunity to see birds of prey up close, as well as learn about wildlife conservation and how people can help protect and advocate for wildlife in your community.

They should bring a lawn chair or blanket for this outdoor event.

NOTICE

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HUNTINGTON

Northern Wilderness land trust to preserve 223 acres in Huntington

HUNTINGTON – Northeast Wilderness Trust, a regional land trust focused on wilderness conservation, announces 223 acres of forestland and 6,100 feet of Westfield River frontage in Huntington will soon be permanently protected as “forever-wild.”

The project, to be called River’s Edge Wilderness Preserve, will advance Massachusetts’ ambitious climate and biodiversity goals. The Wilderness Trust recently received more than \$400,000 in grant funding from the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s Acquisition for Forest Reserves Grant Program to support acquisition of the property, which will be passively managed to maximize its benefits to wildlife and to put down the roots of a future old-growth forest.

“River’s Edge Wilderness Preserve demonstrates the power of conservation to connect habitats and reduce fragmentation of critical landscapes,” said Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper. “Northeast Wilderness Trust’s work aligns with our mission of protecting Massachusetts’ rich biodiversity found within aquatic and land habitats, and we’re proud to support the connection of 223 acres to over 1,500 acres of state and federally protected lands.”

The state’s “Biodiversity Goals for Massachusetts,” as well as its recent decision to join the International Union for Conservation of Nature, are encouraging steps toward a wilder, more sustainable future for the Commonwealth. So too are the \$425,000 award to River’s Edge from the state’s Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, as well as a \$310,000 grant from Mass Audubon’s Catalyst Fund.

“Helping Northeast Wilderness Trust permanently protect this biodiverse and carbon-rich land is exactly why we started our 30x30 Catalyst Fund, which provides critical financial and technical support to our conservation partners,” said David O’Neill, President and CEO of Mass Audubon.

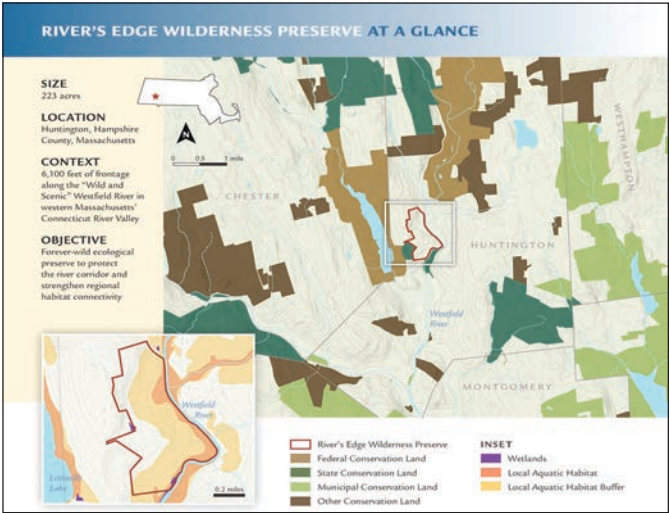
The award demonstrates that both public agencies and nonprofit groups recognize the crucial role private conservation has to play in meeting the state’s lofty goals. About 65% of Massachusetts’ forestland lies in private hands. Of these landowners, land trusts, with their community connections and technical know-how, are well positioned to help cement Massachusetts’ biodiversity and climate leadership.

Especially powerful is when land trusts join forces, as exemplified by River’s Edge: Northeast Wilderness Trust partnered with Kestrel Land Trust, a fixture of land conservation in the Connecticut River Valley and beyond, to execute this project. Northeast Wilderness Trust will own the 223 acres of River’s Edge outright and Kestrel Land Trust will hold a conservation restriction on the property, securing a durable, forever-wild outcome for the Preserve.

River’s Edge Wilderness Preserve is significant not just for the acreage set to be protected, but for how that acreage will be managed or not. The Preserve, like all of Northeast Wilderness Trust’s properties, will be a “wildland,” a place where logging will forever be prohibited, human management will be minimal, and the forest will evolve and grow freely. This passive management strategy often referred to as “rewilding” is similar to the approach used on lands designated by Massachusetts as “forest reserves.”

Wildlands such as these harbor greater species diversity and sequester more carbon than managed forests, and yet just 2.3 percent of Massachusetts is protected as such. River’s Edge will push the state closer toward its goal of 10% of forestland safeguarded as forest reserves.

Northeast Wilderness Trust, a Montpelier, Vermont-based regional land trust, conserves forever-wild landscapes for Nature and people.



This map shows the 223 acres in Huntington to be preserved as “forever wild.”



The land includes a 6,100 foot of frontage on the Westfield River in Huntington.



Submitted photo

Shown from left are Paul Waite, Cindy Loiselle, Linda Siska and Rick Loiselle work on the landscaping in front of the Huntington Public Library.

Library landscaping gets facelift

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – The outdoor plantings at the Huntington Public Library took on a fresh, new look thanks to a \$1,000 grant from the Carmel Fund.

Each year, the grant funds library improvement projects. Trustees Chair Linda Siska said she was inspired to pursue this project after being inspired by the community garden next door, on the grounds of the former Murrayfield Elementary School.

Siska said that the idea was further developed through a conversation she had with Paul Waite. “We talked about how nice it would be to do some plantings of native species around the library as pollinators and which would attract birds and also just for the beauty. At the same time we would be reducing lawn care and mowing,” Siska explained.

Waite came up with a landscape plan and purchased the plants. He and Siska did the planting, along with Library Director Amanda Loiselle’s parents Cindy and Rick Loiselle and Richard Mansfield of Worthington.

Jackson Mansfield donated the bark mulch that was used. All of the labor was volunteer.

Waite has had a landscaping business for 40 years and he exclusively uses native plants in his designs.

He chose plants that were native pollinators, would work in the sun/shade pattern on the grounds and were low enough that they wouldn’t block the library’s windows.

Grant money paid for Waite’s design and the purchase of plants; working with the cardboard, planting and mulching was all pro bono.

They pulled invasive plants and added to the number of plantings.

After lifting the sod, they placed cardboard down to kill the grass and weeds.

After planting, they covered each area with four to five inches of bark mulch, to keep the roots cool and weeds down.

Right now, Waite explained, they are deep watering the area with two-four gallons of water, two to three times a week because it is so dry.

Nursery plants are used to being watered twice a day. Once their roots are set, they will require less watering, especially if we resume a normal rainfall pattern.

“I think it is a good project. I advocate to a lot of people to eliminate more lawn space and do this kind of planting,” Waite said. “Lawn is just a waste of time, energy and water.”

Siska agreed and added that anyone willing to volunteer to help water during dry spells this summer should contact the library and get on the schedule. They may call 413-512-5206 for more information.

They plan to take photos of the project and do an educational project on the library’s website about putting in a low maintenance garden and the use and benefit of native pollinators. People may visit huntington-publiclibrary.org to see the photos.

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GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor



Why don't we have minimum Social Security benefit?

Dear Rusty
I think we should have a Social Security baseline of \$2,500 for each person.
When I retire, my Social Security benefit will not be enough to survive. There are many of us, who worked low paying jobs all our lives because we raised families and only started saving later in life. Considering all the money our government wastes on other countries and welfare programs for people who have not worked, it seems unfair that they will not reward those of us who contributed to society all our lives.

Signed: Needs More Social Security
higher-income person will get about 20% or less of their pre-retirement monthly average income.
In this way, Social Security is already a "progressive" program. But it's important to understand also that Social Security, from its beginning, was never meant to provide 100% of a person's income needs in retirement.

Thus, each beneficiary should plan to supplement their retirement income in other ways such as retirement savings, investment income, working longer, working part-time, etc.
Having said that, it is also important to know that Social Security is a completely self-sustaining program and not dependent on general public funding, which would make it more susceptible to political shenanigans (imagine giving re-election seeking politicians easy access to Social Security's separately held resources).
While it is certainly true that the government spends freely on "welfare programs" for those who have not worked, Social Security is not a program, which is dependent on government largesse. Rather, it is a benefit which is earned by working and contributing to the program, which provides retirement benefits based upon each person's average lifetime work income.

If you expect financial difficulties when you retire, I encourage you to visit this website sponsored by the National Council on Aging (www.benefitscheckup.org). Here you can enter your zip code and find many public programs which you might be eligible for where you live, including assistance with healthcare costs, housing, utilities, etc.
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.

That's because Social Security's benefit formula turns out to be more generous because it is based on lifetime earnings (wages), while the "special minimum benefit" program is based on consumer prices. That causes the SS benefit formula to provide a higher SS benefit than is provided by the "special minimum benefit" option. In other words, people get a higher benefit because their SS benefit is based upon their actual lifetime earnings vs. an artificially created special minimum benefit.

