

Country Journal

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HUNTINGTON

Voters correct town budget

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Twenty-seven Huntington voters attended a Special Town Meeting on Dec. 1, which was two people over the required quorum of 25 people.

Without discussion and in less than two minutes, the town said the pledge of allegiance, moved the warrant article and voted unanimously to approve it. At issue was bringing the budget approved by voters at Annual Town Meeting last June below the town's levy limit. To do so, the article proposed reducing the Education Stabilization Fund Account by \$75,000 and reducing the appropriation for Huntington's vocational tuition by \$175,000. Both measures passed in the single vote and the town's budget is now \$27,607.91 below its levy limit.

The original vocational tuition budget approved on June 23 was \$905,132. This was based upon 36 accepted students and 5.5 students (half of the 11 students on the waitlist), which would each cost \$21,693 for Smith Vocational and Agricultural School or \$20,927 for Westfield Technical Academy, plus special education costs. In the end, 32 of the 41.5 students budgeted ended up attending a vocational school, reducing tuition costs by about \$175,000.

Another \$75,000 will be used from the Education Stabilization account to bring the budget below the levy limit. In speaking with Select Board Chairman Roger Booth before the meeting, he explained that there was an error in calculating the levy limit for the budget due to Gateway's Capital Stabilization number being used, instead of its Capital Debt amount. The overage was able to be addressed by fewer students attending vocational schools than was budgeted at the Annual Town Meeting. As a result of this vote, the town is now under its levy limit by \$27,607.91.

Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin explained the following day that the budget had to be corrected so that the town could set its tax rate in time for the Dec. 31 real estate bills to go out, to ensure the town had the cash flow needed to meet its fiscal obligations to payroll, health insurance and other bills.

BUDGET, page 3

BREAKFAST WITH Santa



Santa visits with a friend at the pancake breakfast put on by the Blandford Fire Association this past Saturday. See more photos on page 6. Submitted photos

HUNTINGTON

Select board approves 71st wildwater races

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Race director Harry Rock met with the Huntington Select Board on Wednesday, Dec. 3 seeking approval on plans for the 2026 Westfield River Wildwater Races, which will be held on Saturday, April 18.

Approval is needed from the town because the start of both the expert and classic races both occur in Huntington. Rock said they are planning to use details from the 2025 race, which all worked well. One new addition is putting duct tape on boats and writing bib numbers to help get boats that dump and don't finish the race, back to owners.

As this year's race is scheduled for the weekend before Easter, Rock anticipates that there will be even more races next year, especially if the weather is pleasant. He hopes to get over 300 paddlers in the classic race.

Registration for the pro race will open at 8

a.m. at Knightville Dam, with a pre-race meeting at 9 a.m. Rock said he emphasizes that pro racers do not have the emergency support that the classic racers have and encourages people, who have not experienced self-rescue, including "swimming down rapids" to run the classic race instead. Selectman John McVeigh said that Huntington Fire/Rescue plans to post more responders at the expert rapids near Gardner State Park, as that area has the "drop" that causes some of the expert canoes to dump. Expert races will start at 9:30 a.m. and go off in 30 second intervals.

The classic race will start at 11 a.m. and starts will also run in 30 second intervals. Boats can be dropped off in the Mass DOT yard and races can then bring their cars down to Strathmore Park for the after race party. Racers will then be bussed back up to the start.

One uncertainty about

WILDWATER, page 3

HUNTINGTON

Storm postponed senior citizen brunch and concert

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON - A winter storm forced the delay of Gateway's senior citizen brunch and concert to Thursday, Dec. 4, but that didn't dampen the holiday spirit at the school.

Seniors from Gateway's member towns of Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery and Russell were treated to a breakfast in the Gateway cafeteria that included quiche, sausage patties, blueberry muffins, fruit salad, juice, water, coffee and tea.

Members of Gateway's National Honor Society chapter greeted guests and served brunch. They included Grace Renauld, Jeffrey Antonellis, Desmond St. Martin, Theo DeAngelis-Page, Michael Whitaker, Jake Marchbanks, Kathryn Harding, Elizabeth Kadzik, Ana Holmes, Eliza Mueller, Lily Peloquin, Ashley Tacke and Justin Rucki.

New Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo was also on hand to chat with visitors, some of whom have been on the School Committee, were retired Gateway staff, volunteer in

schools or serve as substitute teachers.

"What a wonderful turnout from our communities," Matarazzo said after the event. "It seems our guests truly enjoyed the brunch and concert. I'm so proud of our National Honor Society, band and choir students for their contributions to a positive community connection."

Huntington Council on Aging Chair Kat Peterson reported that a number of Huntington seniors were unable to attend the rescheduled date, as the COA had a big holiday bus trip planned for Thursday. Nonetheless, around forty area seniors attended, many of whom looked forward to seeing grandchildren perform in the concert that followed. Blandford Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo was attending for the first time and was excited to see her grandson Parker perform on saxophone.

Preparing her first senior breakfast was Gateway's new Food Services Director Amber Boutilier, supported by cafeteria staff members Elizabeth Andras, Jessica Ellinger, Melvyn Hook and Meaghan McConnell.



Cafeteria staff Elizabeth Andras, Jessica Ellinger, Amber Boutilier, Meaghan McConnell and Melvyn Hook gathered for a pic after their busy morning preparing food for area senior citizens. Turley photos by Wendy Long

McConnell, who is also new as the Gateway Kitchen Manager, was also working her first senior brunch. Boutilier had been challenged by the delay, which kept her produce truck from arriving. An emergency trip to Costco gave her the items she needed to pull off the event.

Blandford senior Wanda Deitner said the whole brunch was delicious. She

attended with 93 year-old Bertha Pease, who had lived her entire life in Blandford.

Following brunch, attendees moved into the Gateway Performing Arts Center for a concert presented by the choral and instrumental groups in grades 7 to 12. The program opened with a vocal ensemble conducted by Daniel Rose who he said would present a holiday-themed PSA in song

titled, "Don't be a Jerk, It's Christmas."

The High School Jazz Band performed "April in Paris," Fats Waller's "What Did I Do (To Be So Black and Blue?)" and "I'll Be Home For Christmas" under the direction of Beth Guertin.

