

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

October 8, 2026 | Vol. 48, No. 24 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

BLANDFORD



Cast of characters portraying Blandford ghosts, from left Mandy LaBrecque as Doris Hayden, Connor Doyle as James Cook, Rylan Shepard as Rev. John Keep, Peter Langmore as John Collister, Randy Garfield and Jennie Coletta as Elijah and Fanny Morton Gibbs, Aaron LaBrecque as Freegrace Norton, Jesse Tappin as Samuel Fraanklin, Bruce Benson as George Ashmun and Michele Crane as Mrs. Josephine Sheffield Porter.

Turley Publication photos by Mary Kronholm

Ghost walk brings early residents to life

Well over 200 visitors to the Hill Cemetery Saturday afternoon learned historical bites and featured factoids about the town's earliest residents interred there and some not buried there and some

whose stories carried forward to subsequent generations. Jeri Hamel was in the first group to participate. When it was over, she said, "A great presentation; portrayals and costuming

brought former Blandford residents, some we never knew of, to life, especially their involvement in quirky twists of American history." Doris Hayden, portrayed by Mandy LaBrecque, met

everyone as they first entered the cemetery. She had been the town's librarian for 24 years, a douser – a process she used to locate unmarked

GHOST WALK, page 6

A message from the Turleys

Dear Reader,
Every week a team of reporters, editors and people who assemble the paper work hard to bring readers information they need to know about their community. It's hard work and we love it.
Our goal is to provide a clear reflection of the community, and share stories about issues and events in your town as well as those about your neighbors, family and friends; in essence, a clear reflection of the community. We provide news that is difficult to find anywhere else.
Turley Publications has been doing so for over 60 years now, and enjoys being an integral part of the community.
Every year we invite residents to join those who already subscribe to the *Country Journal*, so they too can be informed and join their neighbors in keeping up-to-date on so many aspects of the community. We do that by mailing an issue of *Country Journal* to everyone in the Hilltowns on us, so you can see for yourself what types of information we provide.
If you want to know when and why your taxes go up, who is running for election, what successes and challenges are in your school system, what others are doing to make your community a better place, and so much more, we hope you will consider subscribing.
We also value your opinions and ideas. Please let us know what's important to you by picking up the phone and calling us. Let us know if we're meeting your expectations.
You can also call us to let us know about an important event in your family's life. That's why we're here.
We love being a part of this community and maybe even, in a small way, a part of your family.
We hope to be arriving each week at your home holding up that mirror, *Country Journal*.
Patrick Turley, CEO
Turley Publications, Inc.

BLANDFORD

Conservation project protects 580 acres

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent
The Department of Fish and Game, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Conservation and Recreation and The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts commemorated the conservation of over 580 acres in Blandford for wildlife and outdoor recreation. This project conserves a key piece of land across the Mass Pike (I-90), connecting over 39,000 acres of adjacent protected land for wildlife migration and climate resilience. Lands are open to the public as the new 360-acre MassWildlife Blandford Wildlife Management Area

and the 218-acres added to the Chester-Blandford State Forest. According to Governor Maura Healey, the state is protecting clean water and wildlife habitat. Division of Fish and Game Commissioner Tom O'Shea praised the project as an example of partnership to conserve large areas for people and wildlife. "Projects like this don't happen overnight—they take tremendous partnership and collaboration," he said, and thanked all involved. "This project is a testament to what we can accomplish when state, local and nonprofit partners work together towards

PROJECT, page 7

HUNTINGTON

Gateway boy's soccer has largest turnout

By Wendy Long
Correspondent
Gateway Regional School saw the largest turnout for boys soccer sign-ups in years, with 51 boys in grades 7 through 12 ready to try out in August. With a 2026 graduating class of 35 students, it came as a surprise to everyone to have so many students sign up. "It was completely out of the blue," said Athletic Director Matt Bonenfant. In the end, a total of 48 students completed tryouts with Coach Andrew McCaul (Class of 1997 and a member of Gateway's only team to ever win a state championship) and JV Coach Joshua Turner (Class of 2006) deciding to take every one of them. "It's a nice problem to have," Turner said with McCaul noting that it's the



Turley Publications Photo by Wendy Long

Seventh graders Henry DeGregorio and Evan Pappas are playing on the JV team at Gateway Regional School in Huntington, two of 48 athletes competing for the small school this fall.

largest turnout since at least 2021. Some of the recent years have not had a JV team at all in the program, McCaul said. Turner is quick to point out that he does not believe this is a new norm. He sees the high number of seventh and eighth graders as an unusual bubble. McCaul sees it as a tribute to first year GSR coach Turner, who has been coaching some of the younger children for years in teams run by the Gateway Youth Athletic Association. Another, albeit smaller factor, McCaul said is that Westfield Technical Academy now admits students on a lottery system and has to take more Westfield students leaving fewer slots for Gateway students.