In short, the existing SS benefit formula usually provides more than the established "special minimum benefit."

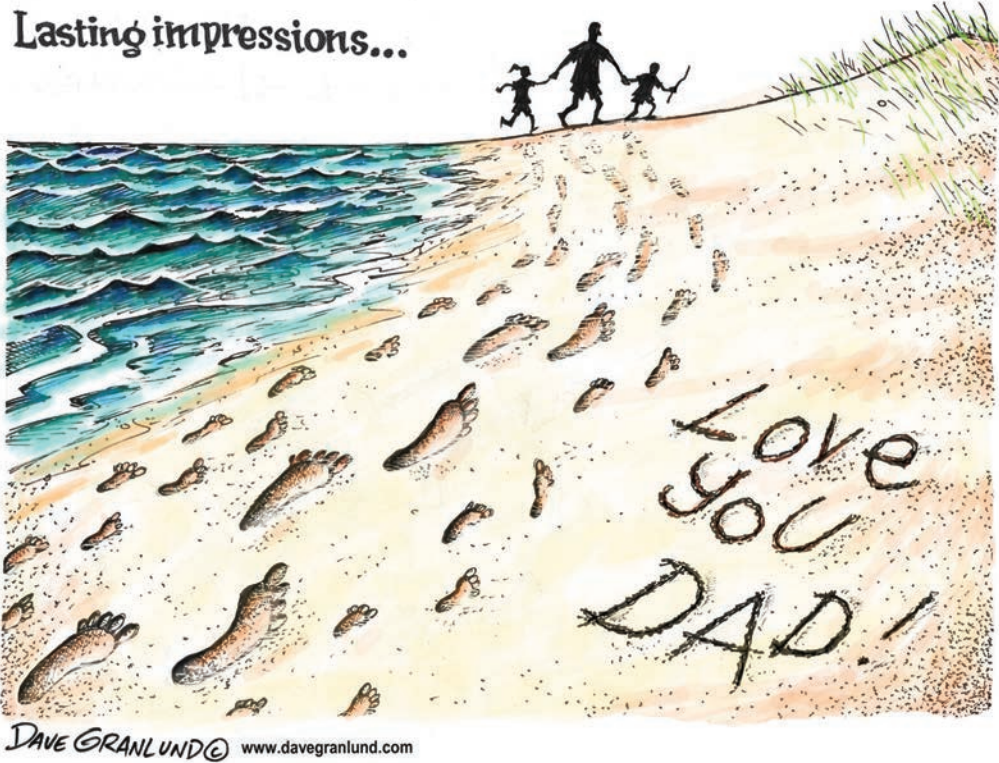
The SS benefit program is based on each person's average monthly income over their lifetime.
However, it is very important to understand that the program is also designed to provide a higher monthly benefit to those with a lower lifetime income.

Thus, the percentage of "replacement income" for those with lower lifetime earnings is more than it is for those with higher lifetime earnings.

Typically, a lower-lifetime income person will get about 40% of their average pre-retirement monthly income as their Social Security benefit, whereas a

OPINION

Lasting impressions...

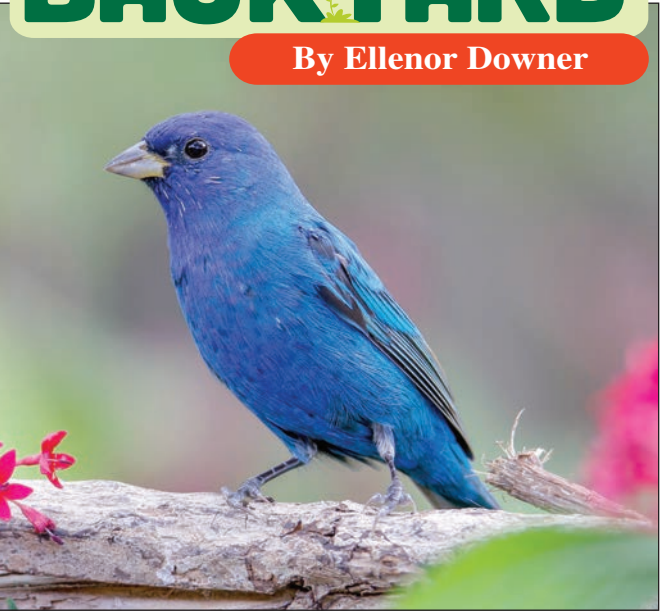


GUEST COLUMN



in my BACKYARD

By Ellenor Downer



Indigo bunting

A reader emailed she saw an indigo bunting at her feeder. The indigo bunting is sometimes called the "blue canary."

However, the indigo bunting like all blue colored birds, lack blue pigment. Their color comes instead from microscopic structures in the feathers that refract and reflect blue light, much like the airborne particles that cause the sky to look blue.

Bunting plumage contains the pigment melanin, whose dull brown-black hue is seen when holding a blue feather up so the light comes from behind it, instead of toward it.

The bunting is sparrow size and about 4.7–5.5 inches long. The adult male Indigo Bunting is dark blue in the spring and summer. Females are brown, usually with fine streaks on the chest and a blue tinge on the tail. A one-year-old male in summer may be blue with a white belly.

Males are often seen singing from a perch in a tall tree. For years, a male indigo bunting sang from a dead limb on a tall tree. Rarely, I spotted the female usually in a brushy area.

They inhabit brushy pas-

tures and bushy wood edges.

They eat mostly seeds and insects. In breeding season, the indigo bunting feeds mainly on insects and spiders and also some seeds and berries.

Young in the nest are fed mostly insects at first. In winter, they eat many seeds and also some insects.

Indigo buntings migrate at night, using the stars for guidance.

The oldest recorded wild indigo bunting was a male and at least 13 years, 3 months old when he was recaptured and rereleased during banding operations in Ohio in 2013.

Other birds

Besides seeing an indigo bunting, the reader also has several Baltimore orioles, rose breasted grosbeaks and goldfinches.

She stated, "Around the corner at the Brook Road pond in West Warren, there was a lone swan. There was a lone swan there for a couple years about six years ago and it made me wonder if it was the same one."



Pileated woodpecker

I received another email on June 6 from a Belchertown resident.

She stated, "My husband and I witnessed a beautiful pileated woodpecker mating ritual in our backyard this morning.... They jumped around the tree on opposite sides going around several times before then jumping to other trees moving farther back into the woods during the process."

She stated, "After looking them up, I realized that

BIRDS, page 6

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.

Strawberry culture 101

Melissa, who gardens in Belchertown asked this question of the Garden Lady.

"It's always so hard to install strawberry plants and pinch off the flowers the first year. Do you really have to? It would be so wonderful to enjoy some fruit."

I completely understand where you are coming from! Last year I was in the same boat. This year, the fruit is coming in and boy, am I enjoying it!

Removing the flowers redirects the plant's energy away from reproducing to forming strong roots and more shoots, so yes, it rec-

ommended practice.

I thought you might find this column, one of my very first, helpful. It contains lots of good tips for strawberry culture.

I have fond memories of strawberry picking. One of the first days of summer vacation was always spent at a local pick-your-own farm with my mom, filling boxes with luscious red berries.

Like any kid I did my

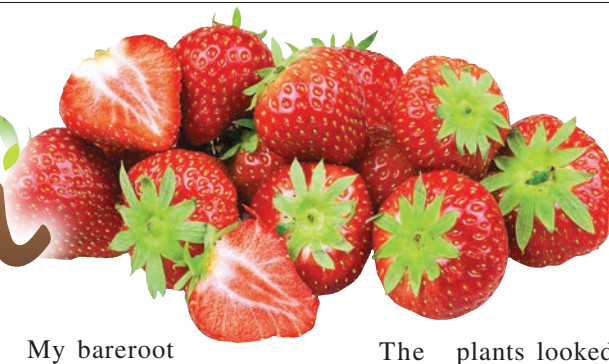
share of sampling out there in the rows, and my taste buds never forgot the intense sweetness found only in fresh picked fruit. Now that I have my own space to garden I am able to go strawberry picking in my backyard.

With a lot of patience and a little labor, so can you!

In the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid





My bareroot strawberry plants arrived by mail in early spring. I had prepared the sunny space intended for them ahead of time, by eradicating all weeds and tilling in two-inches of finished compost and some slow release organic fertilizer.

Lime wasn't necessary, as strawberries prefer a slightly acidic soil.

GARDEN, page 6

EASTHAMPTON

CBERA elects Bozena Dabek to Board of Directors

EASTHAMPTON, – Bozena Dabek, executive vice president, chief administrative officer at bankESB, has been elected to the board of directors of the Cooperative Banks Employees Retirement Association.

CBERA was established in January 1946 to administer pension programs for employees of the Massachusetts cooperative banking industry.