Rose returned to lead the Concert Choir and

SENIOR, page 2



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HILLTOWNS

MassDOT announces 1-90 roadwork

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces it will be performing daytime bridge painting work and bridge repairs on I-90 eastbound and westbound in the towns of Becket, Blandford, Montgomery, and Russell.

All work is weather dependent and will take place at the following locations and times:

In Becket, bridge painting work will be conducted on I-90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 20.0 now through Friday, Dec. 12 from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. In Blandford, bridge repairs

will be conducted on I-90 westbound at mile marker 26.2 now through Friday, Dec. 12 from 7 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 Thursday, Dec. 11 from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Appropriate signage and law enforcement details will be in place to guide drivers through the work area. 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.

Deadline for 'Name A Snowplow' extended

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces an extended deadline for the fourth annual "Name a Snowplow" contest for students in Massachusetts.

The contest seeks to solicit names for 12 MassDOT snowplows that will be in service for the upcoming 2025/2026 winter season. Submissions will now be received through Friday, Dec 12 at 5 p.m. The purpose of the contest is to celebrate the snow and ice season and to help recognize the hard work and dedication shown by public works employees and contractors during

the winter season. Winning names will be announced on Friday, Dec. 19.

Applications for the contest are due on Friday, Dec. 12 by 5 p.m. and can be submitted by using an online portal by visiting <https://www.mass.gov/forms/name-a-snowplow-contest-submission>. The contest winners will be invited to participate in a scheduled snowplow unveiling event.

A selection panel composed of MassDOT employees will choose two elementary school classroom winners that are located within each of the six Highway Division districts. The win-

ning submissions will be evaluated based on two grade-level categories: kindergarten through fourth grade and fifth grade through eighth grade.

During the third annual snowplow naming contest last winter, the winning names were: Snowana, Control-Salt-Delete, Taylor Drift, Ice S'now More, Ice Ice Baby, It's Snow Problem, Mac N' Freeze, Blizzard Buster, C 3 P Snow, Snow Force One, Abominable Plowman, and Meltin' John. These names, which were placed on the sides of plow trucks a year ago, remain on those vehicles.

HUNTINGTON

SENIOR

from page 1

announced that their first song would be, "a song that will be familiar to many this time of year, except not really." They then presented a mixed meter arrangement of "Jingle Bells." The choir continued with "Once Upon a December" from Anastasia and music from "Elf," which featured a kazoo arrangement.

Guertin returned to the stage with the seventh and eighth grade band, who performed "The Red Sled," "Dreidel Sevivon" and a "Christmas Holiday March."

The seventh and eighth grade chorus performed "When the Party's Over" by Billy Eilish, "Old Abraham Brown" and "Sleigh Ride."

Performing last was the High School's Concert Band and some eighth graders performing "Greensleeves Rhapsody," the "Great Movie Adventures Medley" featuring the music of John Williams and "A Fireside Christmas."

Students will present their evening concerts next week, with Grades fifth to eighth performed on Tuesday, Dec. 9 (snow date Dec. 10) and the Gateway Regional High School winter concert on Thursday, Dec. 11 (snow date Monday, Dec. 13). All concerts begin at 6:30 p.m. The public can also look forward to a drama club musical "Shrek" coming in March.



Diane DeMoss, from left, Wanda Deitner, Mary Martin and Lloyd Martin were among the community members attending Gateway's senior citizen brunch and concert on Dec. 4.

Turley photos by Wendy Long



Gateway's Concert Choir and several other vocal groups performed under the direction of Daniel Rose.



The seventh and eighth grade band was among the instrumental music groups performing under Beth Guertin.

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EARLY DEADLINE

In observance of **CHRISTMAS** for Dec. 22-26 newspapers there will be an **EARLY CLASSIFIEDS DEADLINE!**

Place your advertisement no later than **Thurs., Dec. 17 at 3 p.m.**

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HUNTINGTON

Task Force meeting changed to Dec. 17

HUNTINGTON – The Southern Hilltown Domestic Violence Task Force will meet on Wednesday, Dec. 17 from 3-4:30 p.m. at Gateway Regional High School, 12 Littleville Road, second floor Career Center. This is a change in the regular meeting date.



Town Moderator George Peterson opened the special town meeting, led the pledge of allegiance, managed a single warrant article vote, and adjourned the meeting in two minutes. *Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long*

BUDGET *from page 1*

“If we had known in June that we were going to be short, we wouldn’t have put free cash funds into our stabilization accounts,” Pelouin said.

The new numbers will be submitted to the Department of Revenue so that the state can set the town’s tax rate. Remarkably, the meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

WATCHFUL EYES



Some hikers observed this barred owl in a tree in Huntington. *Turley Publications photo by Deborah Daniels*

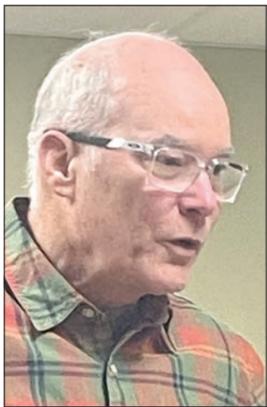
Applications now available for tax work off programs

HUNTINGTON – Applications are now available for the Huntington senior and veteran property tax work off programs for Fiscal Year 2027. \$500 credit on their real estate tax bill. The tax credit will be applied to the owner’s February or May 2027 real estate bill. Those who are both seniors and veterans may apply for both programs.

Huntington property owners, who are at least 60 years old and/or U.S. military veterans, may work up to 33.33 hours at the rate of \$15 per hour in a town department to receive a maximum



WILDWATER



Westfield Wildwater Race Director Harry Rock met with the Huntington Select Board on Dec. 3, and received approval from them for the 2026 race. *Turley Publications photo by Wendy Long*

this year’s races was the planned bridge work on the green bridge at the start of Route 112. Rock said that he received approval from Mass DOT after emphasizing that this is a huge event, encompassing all of the hilltowns and has the biggest turnout of any event in the region. He was told that they plan to start the bridge work in May, but they couldn’t guarantee whether or not they’d have equipment and supplies in place at the rail yard.

