

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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HILLTOWNS

Kim Baker takes part in

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

"You have never seen as many grownups in tears and kids having fun," said retired race car driver Kim Baker of Middlefield.

"It was 100% the most rewarding thing I have ever done." Baker was talking about the Dream Ride Experience he recently attended in Farmington, Connecticut.

This annual three-day fundraiser supports the Hometown Foundation, an organization that formed with a mission "to shed light on the countless abilities of the intellectually disabled community and highlight their determination in their daily lives."

DREAM RIDE, page 3



Submitted photo

Dream Rider Jacob was paired with Corvette Hall of Famer Kim Baker on this year's Dream Ride in Farmington, Connecticut, part of a three-day fundraiser for The Hometown Foundation that supports people with intellectual disabilities. He and his mom Vanessa traveled from Maryland to take part in the weekend, which has raised over \$15 million for the organization since it started in 2001.

HUNTINGTON

School committee passes revised bullying policy

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Gateway Regional School Committee held a virtual meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 25 to vote to approve the district's revised bullying policy.

The updated policy was developed over the summer and reviewed by legal council in response to a bullying incident reported by a recent graduate at the June School Committee meeting.

About twenty people had attended the June 10 school committee meet-

ing in response to a social media post by 2026 graduate Natalie Tacke, in which she described her car being vandalized last spring while she attended a class fundraiser at a restaurant in Holyoke.

On her way to school the following day, she noticed writing on her back window only to discover a racial slur had been written on her car. She described it as part of a pattern of bullying by a group of classmates that dated back to her freshman year.

POLICY, page 3

BLANDFORD



Turley Publications photo by Mark Kronholm

The performers at the curtain call received a standing ovation from the audience. They are from left, Ben Brady, Melanie Spector, Douglas Martin, Maestro Eve Queler, Catherine Wethinton and Joseph Sacchi.

Maestro Eve Quelar conducts opera

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

One has to continue to accept not only surprise but astonishment on the part of Maestro Eve Queler as she

maintains her certitude as an operatic conductor.

She knows when to lead the vocalist, gently nudging in a very cultivated manor. Her playing is always elegant, classy.

She performed with the vocalists for the first half of Saturday evening's performance before turning

the keyboard over to pianist Douglas Martin, who as been with the Bel Canto performance for over 20 years.

Martin brings his own style to the event with his ability to settle in at the instrument and accompa-

OPERA, page 7

BLANDFORD

Crew gets ready for Blandford Fair

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Saturday, Aug. 29 was warm, not too hot, sunny and just a great day all around for accomplishing maintenance and upgrades at the Blandford Fairgrounds in preparation for the 157th Labor Day Fair.

Director Mandy LaBrecque and son Sam along with nephew Kyle Blanchette wielded paint brushes and rollers to renew the benches for seating at the

new pavilion.

Director Bruce Cooley was on the ride-on mower, no doubt the grass will need to be cut again before the fair opens on Friday, Sept. 4. The fair will run through Monday, Sept. 7 at 5 p.m.

President Matt Ripley and vice president Aaron LaBrecque were both on deck as well. There are new speakers and lights in the process of installation and more.

Premium booklets are available at the Post

Office, Porter Memorial Library and the Blandford Country Store. Premium booklets can also be downloaded from the fair website as well as an entry form.

There will be two demolition derbies, a horse show, car show, truck pulls and family fun events.

Live music at the pavilion is provided by Pine Hills Band with Martha Kronholm Moscovitz on Saturday after-

FAIR, page 7



Turley Publication photo by Mary Kronholm

Giving the benches for the new pavilion a fresh coat of paint are l-r Sam LaBrecque, Fair Director Mandy LaBrecque and Kyle Blanchette

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



The dam, which paddlers had to portage around to continue on their river trip.



The portage area to get around the dam. River racers use this same route.



This tree shows marks of a beavers gnawing.

Hilltown Hikers paddle to Crescent Mills

As summer draws to a close, the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers try to get out on the beautiful Hilltown rivers and lakes to enjoy sunny skies and cool water.