Today, the organization

serves not only pensions for cooperative banks, but 401K plans for financial institutions across the region.

CBERA's mission is to support the retirement needs of member employers and their employees through the sound and affordable administration of pension plans, prudent investment of retirement funds held in trust, and guidance that helps participants and human resources professionals achieve desired retirement outcomes.

In her role on the board, Dabek will contribute her extensive financial and operational expertise to help advance CBERA's mission and ensure the continued strength and sustainability of its retirement programs.

Dabek currently serves



Bozena Dabek

as EVP, chief administrative officer at bankESB, a role she assumed in 2015 after serving as EVP, chief financial officer beginning in 2010.

In her current role, she leads human resources, learning & development and executive administration. She brings more than three decades of experience in finance and banking, including leadership roles at JPMorgan Chase, MassMutual Financial Group, and United Bank.

Throughout her career, Dabek has demonstrated deep expertise in financial management, strategic planning, and organizational leadership.

Dabek holds a Master of Business Administration in finance and international business from NYU's Stern School of Business

and a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting from Pace University's Lubin School of Business. She also completed advanced professional studies at the New England School of Financial Studies.

Her election to the CBERA Board reflects her longstanding commitment to sound financial stewardship and to supporting organizations and employees in achieving long-term retirement security.

OPINION

HIKING

from page 5

Helene. Been pelted by torrential rain while thunder rumbled overhead and have melted in 90-degree heat under a blazing sun. We have stood on the highest mountain on the entire Appalachian Trail, the 6,640-foot summit of Kuwohi, formerly known as Clingmans's Dome. Played 'who's going to blink first' with a 5-foot long snake.

We've stood atop mountains looking at views that have taken our breath away, and we've sat side-by-side on the ground in the middle of the forest, our legs stretched out on the dirt and our heads leaning back against our backpacks, simply watching the clouds dance across the sky.

Tonight, we have pitched our tent on a bed of pine needles under a tree, not far from the summit of Big Bald. We are surrounded by twisted, gnarled trees and rocks the size of mobile homes. It feels as though we are in a cloak and dagger mystery novel.

After eating our freeze-dried dinner of beef and pasta, we walked 150 feet up the trail to a small viewpoint, where we sat down on a large flat rock for almost an hour while waiting for the sun to meet the horizon.

We talked about everything. And nothing. Important things and nonsensical things.

We relived our days out here so far. Reminiscenced about past adventures and future plans. Talked about family. Life. Dreams.

I snuggled in closer to Tom as the air chilled. And we waited.

The sun hung low.

Clouds caught the fading sunlight and the golden orb blazed through them with such intensity that we briefly looked away. But when the sun drifted lower, we watched the world catch fire in shades of crimson, orange and gold. Like strokes on canvas, the sky was transformed, leaving us breathless.

Our conversation paused. The earth slowed. The world existed only in the present moment. Time stood still.

Once the sun disappeared behind the distant ridges-leaving the lingering shades of blue and pink and purple behind-Tom and I stood, bowed our heads, and praised God for his goodness.

Then we slowly walked hand in hand back to our tent as darkness descended on the forest.

Over the past 8 years of backpacking, with well over a thousand miles completed, there are about 5 nights on trail that I will never forget.

This is now one of them.

Stay tuned for the second half of our backpacking trip in a future edition of the newspaper.



Submitted photos



from page 4

BIRDS

I have heard their calls and rapid pecking sounds in my backyard for the past two years, but never saw them until now. What a joy to watch and video. They are beautiful birds."

She also stated her home has semi dense woods immediately behind that is a haven for several bird species, robins, yellow finch,

bluebirds and blue jays. The property also borders some wetlands that attract a variety of species from time to time, including hawks, owls and ducks.

Mute swans

My brother, who lives in Sutton, has a pond bordering his property. For several years, a pair of mute swans have raised their fam-



ily on the pond. They are back this year.

Bluebirds

I often see a pair of bluebirds in my yard. After seeing them, I put out dried mealworms for them. I don't feed the birds in summer because of the black bears. Hopefully, bears are

not interested in a few mealworms and the birds will eat the mealworms before the bear.

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.

GARDEN

from page 4

ners (daughter plants), I set my plants in a single row roughly two-feet apart with three feet between the rows. This wide spacing allowed for four daughters to be positioned four-five inches apart from mom and each other.

Some gardeners prefer to pinch away all runners, and nourish only the original mother plant. Initial yields may be higher, but without replacement plants the patch will expire sooner.

All blossoms, although it is tempting to leave them, must be removed the first season so that energy will be spent on building strong

roots.

I set up a soaker hose among the plants to be sure that they would continue to grow with gusto during droughty spells. If you choose to do the same, be sure to position runners under the hose, otherwise removing it for winter storage may be a difficult and tangled task.

A mulch of chopped leaves conserves soil moisture and prevents weeds from sprouting. Evergreen boughs laid over the row after the ground has frozen lessens temperature extremes, preventing the

plants from being heaved out of the ground during winter freeze/thaw cycles.

Anticipation begins to build in the spring of the second season. It is only a matter of time before the plants will be loaded with ripe berries.

As new growth emerges remove the protective boughs. Pull stray weeds and reapply mulch. If frost threatens during blossoming cover the plants with spun poly floating row covers or old bed sheets.

Keep up with watering. Lightweight netting works well to deter birds,

while slugs can be captured in shallow containers filled with beer and buried at ground level. Remove dead slugs and top off the beer nightly.

June-bearing strawberries bear fruit for two-three weeks. Harvest when the berries are bright red; if fruit is picked unripe it may turn red, but flavor will be sacrificed.

The season can be extended a bit by growing early, mid and late season varieties, or by growing day-neutral types which bear smaller amounts of fruit over a longer period, from June-

October.

Nourse Farms (noursefarms.com) of South Deerfield is an excellent local source for strawberry plants.

After fruiting is complete mow down the plants with a push mower. I had to cross reference a few advice books before I had the courage to do this, but it surely did wonders to renovate the bed.

Rake away the mowed leaves, thin runners that are too close, and remove the oldest plants. Top-dress with compost and a sprinkling of fertilizer before remulching.

Although labor intensive, strawberries are worth the work. Managing a strawberry patch in this manner will likely keep it productive for five years. Imagine, your own flavorful memories!

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.



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BLANDFORD

Blandford Historical Society...*Did You Know?*

Fergusons and Knoxes

When the American Revolution came to Blandford, it was very much a family affair. Grandfathers, fathers, sons, uncles, sons-in-law, brothers-in-law, nephews and cousins answered the call, often marching off to war together.

Few families played a larger role than the Fergusons and Knoxes.

Both families traced their roots to Scotland before relocating to Ulster, Northern Ireland and later crossing the Atlantic. After settling first in Hopkinton, they helped establish the frontier settlement of New Glasgow, later incorporated as Blandford in 1741.

Answering the Alarm

Among the children of Samuel and Eleanor Ferguson were a son, John and a daughter, Isabel. Both would become connected to the Revolutionary story that unfolded in the hilltowns of western Massachusetts.

John Ferguson grew into one of Blandford's most respected military leaders. Like most colonial men, he was required to serve in the local militia, where military training was part of everyday community life.

At 17, Ferguson served in the French and Indian War, gaining experience that would later prove valuable during the Revolution.

By the time news of Lexington and Concord reached Blandford in April 1775, Ferguson had risen to captain of the local militia company.

He organized local men and marched east in response to the Lexington Alarm, leading 36 men from Blandford and neighboring Chester toward Boston.

Although they arrived after the initial fighting, the war was only beginning. Ferguson and his men continued to Roxbury, helping build fortifications and support the American forces.

Over the course of the war, Ferguson continued serving the Patriot cause, earning a reputation for leadership and dedication.

A Marriage that United Two Founding Families

His sister Isabel played a different, but equally important role in Blandford's Revolutionary story.

In 1749, she married Captain William Knox, linking two families that would leave a lasting mark on the town. Together they raised ten children in a community where military service and civic duty



Courtesy photos for Blandford Historical Society by Jane Rohman
Aaron and Mandy LaBrecque with Jaxon Stafford who portray Captain William Knox, his wife Isabel Ferguson Knox, and one of their children costumed for a mini ghost presentation during the town's 250th birthday celebration activities the weekend of June 26 and 27.

were woven into daily life. Town records reveal a network of interconnected Revolutionary-era families, including the Fergusons, Knoxes, Freeland, Hamiltons, Stewarts, Blacks, Cannons, Blairs, Gibbs, Bairds and many others.

Bringing History to Life

Some of their stories will come to life later this month during Blandford's Happy Birthday America 250

Celebration.