As in 2025, Granite State will offer timing services and the local fire departments will have emergency response roles, with incident command again set up in Russell to include the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and the Massachusetts State Police. Police cadets from Westfield will be posted with radios at both portages, at Hill ‘n Dale, the biggest rapids on the classic course and at

Turtle Bend. Other rescue volunteers along the course will have push-to-talk communications on their phones. Rescue kayaks and Russell Fire “throw bags” will also be posted at Hill ‘n Dale. He will also have a nurse triage station at the finish line.

Pre-race clinics will be held on April 4 and April 11 at noon; rain dates will be the next day. Safety rules will be covered, including helmets being mandatory for kayakers and stand up paddle boards. All racers are also required to wear a full life jacket.

With Huntington’s approval, Rock is now ready to begin looking for sponsors and publicly announcing race dates and details. All involved towns have given approval and Rock is planning meetings with the last few organizations to confirm their participation, including the Hilltown Community Ambulance and Army Corps of Engineers.

Other business
In other business, the select board approved a community development block grant invoice of \$4,759.50 to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for work on the Stanton Avenue Improvement Project, 2026 liquor licenses to Comfort Kitchen and Bar, B & D Variety, and the Huntington Liquor Store; a 2026 Class I Motor Vehicle Dealer License was also approved for Integrity Trailer Sales and Repairs LLC. A liquor license application for the Rapids is on hold until all required paperwork is submitted.

The board also discussed putting a sand shed for public access at the Norwich Hill Fire Station,

which will be continued at the next meeting. Town Administrator Jennifer Pelouin reported that Treasurer Ryan Mailloux is looking into a new cloud-based software for town departments. The assessors also need new software because their old system is not compatible with their new computers.

The board declined a request from the town of Fairhaven, who are trying to get towns to send letters to state senators and representatives about increasing local aid, which has not kept pace with inflation. Their reason for declining was a belief that this would not achieve desired results, as most state officials are already aware of this issue.

Traffic study
Also discussed was a recent traffic study completed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to look into the number of oversized trucks traveling County Road. PVPC had expected to see that 3% of vehicles were oversized but the study showed that 11 - 17% of traffic was oversized trucks. The town has dealt with three rollovers of large trucks on that road in the past year. They are proposing closing County Road to oversized vehicles, which has gone to Mass DOT for approval.

Water leaks
An update on the Basket Street Water Main Project revealed that they are seeing issues with water leaks at the connections to the new lines; the new hydrant is also leaking. The company is still chasing the source of these issues; in the meantime, 51 Basket St. is still on temporary water.

from page 1

COA lists upcoming events

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Council on Aging will be hosting the following events at Stanton Hall, 26 Russell Road.

The Hilltown Memory Café Christmas Party featuring snacks and games will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. The movie “My Cousin Vinny” will be shown on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026 at 2 p.m. Jerry and Kara Noble will perform on Wednesday, Jan. 21 from 2-3 p.m.

A presentation on

Thyroid Disease Awareness and Prevention and blood pressure checks will be provided by the Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition’s nursing team on Wednesday, Jan. 28 from 1-2 p.m. The Hilltown Memory Café is held weekly on Wednesday at 2:00 p.m.

The weekly café provides seniors with activities while their caregivers participate in a support group. The café is open to all with and without memory issues.

The café is made possible by a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act and by a grant from the Huntington Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. All events are free and open to residents of any community. For more information, people may call Crystal Wright-Partyka at 413-685-5283.

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Christmas will bring early deadlines for all ads & legal notices to run in TURLEY PUBLICATIONS the week of December 22-26, 2025:
Wednesday, December 17 at 2 PM for December 25 issue
• Country Journal • The Register • Wilbraham-Hampden Times
Thursday, December 18 at 2 PM for December 25 Issue
• Agawam Advertiser News
• Sentinel • Quaboag Current • The Journal Register
Friday, December 19 at 2 PM for December 25 Issue
• Ware River News • Barre Gazette
Monday, December 22 at 2 PM for December 26 Issue
• Town Reminder • The Holyoke Sun • Chicopee Register
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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



About tax filing status and Medicare

Dear Rusty:

I'm trying to figure out if I should change my IRS filing status to "Married - Filing Jointly" prior to getting reviewed for my Medicare Part B and Part D.

My current IRS status is "Married - Filing Single" and I noticed this filing status is more stringent. I will be turning 62 this year (2025) and I've read that Medicare will review my income two years prior to turning 65. Any input would be appreciated.

Signed: Uncertain Senior

Dear Uncertain:

Your IRS tax filing status has no bearing on your eligibility for Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient healthcare services) or Medicare Part D (insurance coverage for prescription drugs). Medicare is an individual healthcare program, so enrolling in Medicare provides coverage for you only, not your spouse, your spouse's Medicare eligibility will be individually evaluated.

What your IRS filing status may affect is the amount of your Medicare Part B and Part D premiums. There is a Medicare provision called Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount, which sets the income thresholds on which your Medicare premiums are based and those thresholds are different if you file your income tax as a single or as "married/filing jointly."

The IRMAA thresholds can change annually and there's no way to yet determine what they will be when you are able to enroll in Medicare at age 65. They are currently \$106,000 if you file as a single, and \$212,000 if you file your taxes as "married/jointly." If your "provisional income," your combined income from all sources, exceeds the threshold for your filing status, you will pay higher than standard Medicare Part B and Part D premiums. If your income is lower than the threshold, you will pay only whatever the standard Medicare Part B premium is for the year you start Medicare and there will be no supplemental premium for your Part D coverage.

For information, the IRMAA supplements are progressive that is, the more you exceed the threshold by, the higher your IRMAA premium supplement will be. To see the current IRMAA thresholds and supplements again, these will likely change when you are eligible for Medicare visit www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/2025-medicare-

parts-b-premiums-and-deductibles.

You are correct that your Medicare premium, when you enroll, will be determined by your total income from two years prior. So, if you plan to enroll in Medicare at age 65, sometime in 2028, it is your 2026 income which will determine your Part B and Part D premiums, and that income will be defined by your 2026 income tax return. Note, too, that Medicare premiums are reevaluated each year, based upon your IRS income tax return from two years prior.