SOCCER, page 8

WORTHINGTON

Hilltown Open Studio Tour offers fun weekend to explore art community



Turley Publication photos by Ryan Drago

The Hilltown Open Studio Tour took place over the weekend with Worthington Town Hall serving as the Tour Hub. Pleun Bouricius of AgathaO Photography alongside her photography portraits.

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer

The annual Hilltown Open Studio Tour allowed people to explore the art community throughout the hilltowns. Travelers went off on a self-guided tour during the weekend of Oct. 3 and Oct. 4 to explore the studios of artists throughout the communities of Chesterfield, Cummington, Plainfield and Worthington. This was the eighth year

of the Hilltown Open Studio Tour which featured 23 artists from across the four towns. The tour is an extension of a previous organization that started over 20 years ago. Jan Roby of Worthington was one of this year's featured artists that said the tour was known as "Arts Alive" when it started. The tour was created as a way for artists to meet each other and share their art throughout the community. According to Roby, the tour

started in Worthington and then branched its way out to other neighboring towns. "It's a creative hub," Roby said. The Worthington Town Hall served as a hub for the tour where artists can display their work and offer demonstrations. Roby has been an artist for 70 years and works with welding, jewelry, fiber, photography, collage and acrylic paints.

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HILLTOWNS

MassDOT lists I-90 roadwork

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces daytime and overnight bridge painting, bridge repairs, guardrail repairs and road repairs on I-90 eastbound and westbound in the towns of Otis, Montgomery, Russell and Stockbridge

In Otis road repairs will be conducted on I-90 eastbound from mile marker 23.0 to mile marker 24.0 on Thursday, Oct. 8 from 7:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

In Montgomery and Russell bridge repairs will be conducted on I-90 eastbound at mile marker 36.0 on the night of Thursday, Oct. 8 from 7 p.m.-5:30 a.m. the following morning.

In Stockbridge bridge painting will be conducted on I-90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 6.4 nightly now through the morning of Friday, Oct. 9 from 7 p.m.-5 a.m.

Appropriate signage and law enforcement details will be in place to guide drivers through the work areas. Drivers traveling through the area should expect delays, reduce speed, and use caution.

All scheduled work is weather dependent and subject to change without notice.

For more information on traffic conditions, travelers are encouraged to: Download the Mass511 mobile app or visit www.mass511.com to view live cameras, travel times, real time traffic conditions, and project information before setting out on the road. Users can subscribe to receive text and email alerts for traffic conditions. Dial 511 and select a route to hear real time conditions. Follow @MassDOT on X (formerly known as Twitter) to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.



BECKET

Becket Arts Center announces events

BECKET – The Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, offers weekly all-levels yoga class with Rima Sala on Thursday, Oct 25, 22 and 29 from 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Fee is \$5 to \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members.

Tai Chi Chih class takes place on Wednesday, Oct. 21 and Oct. 28 from 9:30-10:30 a.m. Instructor Sara Rotenberg guides participants through this gentle moving meditation that promotes balance, relaxation and the circular flow of vital Ki energy. This is accessible to all ages and fitness levels. Fee is \$15; \$10 for Arts Center members and \$5 for Card to Culture members.

Beginner yoga class with Maggie Murphy takes place on Wednesday, Oct. 21 and Oct. 28 from 5:30- 6:30 p.m. A registered yoga teacher trained in vinyasa and restorative yoga, Maggie Murphy focuses on the foundations of yoga and emphasize its movements’ influence on the body. Fee is \$15; \$10 for Arts Center members and \$5 for Card to Culture members.

Basic watercolor painting, taught by local artist and instructor Suzanne Gammon, takes place on Friday, Oct. 9 from 1-3 p.m. This beginner-friendly class introduces students to the fundamentals



Sara Rotenberg



Maggie Murphy



Lara Tupper



Dar Williams

of watercolor, including color mixing, brush techniques, washes, layering and composition.

Participants will learn in a relaxed, supportive environment while developing confidence and creativity with the medium. No previous watercolor experience is required. Class fees include all materials, though participants are free to bring their own: \$40, \$30 to \$35 for members and \$25 for Card to Culture members.