As part of the Saturday, June 27 community celebration at the Blandford Fairgrounds, the Historical Society will present a special mini ghost performance featuring Captain William Knox, his wife Isabel Ferguson Knox and one of their children as they reflect on what it was like to live through the birth of a nation 250 years ago.

And along the way,

they'll tackle a question that has haunted them for centuries.

Were Blandford's Knoxes related to Revolutionary War hero General Henry Knox?

You'll have to attend to find out.

Blandford will celebrate America's 250th birthday June 26-27 with a weekend of community festivities at the Blandford Fairgrounds. Friday's events from 6-9:30

p.m. include live music, food and fireworks. Saturday features the Then & Now Parade at 11 a.m. from the Town Offices to the fairgrounds, free cookout, family activities, historical presentations and entertainment honoring both the nation's founding and Blandford's Revolutionary-era roots.

For details, people may visit www.tinyurl.com/blandford.

BFPA close to fund raising goal

BLANDFORD – The Blandford Fair Preservation Association officer Michele Crane announces their goal to raise \$17,000 by December is in sight.

This could put a new roof on the agricultural hall by the 2027 Labor Day fair.

People may stop by the BFPA table during the town's 250th Celebration on Saturday, June 27. They may meet the members of the organization and learn more about the project and how to donate.

To give now, people may visit bfpa.net or

mail a check to BFPA, P.O. Box 178, Blandford, MA 01008.

The Blandford Fair Preservation Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and improving the fair grounds and historical buildings.

COMPLAINT

cemetery maintenance and that the commissioners need to be creative...and see what works for other towns.

Board chair Jackie Coury said, "We can talk about it," referring to making this a priority for the town, trying to give the commissioners what they need.

Town Administrator

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera told the board that the request for proposal for a treasurer/collector has been posted.

The Fire Department will take possession of the Brush Truck after July 1 and any requests for reclassification need to be turned in and reviewed prior to the close of the fiscal year.

Surplus town equipment She asked about the disposition of any surplus town

equipment now on stage in the gym. Some has been labeled by departments as disposable, others to be kept until the library moves back into its expanded facility.

Town contracts

There was a question for what department is responsible for keeping town contracts. The clerk's office is not responsible for this, but according to Mass General Laws it is the town accountant.

Highway Department

Highway Department Superintendent Ray Hultay spoke about an upcoming ten-year contract for Chapter 90 funds.

These current funds will be used for some \$39,000 engineering study for the Beech Hill Road bridge. He said he will send the pur-

chase agreement for the Dirt Roller to legal counsel for review and asked for permission to submit a grant for culvert funding.

Other business

Coury reported that the last meeting on the Energy Projects Siting and Engagement Committee will be June 17.

The board will announce its summer schedule at their next meeting.

The board made approved the following appointments: Theodore Cousineau as Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Alternate; Robert Holmes as Interim-Highway Laborer and Nathan Sperry as State Inspector of Animals. All these appointments are for July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

from page 1

Nation wide bell ringing event takes place July 4

BLANDFORD – Blandford will take part in the nation-wide bell ringing event celebrating the 250th birthday on Saturday, July 4 2026.

People may bring lawn chairs and listen to patriotic music at 1:45 p.m. at the steps of The White Church while awaiting the start of the bell ringing.

They may bring hand

bells, sleigh bells, cow bells or any kind of bell to join in the event..

There will be a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence at 2:15 p.m.

School-age children will be asked to go to the Historical Society yard to ring Blandford's old North Church bell along with the bells they bring.

Then, at 2:50 p.m. the bells will peal across the nation. The historical society invites everyone to participate in the celebration.

According to the National Bell Festival website, the Bell Festival invites bells and bell towers across America to ring out together on Independence Day, creating a canopy of sound over the nation. Cathedrals and churches, community organizations and historical structures, national parks and memorials and people from coast to coast are encouraged to gather and contribute to the sound.

This symbolic gesture of ringing bells together celebrates our commitment to community, honors our nation's incredible past and inspires the next generation of American patriots.

The Blandford Historical Society invites everyone, by ringing bells simultaneously with neighbors cross the nation to raise a patriotic clangor from sea to shining sea.



Blandford will take part in the nation wide bell ringing event celebrating the 250th anniversary on Saturday, July 4 at 2:50 p.m.

GOSHEN

Highland Ambulance EMS offers Thayer Scholarship

GOSHEN – Highland Ambulance EMS, Inc. honored Pat Thayer at a reception held on Thursday, June 4.

Over the past 20 years Pat served on the Board of Highland Ambulance, during the last seven years as Board President. During her tenure, Thayer of Ashfield helped navigate Highland Ambulance EMS through their most challenging time of the Covid pandemic.

She holds a MS and a RN degree in nursing from the University of Massachusetts and has several decades of experience

in dealing with medical emergencies.

Ashfield is one of six towns Highland Ambulance provides EMS services.

Thayer retired as Highland Ambulance EMS, Inc. Board President on Jan. 31 Denis Banister of Williamsburg replaced her.

The scholarship will be funded through ancillary donations made to Highland Ambulance.



Submitted photo

Pat Thayer is shown with Highland Ambulance Director, Mike Rock. He presented her with a certificate for The Pat Thayer Scholarship, which was created to help students who are residents of the six Hilltowns Highland Aambulance serves, to pursue their career in the EMS field.

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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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Gateway Regional School Committee celebrates retirees

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – The Gateway Regional School Committee hosted its annual reception to honor staff, who are retiring and those who were honored by distinctions outside of the district.

They held the reception just off of the courtyard on Wednesday, June 10 at 6 p.m.

School Committee Chairman Jason Forgue announced this year’s retirees, who included ELL Teacher Susan Addis and PreK Teacher Susan Rhoads; CPPI Grant Coordinator Joanne Hentnick; Instructional Assistants Bonnie Charpentier; Sharie Laurie; Cheryl Miller-Harper; Deb Senecal and Robin Whitney and the district’s Transportation Coordinator Deborah Burkott.

Those present received a gift from the district from Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, Superintendent.

Susan Addis will retire on Aug. 3 after nearly twenty years as an ELL (English Language Learners) teacher at Gateway. She came to Gateway after working at Worcester Academy, the Fay School in Southborough, Northfield Mt. Herman and at the Fu Hsing School Taipei in Taiwan.

She earned her undergraduate degrees in England and a Master of Teaching degree from the Department of French at UMass Amherst.

While at Gateway, she served as the ELL Coordinator, on the Professional Development and Technology Committees and taught a Crafting Minds course.

Deborah Burkott will retire on June 26 after near-

ly 13 years as Gateway’s Transportation Coordinator. A graduate of Westfield High School, she later took classes at Bay Path Junior College in Executive Secretarial Studies. She is a 7D Driver trainer and also drove Gateway’s vans when needed, as well as substituting in the security booth.

Before coming to Gateway she was a logistics manager, dispatcher, operations manager and safety department administrator/coordinator.

Bonnie Charpentier arrived as a part-time staff member in December, 1995. She became a full time Instructional Assistant in February 1998 and will retire on June 30 after over 28 years at Gateway. She worked at Littleville, the middle school, high school and as a summer tutor.

Ellen Emmonds served as Gateway’s second shift security monitor upon her hire in April 2021 before moving to days as Lead Security Monitor until her retirement on March 3 of this year.

She held an associates degree from Holyoke Community College, a Bachelors Degree in education from Westfield State and a Masters Degree in reading/consulting from the University of Rhode Island.

Before coming to Gateway, she was a Reading Specialist in Westfield Public Schools and a caretaker and healthcare advocate.

Joanne Hentnick came to Gateway in September 2023 and will retire on Aug. 31. She previously worked in Springfield Public Schools, Westfield Public Schools and at the Creative Kids Preschool in Westfield.

She came to Gateway as a Preschool Teacher and later



Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long

Superintendent Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, from left, is shown with Shari Laurie, Susan Addis, Cheryl Miller-Harper, Deborah Senecal, Bonnie Charpentier, Susan Rhoads and Joanne Hentnick, who were honored for their upcoming retirements from the Gateway Regional School District. Four other retirees were honored but unable to attend: Deb Burkott, Ellen Emmonds, Karen Malinowski and Robin Whitney.

transitioned to the Preschool Grant Coordinator. She earned an Associate’s Degree in Computer Technology from Holyoke Community College, a Bachelor’s of education from Westfield State and a Master’s in Technology Education from Lesley College.

Shari Laurie has been a full time Instructional Assistant since September 2007 and will retire on June 30. She is a graduate of the Wahconah Regional School District and worked at Westfield Head Start and Pittsfield Cooperative Bank. She has worked in all four Gateway schools as both a 1:1 and classroom aide. She has also worked as a tutor and as a long term substitute aide before being hired full time.