FYI, there are advantages to filing your income tax as "married/jointly" vs. married/filing separately and those are best evaluated by your tax advisor. We are not tax advisors here at the AMAC Foundation. And while it's true that the IRMAA thresholds are higher when you file as "married/jointly," it's also true that your total income as a married couple will be used when determining your IRMAA premiums for Medicare. So, once again, it is probably best to consult with a qualified income tax advisor for guidance on whether it is best, financially, for you to change how you file your income tax in 2026, considering that you will be enrolling in Medicare in 2028.

One final thing: If you are still working and have "creditable" healthcare coverage from your employer, "creditable" is a group plan with at least 20 participants, then you can delay enrolling in Medicare until your employer coverage ends thus temporarily avoiding the Medicare premiums. In other words, if you have creditable healthcare coverage from an employer, you don't have to enroll in Medicare immediately at age 65.

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GUEST COLUMN

Christmas decoration trivia

Last week I provided you with a few tips on how to make a simple evergreen swag and wreath. Hopefully you gave it a try.

For this column I thought it would be fun to share some fun facts with you, many of which I just learned today. You see, I will be working with a group of students tomorrow and wanted to have some cool trivia up my sleeve.

I'll be bringing in all the Christmas greens I talked about a week ago and will pass them around to each student: juniper, hemlock, fir, white pine and more materials, including rose hips, pine cones and holly. Read on to see if what I share is new to you, too!

For example, did you know that the Easter White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) is the tallest tree in the northeast? It also goes by the name "the Great Tree of Peace," due to the fact that five Native American tribes formed an alliance under a tall white pine; a neat correlation because the needles that are attached to the twigs are in groups of five.

This tree also has a history of being used to make ship masts, and for awhile the trees were reserved for "the Crown." The great "Pine Tree Riot" was an act of defiance that led up to the American Revolution!

One other point of interest is that pine needles are edible and contain vitamin C.

Other materials that often shows up in Christmas decorations are pine cones. What I learned today is that the correct terminology is to generically call them "cones," since they are only pine cones if they come from a pine tree! Logical point!

The hard cones we use

for decorating are female and their main purpose is to keep the naked seeds inside safe. They will open and close to maintain proper humidity levels. \

Some close so tight that they need the heat of a wild fire to have them open enough to drop their seeds! Cones can stay on a tree up to 10 years without falling off.

The kids will find it funny that dinosaurs even ate pine cones, the *Parasaurolophus*, to be exact! These trees belong to a group of plants called *Gymnosperms*, that have indeed been around since prehistoric times.

Many of our favorite Christmas trees are *Fir trees (Abies spp.)*, with the *Balsam Fir* being one of the most common. Firs have needles that are soft and flat, and attached to twigs one by one, versus the pine that we learned attach in clusters.

An average, it takes about seven years to grow a decent size Christmas tree. According to my research, the first Christmas tree was in Latvia in the year 1510.

By the early 1800's German and Irish immigrants had brought the custom to America but it still took some time for it to catch hold.

Juniper (*Juniperus spp.*) is another evergreen that often makes its way into our Christmas wreaths and arrangements. The species can produce greenery that is either smooth or picky.

One of the biggest draws to using juniper is that it smells nice and often has attractive waxy looking berries along with the foliage. It was interesting to learn that these berries are actually cones.

The seeds are protected well within the tough outer coating and can pass through an animal's digestive tract intact. That way the seeds can be dispersed far and wide - wherever the animal is traveling, I guess!

I've done complete articles on Holly (*Ilex spp.*) before, but I did learn a few new interesting tidbits with this most recent bout of research. The plant has a unique defense mechanism.

Lower foliage is extra spiny to reduce deer from browsing. Upper foliage is not nearly as spiny. There are chemicals in holly berries that make the berries unpalatable to birds and other wildlife at first, but as winter goes on they begin to taste a little better.

Still the birds only eat a few at a time thereby dispersing seeds at various rates and locales. I think all of this is so interesting and so carefully orchestrated to continue the species!

Well, I hope my research has been entertaining, and I do hope that the students enjoy my show and tell tomorrow!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 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.



by Roberta McQuaid

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 in the same section where the error originally occurred.



Country Journal welcomes 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*.

Country Journal TEAM



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EDITORIAL POLICY

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.



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OPINION

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Smooches under the mistletoe

By Deborah Daniels
Guest Columnist

Not getting a Christmas tree this year? Well you may consider putting up some mistletoe, make that a lot of mistletoe to offset your Grinchness for not getting a tree. Of course there are those of us who will take to the woods with a trusty axe to offset the price of a Christmas tree this year.

Mistletoe carries a bigger bang for your buck all together with your reward of a kiss every time you are under it. That is providing that not just your pet will stand under it with you.

Because I know your spouse won't be near it when you are under it. For those of you with less than five years of togetherness, the whole kissing concept is still very attractive to you. For those of you unfamiliar with the custom, you kiss when under the mistletoe.

The folklore behind mistletoe is as follows. Norse mythology tells about a god Loki, who tricked a blind god to kill Loki's twin brother Baldur with an arrow made of mistletoe wood. When he dies the mother Frigga weeps and her tears become mistletoe berries, which evolved to become a symbol of love in Scandinavia. You have to do something to offset those long nights up north. That is the best story you will get about a parasitic plant that is poisonous when we eat it but looks great in a Christmas arrangement.

Mistletoe is a vivid green plant that has white berries and some varieties do have red berries. Washington Irving (Sleepy Hollow author) wrote in 1820 that a kiss is granted under the mistletoe and a berry is plucked each time and once all the



Mistletoe hanger displayed for Christmas in hopes that a tall, dark and handsome specimen will appear.



Mistletoe grows on a tree.



This poster shows the different types of mistletoe.

berries are plucked no more kisses to be had. Even he put a limit on this kissing behavior. It was a Christmas tradition much practiced by servants in the 1800s. Its endurance today is questionable, but it represents a positive spirit of Christmas past.