On Sunday, Oct.11 from 6-8 p.m., the Becket Arts Center presents a reading of “A Year of Magical Thinking,” at Dream Away Lodge’s Back Shed in Becket. Paula Langton, a professional actor and voice teacher, presents this spare, quietly gripping study of vulnerability, memory and grief, based on Joan Didion’s award-winning memoir. Suggested admission: \$10,

and \$20. Space is limited.

In advance of singer-songwriter Dar Williams’ appearance at the Becket Arts Center, author Lara Tupper will lead a book group discussion of Williams’ book, “What I Found in a Thousand Towns,” on Thursday, Oct. 15 from 7:30-9 p.m. The event is free, though donations are welcome.

On Thursday, Oct. 22, from 4-6 p.m., the Becket Arts Center offers a workshop celebrating the Mexican “Day of the Dead” festival. Instructor Elizabeth Shrader, who lived in Mexico for many years, will demonstrate how to make sugar skulls using paste and molds, and help participants decorate them with colored icing, foil and jewels.

The resulting artwork may be used as part of a community ofrenda or altar, honoring departed friends and relatives. All materials

are provided. Cost is \$10 for adults and free for young people, ages 5 to 17. Pre-registration is recommended, but walk-ins are wel-

come.

The Becket Arts Center will present an evening conversation with famed singer-songwriter Dar Williams, who will discuss her book, “What I Found in a Thousand Towns: A Traveling Musician’s Guide to Rebuilding America’s Communities – One Coffee Shop, Dog Run and Open Mike Night at a Time,” on Saturday, Oct. 24, from 5-6:30 p.m. Her story-and-song presentation will describe how towns can build social capital one encounter at a time. Community leaders and the audience will then discuss their own experiences in fostering community spirit. For tickets (\$45 to \$50) and more information, people should visit becketartscenter.org.

For registration for classes and more information, people may visit beck- etartscenter.org.

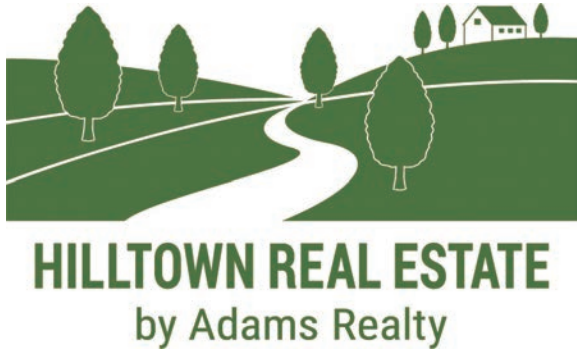
Congregational Church holds turkey dinner

BECKET – The Congregational Church of Becket hosts a harvest turkey dinner on Saturday, Oct. 17 from 4:3–6:30 p.m. at the Guild Hall on YMCA Road.

They will be serving roast turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy, butter- nut squash and apple crisp with real whipped cream for dessert.

Cost will be \$18. Children under 12 are free. People may stay and eat in or do take out. They should call 413- 623-8300 for reservations or just walk in.





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Worthington – 47 Acre woodland sanctuary with home and guest house in Worthington MA. Home is at the end of a quarter mile driveway off a scenic road. 18th century style Cape, built in 1990, Extremely private compound offered at **\$814,000**



Worthington – You will be impressed by this incredible three-bedroom home with a full in law apartment! Like new conditions. Everything you could ever ask for with a three-bedroom 2.5 bath dream home with a separate 2 Bedroom full bath, accessory unit for extended family Offered at **\$799,000**



Huntington – A magnificent mix-use home in Huntington center. The 2nd and third floor have an expansive 3-bedroom apartment on two levels with bedrooms on the upper level. Beautiful natural woodwork and hardwood floors. The first floor has a commercial tenant but could be a residential use. Offered at **\$335,000**



Worthington – A rare architectural gem, the Jonathan Woodbridge House, built in 1806, exhibits all the classic hallmarks of Federal Georgian design: elegant proportions, symmetry and magnificent carved Palladian details. The eleven gracious rooms retain original floors, paneling and moldings and six fireplaces Offered at **\$875,000**



Middlefield – Historic Country Home + Hobby Farm with majestic views of the hills and local pastures. This beautiful historic country home has room for the animals and a two floor barn. Offered at **\$337,000**



Worthington – A very special 18th century authentic reproduction post and beam on a tranquil country road. One of the finer homes in Worthington set on just under six acres of peaceful forest. The home was built in 1976 with high-quality craftsmanship. The home is built with vintage integrity. Offered at **\$559,000**

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