Karen Malinowski came to Gateway as a lunch aide at Chester Elementary School in December, 2008. From there, she became a secretary at that school in August of 2009 and served in that role to the Director of Academics, in the Pupil Services Office and in the High School/

Middle School office until her retirement in July, 2024. She also served as the district’s sub caller, as a game administrator and taking tickets at home basketball and soccer games.

Cheryl Miller-Harper might be Gateway’s longest serving employee ever, having arrived in October 1981 and retiring June 30, 2026. She is a graduate of Pittsfield High School. Before coming to Gateway she worked for New England Telephone and the hilltowns vet clinic. She started her nearly 45 year career at Gateway as a Media Aide before working across all four schools, landing mostly at the middle school and high school as a classroom aide.

She also tutored in the summer academic support program and after school programs and was called up several times as a long-term teacher sub in special education.

She served as the Advisor to Gateway’s chapter of Students Against Drunk Drivers. She was named the 2008 Massachusetts

Education Support Professional of the Year for her work in the district.

Susan Rhoads will retire on July 17, 2026 from her position as a Littleville Preschool Teacher after nearly 15 years in that position. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Iowa State University and a Master’s Degree in education from Fitchburg State College.

Before coming to Gateway she worked at the Granby Preschool, East Meadow Elementary School, the Early Childhood Learning Center and the May Institute. As a member of the Gateway faculty, she mentored new teachers, supervised students in the Early Education and Care vocational program and served as both the Preschool Coordinator and Early Childhood Coordinator.

Deborah Senecal is retiring on June 30 after completing 17 school years at Gateway as an Instructional Assistant. She had previously worked at the Amesbury Public Library and had taken classes at Westfield State and

Salem State.

While at Salem, she painted murals at several locations in the library, a local restaurant and a children’s play room at the hospital. She began subbing in 1998 before becoming a long term sub in the high school in May 2001. She was hired full time in September 2009 as a Middle School Grade 5 aide before moving to Grade 6 inclusion. She spent her entire career at Gateway Regional School.

Robin Whitney retired at the end of December, 2025 as an Instructional Assistant. She started in January, 1999 and has covered a number of roles including Hall Monitor, PreK, Middle School Life Skills, Student Support and as Littleville, Middle School and Russell Elementary School.

She was a senior class co-advisor three times, a junior class advisor and a freshman class advisor twice. She also worked in summer programs and as a game administrator and ticket taker for home basketball and soccer games.

Three special education administrators were also honored by the MA Special Education Directors Association this spring. Pupil Services Director Kurt Garivaltis was named the Suburban/Rural Special Education Director of the Year. Assistant Pupil Services Director Chris Tamburrino was given the Transition Specialist of the Year and current Business Manager Amy Mason received the Inclusion Specialist of the Year for her prior work with the district’s program for visually impaired students.

Their awards were also recognized at the Committee’s staff reception.

WPI students complete research projects

WORCESTER – At Worcester Polytechnic Institute, all undergraduates are required to complete a research-driven, professional-level project that applies science and technology to addresses an important societal need or issue.

Known as the Interactive Qualifying Project, this project is a core part of the innovative undergraduate experience at WPI. Centered around project-based learning, this hands-on approach offers students opportunities to help develop thoughtful

solutions to open-ended problems.

Local students completing the project are: Michael Grinley of Goshen, class of 2027, majoring in environmental engineering, completed the project titled Developing Laboratory Sustainability Guidelines for AMI; Christopher Ondrick of Westfield, class of 2027, majoring in electrical and computer engineering, completed the project titled Feasibility of AI in Armenian Early-Stage Tech Startups and Gabriel Rapoza of Easthampton,

class of 2027, majoring in aerospace engineering, completed the project titled Assisting ELWP to Develop a Community Garden at Aldriche Way.

These real-world problems affect the quality of life for people in the communities where students work, giving students a chance to make a difference in the world before they graduate. All WPI undergraduates are required to complete an IQP, usually in their junior year, through which they apply science and technology to address an important societal

need or issue.

About two-thirds of WPI students complete their IQP at one of the university’s 50+ off-campus project centers located in more than 30 countries around the world.

“The WPI project-based curriculum’s focus on global studies brings students out of the classroom and their comfort zones and into the global community to apply their knowledge and to solve problems,” said Professor Kent Rissmiller, professor of International & Global Studies and associate dean of The Global School.

Rolland Scholarship applications due June 30

WORTHINGTON – The late Art and Peg Rolland established a scholarship fund to benefit citizens of Worthington seeking to further their educational goals.

The annual interest earned on the Fund is distributed each year to qualified students by a committee consisting of the Town Clerk, a member of the Select Board and a School Committee member.

The requirements for consideration are: The applicant must have been a resident of Worthington for at least two years prior to the date of application.

The applicant must be a high school or secondary school graduate, pursuing a course of study at an approved school or college.

The applicant must demonstrate financial need.

Applications must be postmarked no later than

June 30.

All application essays must be typed in order to receive consideration.

Each scholarship awarded will be for at least \$500, but the actual amount and the number of scholarships awarded will depend on the number of applications received and the Fund interest available. Funds will be distributed by Sept. 1, payable to the appropriate institution.

To apply, please complete the attached form and mail to: Rolland Scholarship Committee c/o Town Hall, P.O. Box 247, Worthington, MA 01098-0247 or leave in the dropbox outside the Town Hall Door.

Amy Wang, Select Board; Katrin Kaminsky, Town Clerk and Deborah Clapp, Worthington School Committee are on the scholarship committee.

Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi elects Alecia Kittelson

BATON ROUGE, LA – Alecia Kittelson of Westfield, was recently elected to membership into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s oldest and most selective all-discipline

collegiate honor society, at University of Louisiana at Monroe.

Kittelson is among approximately 20,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be ini-

tiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year. Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10% of seniors and 7.5% of juniors are eligible for membership.

Graduate students in the top 10% of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

RACISM

dent to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and had a phone meeting with them the following day. Andrew concluded, “It’s sad that it took a 17-year old’s public shaming of you to do anything.”

Unrelated to this incident, the school recently held an assembly for eighth graders to make sure that students were aware of the impact that using discriminatory language had on other students. Several high school students addressed the eighth graders at that assembly, which was mentioned by several who spoke to the school committee.

Those who testified said that racism is a deep-rooted problem in the school that has resulted in students leav-

ing the small district. Current students said that students of color are going through these situations and are too scared to say anything. One unnamed student, who spoke at the meeting, said a teacher was bringing up jokes to her in Spanish, with the other kids laughing. “It” not funny. It literally destroys a kid’s mental state. Nobody can choose their skin tone,” she said.

Several students who spoke said that the process of creating safety plans was proving ineffective and that the perpetrators of harassment, etc. were violating them.

One parent, also an alumna, said the problem stems from the parents. “If you use the ‘N’ word at home, at least tell your kids

not to use it at school,” she said. This was echoed by school committee member Stephanie Simonowitz who said, “There is also a parent responsibility in how we act, coach, shape, mold and educate our kids. While I appreciate the courage, honesty and transparency (tonight), we can’t lose sight of the fact that this starts at home.”

Chairman Jason Forgue thanked everyone for coming and sharing their experiences. He said that one of the committee’s three roles was to set policy for the school district (the others are approving the budget and evaluating the Superintendent). He consulted with the Policy Committee Chair Lyndsey Papillon and they agreed that they would meet over

the summer to look at the district’s related policies. “It will be on the forefront. I will do my best to be sure that action is taken and changes are made,” Papillon said.

“We have zero control over that Facebook post,” Forgue pointed out. “It was brought to my attention on Sunday and I read some of the comments. I think we’re failing here.”

He said that, in addition to looking at policy and consequences, he would do his best to attend any future efforts to curb racism in the school.

He also pointed out that the school committee is not informed when such incidents occur or when investigations into them are taking place and invited people

to continue to keep them informed.

Speaking the following day, Superintendent Dr. Melissa Matarazzo clarified that student privacy protections prevent administrators from sharing information about individual consequences that are meted out to students.

“We welcome feedback that helps us grow, and - while it’s heartbreaking to hear - we know we can do better,” she said, adding that their work with the Barr Foundation had involved a Youth Truth survey several years ago that had indicated that students of color at Gateway had a lower sense of belonging at the school.

“In our next three year plan, we have a goal to raise all students’ sense of belong-

ing, with a particular focus on improving the experience of students of color,” she said.

The district announced later at this school committee meeting that they’d received a three-year, \$790,000 continuation grant from the Barr Foundation, which is supporting a number of changes and new initiatives at the school.

In other news at that meeting, the committee approved the GRS Course of Studies for the coming school year and announced that the Fiscal Year 2027 budget had passed in all six towns. The committee also unanimously voted to approve a new three-year union contract for the district’s Instructional Assistants.

from page 1

FLORENCE

Florence Bank presents Candice Somar with Community Support Award

FLORENCE – The Florence Bank announces its recent presentation of its 2026 Community Support Award to Candice Somar of Springfield, Assistant Vice President and Springfield Branch Manager.