Mistletoe grows only on the branches of trees such as oaks, maples and pine trees and not on the roots. It takes its nutrients from the tree and because it is up high on the branch it gets more sunlight. It spreads its seeds via birds. Mistletoe seed is surrounded by a berry that birds feed on. When the birds go to the bathroom, the seeds are released. The seeds are sticky so they stick to the bird, requiring the bird to do a little dance to rub the seeds off on a branch. Evolution, ya gotta be impressed with it. Mistletoe is toxic to humans. You may be tempted to let the children snack on the berries but don't. You will never make the nice list if you do.

You can grow mistletoe, but it will take about five years to mature and produce berries. Eventually mistletoe

will kill a tree one branch at a time if enough mistletoe has invaded the tree. In the meantime it does provide food for birds and dense foliage for nesting, all is not doom and gloom. You can't beat those lovely kissing balls made of mistletoe and holly either. The evergreen leaves of mistletoe are a welcome sight among the drab brown of winter.

Mistletoe has been more than a decoration and a reason to share a kiss in the past. It also entertained children during the 1940/50s as the character Uncle Mistletoe, a jolly figure who wore a top hat and red coat. He reminded children to be kind. It was the era when department stores put up posters and storyboards such as the story of the "Night Before Christmas" in their display windows. Uncle Mistletoe was joined by Aunt Holly and the kissing phenomena took off. Winters were long and cold in those days, so a little heat under the mistletoe was therapeutic. Hang some mistletoe and let the fun begin. Happy Holidays.



Kissing balls with red bows decorate this tree.

Turley Publications by Deborah Daniels

News, photo publication policy

As a community newspaper our focus has always been local news. While we try very hard to run upcoming events as a public service whenever space allows, space does not allow us to run an upcoming event repeatedly. Our policy is to limit publication of upcoming events to one article in advance of the event and, space permitting, a second brief reminder article the week prior to an event, and to run those articles in only one section of the paper, and not in multiple sections simultaneously.

All such public service announcements and photos are subject to space limitations and deadlines, therefore publication cannot be guaranteed. Whenever copy for the week exceeds allotted space, news copy will take priority, and public service copy is the first area to be cut. We also reserve the right to edit for style and space, and are under no obligation to print lists of sponsorships, or articles that arrive after deadline, unless time and space allows.

Deadline is Friday at NOON.



Job Connection

HELPING YOU FIND HELP

The Town of Williamsburg, MA, is accepting applications for the position of Town Administrator.

Williamsburg has a population of approximately 2,500 and an annual operating budget of \$10 million.

As the chief administrative officer of the Town, the Town Administrator is appointed by and reports to the Select Board. While working with considerable independence, the Town Administrator performs administrative and supervisory duties; coordinates and supports the activities of departments, commissions, boards, committees, and offices of the Town of Williamsburg; carries out the policies and activities of the Select Board; and serves as a liaison and coordinator among other Town departments and organizations.

A bachelor's degree in public administration, business, or a related field is preferred; three to five years of experience in municipal administration as a Town Administrator or in a related field is preferred; experience in public procurement is preferred; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

The position is Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exempt and fully benefited at 40 hours per week (M-F, 8 AM-4 PM). Friday may be remote or in-office. The position includes a minimum of two evenings per month for Select Board meetings; other night meetings may be required as needed. The salary is commensurate with experience, within the range of \$75,000-\$90,000. A complete job description is available on the Town's website at: <https://www.burgy.org/board-selectmen/pages/employment-applications-opportunities>.

Resumes will be accepted until 01/05/2026. To apply, please submit a resume and a letter of interest to selectmen@burgy.org.

First Congregational Church of Blandford

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

First Congregational Church of Chester

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

First Congregational Church of Williamsburg

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

Hilltown Community Church

Rev. Dr. Robert Perreault
55 Main St., Russell, MA 01071
413-275-3232
Office: 413-862-3341
hilltownchurch3341@gmail.com
Sunday Mornings 10 a.m.

Holy Family Parish

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

CHURCH DIRECTORY



Your Community Church

New Boston Congregational Church

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

Pioneer Valley Assembly of God

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

Pioneer Valley Mennonite Fellowship

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

BLANDFORD

SANTA VISITS FIRE ASSOCIATION BREAKFAST



Children and their parents wait in line to visit with Santa at the pancake breakfast held in Blandford on Saturday, Dec. 6.



Servers are ready to dish up breakfast treats. Organizer Pat Lombardo said the breakfast was "a huge success" with over 100 people enjoying pancakes. *Submitted photos*



Not even sub-zero temperatures could keep hungry pancake diners from the ninth annual Firemen's Association annual pancake breakfast Saturday morning.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOLDS CRAFT FAIR



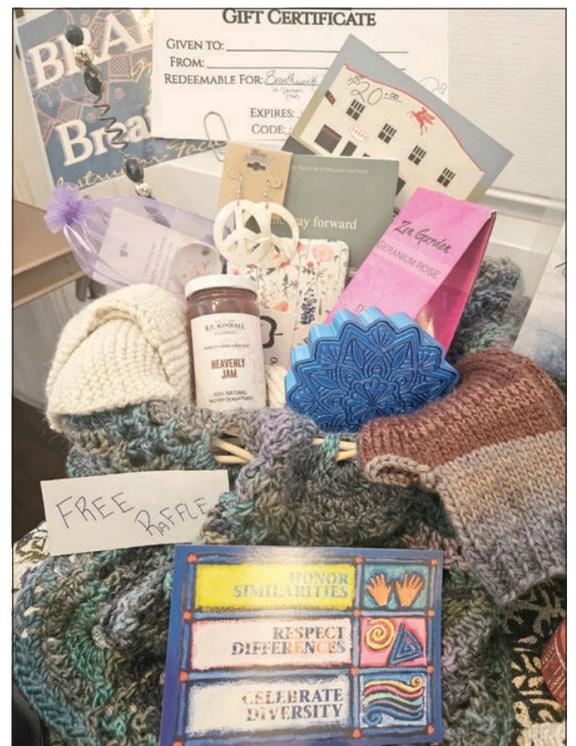
This Christmas tree displays different Christmas ornaments that were for sale at the craft fair.



Bonnie Lemme, Kim Blanchette and Mandy LaBrecque, Three Sisters, aka the Blood sisters, sold ornaments and home décor at the Blandford Historical Society craft fair held this past weekend *Submitted photos*



These trees were some of the Christmas decorations for sale at the Blandford Historical Society.