Both a historic and beauty spot Crescent Mills developed as a village within the town of Russell, about four miles from Russell Center and 1.5 miles from Huntington containing 180 acres.

The site originally operated as a gristmill owned by Cyrus W. Field. In 1858, Field sold the gristmill, dam, water rights, and surrounding acreage to Charles C. Chapin and Henry A. Gould.

Chapin & Gould converted the site into a paper manufacturing operation specializing in high-grade writing and ledger paper for 79 years. Three departments operated around the clock.

Longtime superintendent W. D. Kites introduced innovations such as a hillside draft chimney connect-

ed to the boilers and patented improvements to the “dandy roll” a watermark device.

Filtered water was originally fed via wooden pump logs from a reservoir up on the hill and people can still see it today. Chapin & Gould owned the mill buildings, boarding houses, and worker tenements. The village featured its own schoolhouse with an upper hall for theater productions and dances, sports teams, a communal barn and regular deliveries from nearby Huntington and Montgomery farms.

Company executives commuted daily by train from Springfield, using a pedestrian swing bridge across the Westfield River near the dam until spring ice carried it away.

In the 1930s during the Great Depression, Chapin & Gould went bankrupt. The Springfield Five Cents Savings Bank foreclosed on a \$100,000 mortgage on May 29, 1936, leaving the

mill idle for three years.

In 1939, the mill was leased to E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. The bank sold the entire property in April 1942 to the Crescent Paper Corp., which liquidated after selling the industrial mill buildings and water rights directly to Du Pont.

Under Du Pont and later operations, the mill transitioned from paper to manufacturing “Texon,” a specialized leather substitute used for footwear midsoles and innersoles, employing around 90 workers.

A holding firm, the CVM Company, Inc., sold the residential company housing to private owners. The village modernized with paved roads (Route 20), town-supplied water from Blandford Mountain and a new school building erected on the former company barn site.

No doubt this spot has always been this beautiful with bald eagles diving for fish in the river.



Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers paddle their way toward a dam on the Westfield River in Russell.



Submitted photos

Hilltown Hikers pull their kayaks up by the portage area by a mill on the Westfield River.



Hilltown hikers continued paddling on Westfield River past the dam.

RUSSELL

Cultural Council seeks funding proposals

RUSSELL – The Russell Cultural Council set a Thursday, Oct. 15 deadline for organizations, schools and individuals to apply for grants that support cultural activities in the community.

Applications must be made online by visiting www.massculturalcouncil.org.

According to Council spokesperson Lorrie Bean these grants can support a

variety of artistic projects and activities in our community – including exhibits, festivals, field trips, short-term artist residencies, or performances in schools, workshops, and lectures.

The Russell Cultural Council is part of a network of 329 Local Cultural Councils serving all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The LCC Program is the largest grass-

roots cultural funding network in the nation, supporting thousands of community-based projects in the arts, sciences and humanities every year.

The state legislature provides an annual appropriation to Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, which then allocates funds to each community.

This year, the Russell Cultural Council will distrib-

ute about \$5,700 in grants.

Previously funded 2026 projects included: Littleville Elementary School, Russell Library, Russell Council On Aging, Hilltown CARE and North Hall Association to name just of few.

Application forms and more information about the Local Cultural Council Program are available online by visiting www.massculturalcouncil.org.

WESTFIELD

St. Joseph’s Church hosts pot roast dinner

WESTFIELD – St. Joseph’s National Catholic Church, 73 Main St., hosts a community pot roast dinner on Sunday, Sept. 13 at noon.

Dinner will feature tender pot roast, home-made mashed potatoes with beef gravy, glazed carrots and chocolate cake and includes coffee, ice tea and bottled water.

Tickets are \$18 for

adults and \$10 for children under 12. For tickets, people may call Cliff at 413-977-2007.

The deadline for purchasing tickets is Thursday, Sept. 10. A limited number of Meals-To-Go will be available at 12:30 p.m.

When buying tickets, people should indicate if take-out. Everyone is welcome.

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.