Candice Somar

The Community Support Award was established by the bank in 1997 as a means of formally recognizing team members who are active in the community and give their personal and professional time to local nonprofit organizations.

Each year, the award recipient selects an organization of his/her choice, and the bank donates \$500 to that organization on

the recipient’s behalf. Somar chose to support Ella’s Feline Rescue Mission in Springfield because she loves cats and applauds Ella’s mission.

She supports many other nonprofits in the region with her time, serving as a board member for Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity, as ambassador for East of the River Chamber of Commerce, is on the Caribbean American Heritage Committee and as a volunteer for Revitalize CDC and Ronald McDonald House.

Somar has 27 years of banking experience and manages Florence Bank’s Allen Street branch location in

Springfield, supporting business growth and community development.

“We are pleased to shine a spotlight on Candice because we are proud of all the important work she does in the community,” said Matt Garrity, President and CEO of Florence Bank. “She is a team member who actively supports and volunteers for area nonprofits, assisting the communities they serve and is well-deserving of the Community Support Award”

Florence Bank is a mutual savings bank chartered in 1873. Currently, the bank serves the Pioneer Valley through 12 full-service branch locations in Florence, Northampton, Easthampton, Williamsburg, Amherst, Hadley, Belchertown, Granby, Chicopee, West Springfield and Springfield.

Florence Community Band holding concert June 21

FLORENCE – The Florence Community Band will host their Community Band Festival at the Look Park Pines Theater in Northampton on Sunday, June 21 at 3 p.m.

The concert is free; there is a vehicle fee to enter the park. Musicians, who would like to participate should email priscilla@florencecommunityband.com.

encecommunityband.com.

Band director Priscilla Ross says, “Calling all musicians, to continue celebrating our 25th Anniversary, we are reprising our Community Band Festival of days old. Join us on Sunday, June 21 at the picturesque Look Park Pines Theater for the rehearsal in the morning, lunch, and then the concert.

We can’t wait to play with you.”

Florence Community Band has long-standing roots in the Pioneer Valley and has an active playing membership of 75 musicians. With a commitment to community and musical excellence, FCB continues to grow and flourish as a welcoming place for all.

PLAINFIELD

Annual Firefighter’s Barbecue, road race to be held on Sept. 6

PLAINFIELD – The Plainfield Volunteer Firefighter’s Association hosts the 55th Annual Firefighter’s Barbecue and 50th Plainfield Road Race on Labor Day weekend, Sunday, Sept. 6.

Barbecue tickets are now available from any Plainfield firefighter, EMT or fire association member. People should not wait until the day of the event to purchase their ticket. This is Plainfield’s largest annual gathering.

The meal includes barbecued chicken local baked potatoes and corn-on-the-cob, as well as homemade Coleslaw, dinner roll, slice of watermelon and a beverage.

Cost is for \$20 per

adult and \$10 per child under 12. The barbecued chicken, baked potato and corn on the cob are all cooked on a giant open fire pit built by firefighters two years ago. The cooking fire starts at 6 a.m., cooking through the morning to be ready for a 1 p.m. serving time.

The day’s event will include a giant silent raffle with tickets on sale at the food tent. There is live music featuring the Curtis Rich Review, who has a Plainfield resident performer.

The 50th Plainfield Road Race, started in 1976, is a 1.1-mile loop around the center of town on a deceptive difficult course. Registration is free and day

of event. Race start time is 1:15p.m. Winners of both the overall race and children under 12 get their names inscribed on race bowels that are on display at the Shaw-Memorial Library throughout the year.

The giant silent raffle is put together during the summer months preceding the barbecue by the volunteer fire association members, who seek donated items throughout Western Mass. If people would like to donate an item, new items only, packaged and sealed, they should contact a firefighter or EMT or drop off the item Thursday evenings at the Safety Complex at 38 North Central St. after 7 p.m. Raffle winners are picked the day of the event.

SOUTH WORTHINGTON

Sevenar’s Academy eager to hold July 12 concert

S O U T H WORTHINGTON – The Sevenar’s Academy, 15 Ireland St., just off Rte. 122, will hold six concerts beginning Sunday, July 12 and running through Sunday, Aug. 16 at 4 p.m.

Their “Family and Friends” opener marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of the USA. The program will feature a fantastic array of

American music, including Gershwin, Copland, Joplin, Blake, Braggiotti, Waller, Schoenfield, Bolcom, Brubeck, and songs of late Sevenars co-founder Rolande Young Schrade.

Rorianne Schrade, Lynelle James, and Christopher James will be at the pianos, and violinist Alexis Walls, pianist/composer Clifton J. “Jerry” Noble, Jr., and bass-baritone

John Henry Thomas will add their tremendous gifts.

From riffs on “Yankee Doodle” to more serious fare, there will be lots of fun!

For individual biographies, please visit their websites: alexiswallsmusic.com, cliftonjnoblejr.com, lynellejames.com, rorianne.com For more information on the program, people may visit: <https://www.sevenars.org/july12>.

Padelford becomes Senior VP/CFO at Florence Bank

FLORENCE – The Florence Bank announces Eric Padelford of Dalton, is senior vice president/chief financial officer.

Padelford will succeed senior vice president/treasurer Sarah Darling, who will be retiring in June after 40 years of service to the bank.

Prior to joining Florence Bank, Padelford was executive vice president and chief operating officer at Pittsfield Cooperative Bank in Pittsfield, where he oversaw all operational, financial and technological functions for the organization.

“Eric has successfully managed multiple bank divisions and has a proven track record of achievement in each of those key areas,” said Matt

Garrity, president and chief executive officer. “I look forward to Eric joining our senior leadership team and am excited to see his vision for our finance and facilities divisions.”

Padelford holds a Bachelor of Science degree in information technology from the State University of New York Empire State College and a Master of Science degree in data science from Eastern University in Pennsylvania.

Garrity also reflected on Darling’s distinguished four-decade career at Florence Bank.

“In her 40 years of ser-



Eric Padelford

vice, Sarah has always represented Florence Bank with the highest degree of professionalism and integrity. We’ll miss her financial acumen and keen insight but wish her all the best as she embarks on her next journey.”

Florence Bank is a mutual savings bank chartered in 1873. Currently, the bank serves the Pioneer Valley through 12 full-service branch locations in Florence, Northampton, Easthampton, Williamsburg, Amherst, Hadley, Belchertown, Granby, Chicopee, West Springfield and Springfield.

PUBLIC NOTICES

TOWN OF HUNTINGTON WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION HUNTINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Sealed Bids for the construction of the “**Town of Huntington, MA SCADA System Upgrades Project**” will be received by the Town of Huntington, Water and Sewer Commission, Town Hall, 24 Russell Road until **2:00 p.m. local time on July 09, 2026** at which time the Bids received will be publicly opened and read. Sealed Bids must have outer envelope marked as “Town of Huntington, MA SCADA System Upgrades Project”.

The work consists of the installation of a new SCADA system including new equipment, panels, and enclosures at the water treatment building. Bids shall be on a lump sum basis as indicated in the Bid Form.

All Bids for this project are subject to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 149, Section 44A - 44J inclusive as amended.

In accordance with Section 44D of Chapter 149 of the General Laws of Massachusetts as amended, the prospective General Bidders must submit with their Bid, a certificate of eligibility issued by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), showing that the Bidder has been approved to bid on projects of the size and nature as advertised herein. Prospective General Bidders must also submit an updated statement summarizing their record for the period between the latest DCAMM certificate and the date of the Bid submittal. The DCAMM certificate of eligibility to be submitted by the General Bidder shall be for the category of work defined as “Electrical”.

Bidding Documents may be obtained electronically from the Tighe & Bond website at: http://www.tighebond.com/Projects_Out_to_Bid.php

Prospective bidders must complete a one-time registration process on the web site in order to receive log-in credentials.

Bidders must log in to the web site to download bidding documents for the project. Bidders will be added to the “planholders” or prospective bidders list upon downloading the bidding documents for the project.

All general bidders shall furnish with their bid a bid deposit in the form of a bid bond in the amount of 5% of the total amount for the Bid and made payable to the Town of Huntington.

Minimum Wage Rates as determined by the Commissioner of Department of Workforce Development under the provision of the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 149, Section 26 to 27D, as amended, apply to this project. It is the responsibility of the Contractor, before Bid opening, to request, if necessary, any additional information on Minimum Wage Rates for those trades people who may be employed for the proposed Work under this Contract.