This was a raffle item at the craft fair this past Saturday, Dec. 6.

WESTFIELD

WRWA hold ugly sweater walk

WESTFIELD — The Westfield River Watershed Association will hold its first ever Westfield River nearly-winter ugly sweater walk on Saturday morning, Dec. 13.

“Don those ugly Christmas/ holiday sweaters and come along with us for a fun, free and informative walk along the Westfield River Esplanade,” says Heather Wyman, board member of the WRWA. Professor Nicholas Aieta, Department Chair of History and Philosophy at Westfield State University, will share some of the City’s unique history during the almost hour-long walk.

Wyman adds, “This is just for fun; we hope that folks of all ages will join in and learn a little more about our fascinating city and one of the rivers that runs through it.”

The walk will begin and end at the Westfield Whip Manufacturing Company. After the walk, participants have the rare opportunity to visit a portion of the Westfield Whip Factory, built in 1886. “This is a unique opportunity,” says Wyman. “It’s the last surviving whip factory in Westfield that is still producing whips.” Carol Martin, founder of Westfield Historic Industries Preservation Project (WHIPP), now a part of Westfield Museum Inc., will be on hand to answer questions afterwards. “To top it all off,” adds Wyman, “we’ll be serving cocoa, coffee, and cookies. We’d love to have you and your friends join us.”

Participants will meet at 11 a.m. at the Westfield Whip Manufacturing Company, 30 Elm St. The best place to park is immediately after the southbound Great

River Bridge on the right or on-street parking is available.

This event is free and open to everyone interested in history, the Westfield River, and fun holiday traditions. “Please register in advance so that we know how many people to expect and to let you know if we are cancelling due to poor weather conditions. We will also post updates on our Facebook page and on our website,” states Wyman. People can sign up by emailing Heather Wyman at Info@WestfieldRiver.Org.

The Westfield River Watershed Association was established in 1953 to protect and improve the natural resources of the watershed, as well as to expand recreational and other land use opportunities for people’s enjoyment and for sound ecology. People may visit westfieldriver.org.

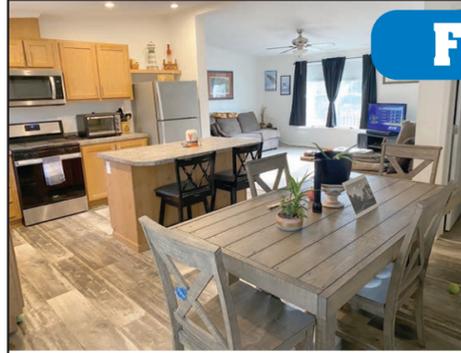
Alzheimer’s Support Group to meet

WESTFIELD — An Alzheimer’s Association Support Group meets at Armbrook Village Senior Living and Memory Support Community, 551 North Road, on Wednesday, Dec.

17 at 6 p.m.

Caregivers and family members are invited to share their personal experiences and strategies for communicating with their loved ones. This month’s group is virtu-

al. People should email their name and phone number to reception@armbrookvillage.com to be added to the Zoom list. Groups are typically held on the last Wednesday of the month.



FIVE ISLANDS

Georgetown, Maine

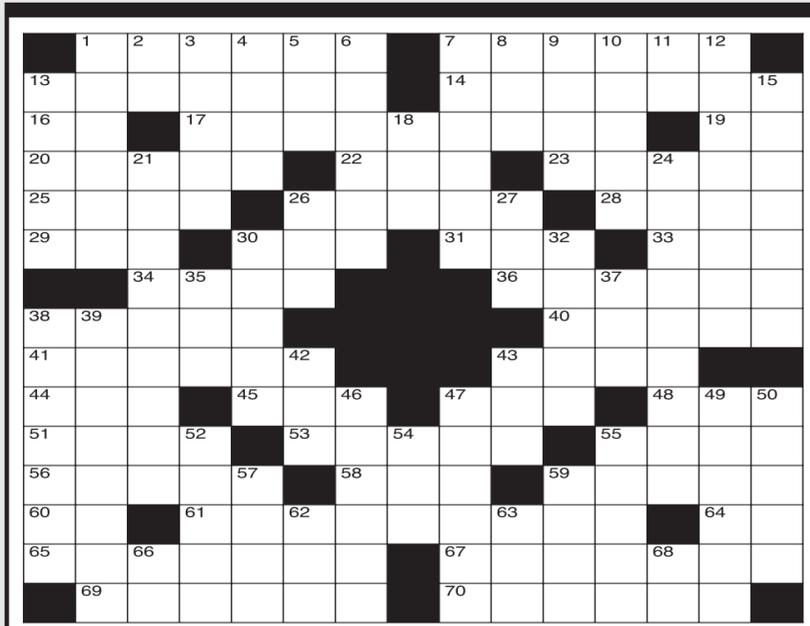
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- Walk to Five Islands Wharf and Ledgewood Preserve Beach
- Close to Reid State Park



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CLUES ACROSS

- Spiritual leaders
- A type of solution
- Fortified wine
- Edible mollusk
- They precede C
- A way to compare
- Government lawyer
- “Game of Thrones” actor Ciaran
- The eighth month (abbr.)
- Very willing
- ___ ex Machina
- Makes happy
- Type of berry
- A doctrine
- Popular Dodge truck model
- Dekagram
- Naturally occurring solid
- Company officer
- Villains
- Cricket frogs
- Influential German

psychologist

- Endured
- A female domestic
- You can get stuck in one
- Cigarette (slang)
- Fiber optics network
- Group of blood disorders (abbr.)
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Belonging to the bottom layer
- Sound
- MLB legend Hank
- Very attractive person
- Late beloved sportscaster Craig
- South Dakota
- Mocking
- Symbol for gold
- Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
- Humor
- Shawl

70. Preliminary patient assessment

CLUES DOWN

- Animal disease
- Commercial
- Necklace material
- Containers
- A way to save for your future
- Colorado Heisman winner Rashaan
- Dipped down
- Head injury (abbr.)
- Lay about
- Intestinal
- Opposite of yes
- Caused to be loved
- Spiritual leader of Islam
- Businesslike
- Not in
- Number above the line in a fraction
- An animal with its own day
- Pouch
- Swedish krona
- Start over
- Field flowers
- Fourteen
- A visual way to interact with a computer
- Up-to-date
- Campaigns
- Touch lightly
- “Boardwalk Empire” actress Gretchen
- Violent seizure of property
- Supporter of the Pope
- Anxiety
- Body fluid
- One who’s faking it
- Title of respect
- Chilean city
- City in central Japan
- Silk garment
- A form of dance
- Automobile
- The man
- Justice Dept. head
- honcho

THIS WEEK’S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, this week is all about momentum. Your boldness helps you break through obstacles like a professional. A surprise opportunity might crop up. Embrace this chance.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Your nurturing side shines through. You might find yourself acting as the go-to person for support or advice. Just be sure to tend to your own needs as well.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, this week is all about harmony and how you can organize things to achieve it. You may be in the mood to connect and collaborate, helping to bring people together.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Hard work pays off in little victories this week, Capricorn. While you love being productive, remember to celebrate every success, even if it is a small one.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

The week starts off slow and steady, but then a sprinkle of excitement is added to your routine. A sweet surprise from a loved one could make your week even better.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, you are ready for action even if everyone else isn’t. They will look to you as a leader, but you probably won’t mind having a few chances to lead over the next several days.

SCORPIO

Oct 23/Nov 22

People may be drawn to your playful and magnetic side this week, Scorpio. Make time for socialization, but don’t hesitate to book some alone time if you think you need it.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

A change of scenery could be good for you, Aquarius. If work had you feeling tired and worn out, book a short trip somewhere to enjoy some much-needed rest and relaxation.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Your social butterfly wings are flapping. Engage in fun conversations with all of the people who come your way. Who knows, even a spontaneous adventure might present itself.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

Clarity and calm are the words of the week for you, Virgo. Those little details that you’ve been puzzling over for a bit finally click into place, leaving you feeling amazing.

SAGITTARIUS

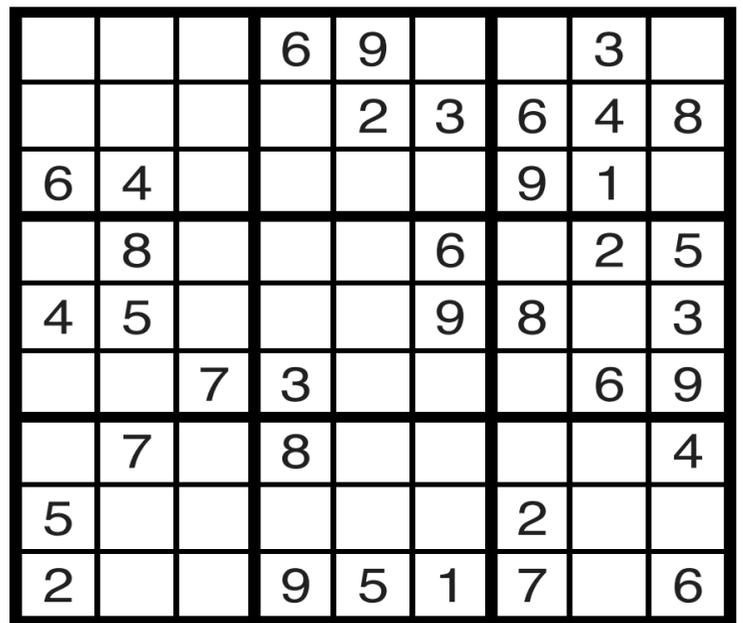
Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, your adventurous side is unstoppable right now. You are still being fueled by discovery and others want to join in the fun. Remember to slow down and recharge.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Don’t brush aside the creative sparks that seem to be popping into your brain one after another, Pisces. Trust your intuition, as it’s guiding you toward fun things ahead.



SUDOKU

Here’s How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you’ll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

answers

9	8	7	1	5	6	4	3	2
1	6	2	7	3	4	8	9	5
4	5	3	2	9	8	1	7	6
9	6	4	5	8	3	7	2	1
3	7	8	6	1	2	9	5	4
5	2	1	9	4	7	6	8	3
2	1	6	8	7	5	3	4	9
8	4	9	3	2	1	5	6	7
7	3	7	4	5	3	7	1	8

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CHESTER



Participants go through the buffet line at the Chester Hill church Thanksgiving dinner.



Friends and neighbors share a Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday, Nov. 27.

Submitted photos



Kris and Ernie Baker go through the dessert line.

Church hosts community Thanksgiving dinner

CHESTER – The First Congregational Church of Chester on Skyline Trail held its first ever community Thanksgiving dinner on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27.

Rick and Cindy Loiselle cooked up the idea of hosting this event at the church a month in advance. The immediate response from the congregation encouraged the event to move forward. Twenty friends and neighbors gathered in the dining hall of the church to celebrate together and give thanks for all of their blessings.

Cindy and Rick Loiselle provided two 20-pound

roasted turkeys. Ernie and Kris Baker brought in their traditional minced venison pie. Others brought dishes of mashed potatoes, green beans, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, homemade rolls and several delicious pies. Following grace, attendees formed a buffet line to fill their plates with home-cooked holiday foods.

Apple cider and sparkling cider added to the festivities. Lively conversation continued into the late afternoon commemorating the true spirit of Thanksgiving. A good time was had by all and it marked a fine start to the holiday season.



Harriet Gilman and Cindy Loiselle enjoy a chat at the First Congregational Church of Chester's Thanksgiving Day gathering.

WORTHINGTON

Parks and Recreation holds movie night

WORTHINGTON – The Parks and Recreation will hold a holiday movie night on Friday, Dec. 19 at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall. People are invited to bring a blanket, enjoy popcorn and hot chocolate while watching "The Polar Express."

WILLIAMSBURG

Library hosts crochet art exhibit

WILLIAMSBURG – The Meekins Library, 2 Williams St., will exhibit crochet coral reef art in the Neil Hammer Gallery at the library now through Tuesday, Dec. 30.