Consulting Engineer:
Tighe & Bond, Inc.
53 Southampton Road
Westfield, MA 01085
413-562-1600

06/18/2026

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) of the Town of Huntington will hold a public hearing on **Monday, June 29, 2026 beginning at 6:00 pm** in Stanton Hall.

The Public Hearing is scheduled for 6:00 pm for the Special Permit Application of Holly Neylon DBA The River House Bar & Grill of 93 Pomeroy Road, Montgomery, MA to reopen the former Rapids Bar & Grill under a new name at 200 Worthington Road, Parcel # 326-1A.

The Special Permit Application will be available to view by **appointment** in the office of the Selectboard during regular business hours after June 15, as well as at the Public Hearing.

Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Huntington
06/11, 06/18/2026

Chesterfield Planning Board Notice of Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held for a Special Permit Application from Verizon Wireless on behalf of SBA Communications, on **Monday, July 6 at 6:30 PM** in the Town Offices, 422 Main Road, Chesterfield, MA. The proposed plan at 53 Bofat Hill Rd., Chesterfield, MA is to add a 10’ antenna extension and 8’ lightning rod to an existing 18’ cell tower; a back-up 50 kw diesel generator; flood lighting; and related construction. A copy of the proposed plan is available for viewing and a notice is posted at the Town Clerk’s office..
06/18, 06/25/2026

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination.

This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development "HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

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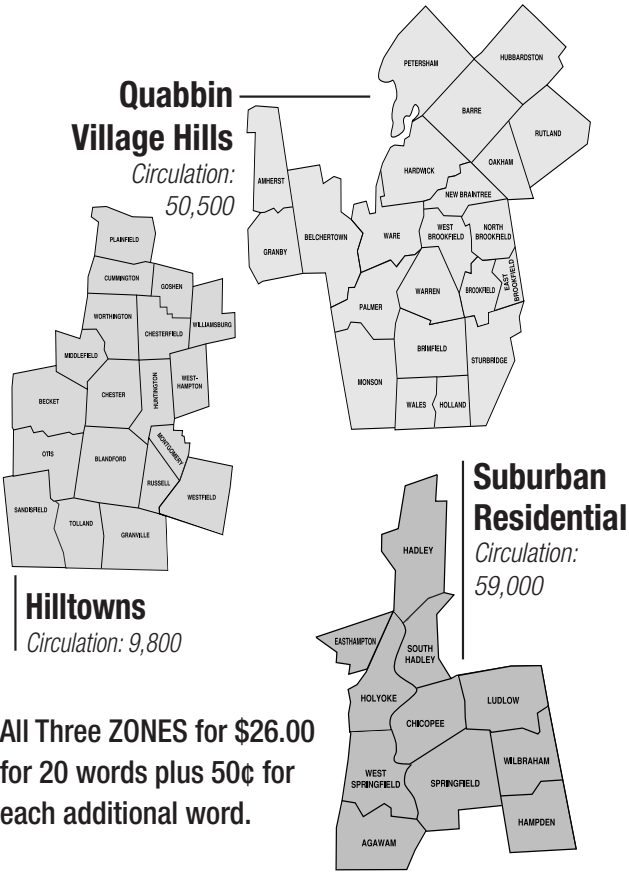
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13	14	15	16
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21 Base Price \$26.50	22 Base Price \$27.00	23 Base Price \$27.50	24 Base Price \$28.00
25 Base Price \$28.50	26 Base Price \$29.00	27 Base Price \$29.50	28 Base Price \$30.00
29 Base Price \$30.50	30 Base Price \$31.00	31 Base Price \$31.50	32 Base Price \$32.00
33 Base Price \$32.50	34 Base Price \$33.00	35 Base Price \$33.50	36 Base Price \$34.00
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OBITUARY

Sybil K. Whitaker (St. Peter) Miezejewski, 94

Sybil K. Whitaker (St. Peter) Miezejewski, 94, passed away peacefully on June 8, 2026 surrounded by the children, who were the center of her life. She was born on Nov. 17, 1931, the eldest daughter of 12 children born to Clara and Clifford Whitaker, Sybil lived a long, beautiful life defined by generosity and fierce resilience.

She was proudly the last surviving member of the Chester High School Class of 1949.

Sybil was predeceased by her husbands, Victor (1960) and Stanley (2006). She leaves to cherish her memory her children: Kathy, Thomas, Victor, Frances, Susan, Sam and Sheila as well as daughters-in-law, Linda and Everley and son-in-law, Marshall.

She is survived by siblings: Beulah Kidrick, Kay Caputo(Tony),Morgan



(J a k e) Whitaker(Carol), Roxanne Nowak (Paul), Sandy Mazur (Rich), Anita Grimm (Bill) and sister-in-law Bobbi Whitaker.

While raising her large family, Sybil built a distinguished 28+ year career with the United States Postal Service, rising through the ranks to retire as Postmaster of Russell Post Office.

Known for her sharp wit and knack for leadership, she memorized names, shared stories and made the small-town post office feel like home.

Deeply committed to civic duty, she also actively served on several Russell town committees for many years. In her leisure time Sybil enjoyed her gardens and crafting, especially

needle crafts.

She had a great love of music. One of her favorite past times was being outdoors and watching her birds.

Above all, Sybil's proudest accomplishment was her family. As a mother of seven, her home was always filled with laughter, open doors and delicious meals.

In her final hours, her children stayed by her side, returning the profound comfort and devotion she had given them throughout her life.

To know her was a joy, and she leaves behind a legacy written in the hearts of countless friends and neighbors.

A Funeral Home Service was held on Tuesday, June 16, 2026

at 4 p.m. in the Firtion Adams Funeral Service, 76 Broad St., Westfield, visiting hours preceded the service from 1-4 p.m. in the funeral home. A graveside service was held on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at 11:30 a.m. in St. Thomas Cemetery, Huntingdon.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Sybil's memory to Russell Volunteer Fire Association P.O. Box 394, Russell MA 01071 or Friends of the Westfield Senior Center P.O. Box 2184, Westfield MA 01086 to honor her lifelong spirit of giving back.

DEATH NOTICE

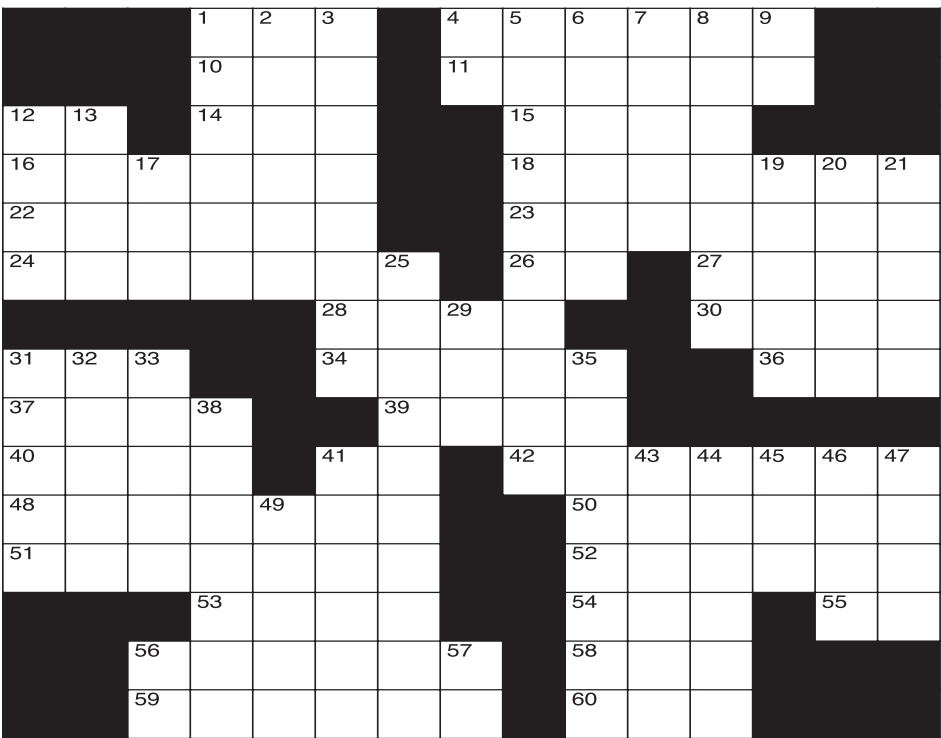
Miezejewski, Sybil K. Whitaker (St. Peter)
Died June 8, 2026

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.

Parents & Coaches
SEND US YOUR NEWS & PHOTOS
email us at: **countryjournal@turley.com**



CLUES ACROSS

1. Similar
4. Have an ambitious plan or a lofty goal
10. No (Scottish)
11. ___ Aires, city
12. Morning
14. Senior's son (abbr.)
15. A notable achievement
16. European nation
18. Endings
22. Puts into place
23. Former
24. Grenadier
26. Sea patrol
27. Algerian port
28. Norwegian river
30. Precipitation
31. Sunscreen rating
34. New York is one
36. Patti Hearst's
- captors
37. Soft mineral with greasy feel
39. Retired Brazilian footballer
40. An Indian nursemaid
41. Atomic #24
42. Immobile
48. Insignia of royalty
50. Seeds from which chocolate is made
51. Begin again
52. Round root
53. Beginning to end (alt. sp.)
54. What newlyweds just said
55. Empire State
56. Give back
58. College hoops tournament
59. Unstable situations

60. Young women's association

CLUES DOWN

1. Administer a drug
2. Holy places
3. Contrary opinions
4. Blood type
5. Gags
6. Micturating
7. Silly
8. A type of "cuff"
9. Spanish be
12. Austrian river
13. Messenger
- ribonucleic acid
17. Consume food
19. California supermarket
20. Electronic communication
21. Cassia tree
25. Written works
29. Cool!
31. Noteworthy 90s lawyer Kenneth
32. One who was compensated
33. National symbols
35. Raising
38. A type of talk
41. Cloud
43. Middle Eastern peoples
44. Pouches
45. 007's creator
46. A cut of meat
47. Sports entertainment award
49. Christine __, actress
56. Relief organization (abbr.)
57. Canadian province (abbr.)

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20
Management opportunities are coming. It is time to step up and take the lead. Your confidence has long been a strong character trait, so push forward.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, patience will pay off big time when a long-awaited piece of news finally arrives. The weekend is a perfect time for walking in nature or tending to the garden.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21
Your curiosity is leading you down a fascinating path. This could spark a new interest. Stay flexible, as a last-minute change of plans might be in the cards.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, emotional clarity might help you address a minor concern with grace and ease. You often project a gentle strength that helps to draw people closer to you.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23
It's time for your inner child to come out to play, Leo. Say yes to a game night or a creative pursuit. Joy will be the primary focus this week, leading you to have more fun.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, a breakthrough in your wellness routine may be on the horizon, leaving you feeling energized and refreshed. People might notice the glow and ask for your secret.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, artistic inspiration might just be everywhere you look this week. Whether gazing at the clouds or the buildings around you, you might be inspired to create something.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22
Transformation is in the air, Scorpio. You might be shedding an old habit for a better one. You may be stepping into a more powerful version of yourself soon enough.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21
Sagittarius, it's time to share your knowledge with others, which can bring you a sense of fulfillment that you might not have seen coming.

CAPRICORN

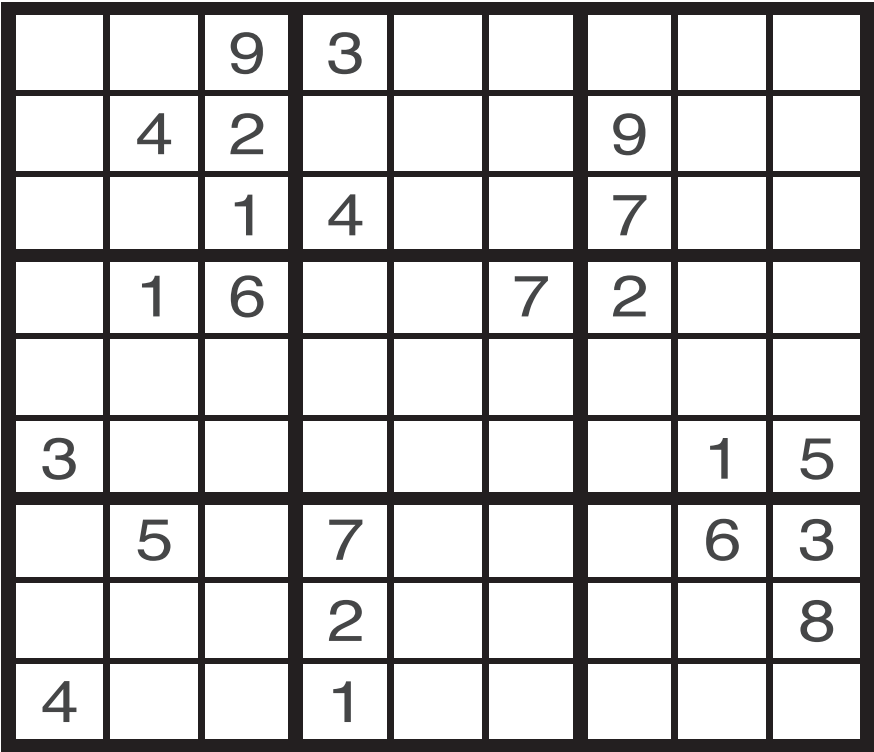
Dec 22/Jan 20
Career goals are moving forward at a steady, satisfying pace, Capricorn. Keep your eyes on the future and trust the process. You're doing amazing work.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18
Social activism or community work may give you a sense of purpose that is much-needed right now, Aquarius. Your ability to think creatively will help immensely.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20
Your kindness this week will create a ripple of positivity that flows right back to you, Pisces. Reach out to a friend in need when you have a moment.



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!

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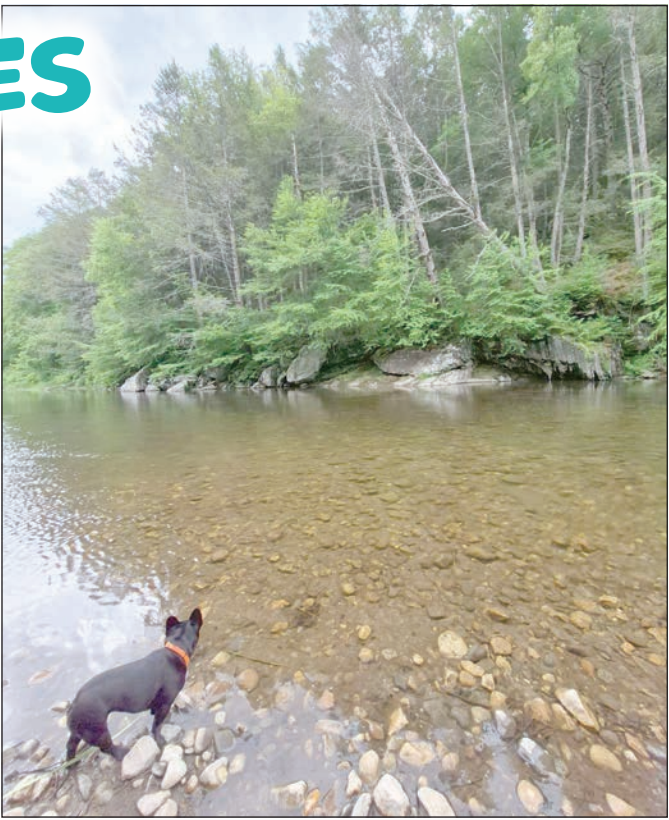
HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Stephanie is always in charge of the campfire.



They spent most of the time floating in the lazy East Branch of the Westfield River.



Frankie the Frenchie hikes on the island.

Hilltown Hikers spend weekend camping

The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers spent an off the grid camping weekend at Indian Hollow Campground in Chesterfield with great company, food, hiking, exploring and most importantly relaxing.

The lazy East Branch was where they floated every afternoon and some fell asleep enjoying the wildlife and paddling to the beautiful sights on the river.

They lost one tent, saw Jupiter and Venus in the June night sky, climbed up to the overlook pinnacle trail, explored Dead Branch Forest and enjoyed every minute of all three nights of campfires.

These group camping events are open to the public whether a first timer or seasoned camper. The Indian Hollow Campground is available for rent to groups like non-profits and other civic groups.



Cybil attempts to help play cribbage.



A crabapple tree provided shade from the heat for the camping Hilltown Hikers.



Hilltown Hikers cross the Dead Branch.



Hilltown Hikers are shown at the Pinnacle Trail.

Submitted photos

Send Us Your Autumn Event Information

Turley Publications will print your Autumn event **FREE OF CHARGE** in our **Autumn Fest Supplement** which will be published **September 9, 2026.**

Total circulation of 85,000 reaching over 200,000 readers in the Pioneer Valley.

Deadline for Calendar submissions is August 19.

Community Autumn Events

Event Should Be Non-Profit & Open to the Public

FREE Calendar Listings Reaching over 200,000 Readers in the Pioneer Valley

Event Name _____

Date/Time _____

Location _____

Description _____

Cost _____

Contact name & phone number for more information _____

MAIL YOUR LISTING INFORMATION TO:
Turley Publications, Attn: Jamie Joslyn, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
or email* them to: jamie@turley.com
***Be sure to indicate "Autumn Event" in the subject line of your email.**