Ricki Carroll, 74 years young, grew up in Englewood New Jersey, went to The Boston Museum School and Tufts University, taught art for grades K-6 and moved to Ashfield in 1975. Carroll stated the New England Cheese Making Supply Company in 1978, gaining the status of "The Cheese Queen" in the process.

Carroll has been snorkeling in the waters off the island of Culebra for 45 years amidst the varieties of living coral. Over the years she has witnessed the death of the reefs, broken and bleached corals and a decline in the number of fish and turtles from her earlier days there.

During COVID, she learned about the "Crochet Coral Reef" project begun by Christine and Margaret Wertheim for the Institute for Figuring, a project responding to Climate Change and the global com-



This is an example of Ricki Carroll's crochet coral reef art, which will be on display at the Meekins Library, Williamsburg now through Tuesday, Dec. 30.

Submitted photo

munity based on applied mathematics and evolutionary theory bringing people together from all over the world, and taught herself how to crochet. Carroll

invites her audience to look and think about what is happening in the world's oceans and consider some of the actions being made to try to save them.

FLORENCE

Florence Community Band holds December concert



NORTHAMPTON – The Florence Community Band will perform on Sunday, Dec. 14 2 p.m. at Northampton High School, 380 Elm St. for a program of winter and holiday favorites.

Priscilla M. Ross is the director. The Northampton High School Jazz Band and the Joyful Chorus will be joining them for the musical celebration. The concert offers free admission. People should bring a non-perishable food item for donation to the Northampton Survival Center.

CHESTERFIELD

Church holds Christmas bake sale

CHESTERFIELD – The Chesterfield Congregational Church, Route 143, will be having its biggest and best Christmas bake sale ever on Tuesday, Dec. 23 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and on Wednesday, Dec. 24 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

There will be a huge array of items including breads, fancy cakes, pies, coffeecakes, cookie and bar platters of various sizes and assortments. In addition, there will be gluten-free cookie boxes.

Bread choices will include sourdough loaves, English muffin, eggnog, and various quick breads. Fancy

cake choices will include cranberry orange, lemon and pecan fruitcake, Irish whiskey Christmas cake, rum cake with pecans, rum/chocolate, mixed berry Bundt cake, orange chocolate and many more.

Pie choices include apple, regular or crumb top, pumpkin, mince, cherry, blueberry, chocolate cream and pecan. Coffeecake choices will be cranberry upside-down and banana sour cream with walnuts or pecans.

Breakfast casseroles choices will include sausage, vegetable, and blueberry French toast. Candy items will include white chocolate

brittle, pecan pralines, fudge and almond roca.

Other individual items include Pfefferneuse, a German cookie; rum walnut balls; oatmeal mincemeat squares; crème de menthe brownies; chocolate whoopee pies; raspberry lemon cheesecake bars; chocolate strawberry trifle cups and jars of sweet n' spicy nuts.

This year will also feature many hand-crafted items as well as locally made honey. This will be a great chance to get all your holiday baked items and gifts by coming early to the bake sale. All proceeds will benefit the church.



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OBITUARIES

Jonathan Sydney Tyminski, 42

Jonathan Sydney Tyminski, born June 11, 1983 passed away on November 30, 2025 in Burlington, MA surrounded by his beloved wife and family.



Jon, as he was affectionately known by many, was a caring, calm, gentle man full of compassion and patience for those who had the privilege of knowing him. He grew up in Montgomery, MA, the youngest of five in a loving, united home. His mother Claire and his father Tom impressed upon him values that he exemplified throughout his life - empathy, kindness and generosity of self. Jon reciprocated his parents love and dedication by being a devoted and loving son. Always proud of his large family, Jon was the little brother everyone wanted. From donning dresses to standing in for school project videos to patiently picking up bows and ribbons at baby showers and weddings, his admiration and love for his siblings meant he was willing to do just about anything for them.

He nostalgically spoke of days in his youth spent at his father's bakery, surrounded by wonderful smells and tastes. His childhood, encircled by nature, made him an avid and knowledgeable outdoorsman - from mountain climbing, fly fishing to kayaking and more, his passion for outdoor sports was only topped by his fascination with how the environment worked. Witnessing him attentively build a bon fire that was lit with one match and lasted 6 hours was just a small sample of the vast skill and knowledge he possessed.

A graduate of Gateway Regional High School, Greenfield Community College (2003) and UMass Amherst (2006), Jon knew so much about the world around him. The important things: the way things work, the way things grow, symbiotic relationships. But he never just told you what he knew. He taught you. He shared all of the knowledge and excitement and answers that he had, and he was never afraid to ask questions.

Meeting Adriana and creating a family with her was one of Jon's proudest achievements. His admiration and respect for her on a personal level - as a partner and wife, as well as a his support of her education and career made him a compassionate, supportive spouse. His love for her was evident in the way his face lit up just at the mention of her name. His world revolved around the people he loved the most. His eyes were the biggest for them.

He was so curious, so humble and incredibly patient. He was only made

up of kindness as was exemplified by the caring and patience he showed towards his daughter Amara, her many cousins and school friends. Always present and aware when speaking with others (especially children), Jon managed what many adults distracted by life cannot, to be in the moment. Before transitioning to full-time work and during Amara's first year, Jon lovingly cared for and nurtured her every need. Jon would not just care for Amara but would take the time to ensure she felt seen, heard and understood. He encouraged her to test out doing things for herself while being lovingly supported. It was such a joy to see them together.

But Jon was not just loved by friends and family. Neighbors, the elderly, strangers, really anyone who needed a helping hand was met by Jon's kind smile, patience and willingness to roll up his sleeves and do the work. From household repairs to caring for those with illnesses that could not care for themselves, Jon faced every challenge with a gentle demeanor and thoughtfulness.

Esteemed by his coworkers, Jon always brought a collaborative and positive disposition to his work. As a Wastewater Treatment Operator/Operations & Maintenance Technician, holding a Massachusetts Grade 2 Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator's License, his dedication to process and doing a job well done often times had him going above and beyond his responsibilities, which he did not only gracefully, but enthusiastically.

Jon is survived by his beloved wife, Adriana, and their daughter, Amara. He is also survived by his mother, Claire, and his father, Tom.

He leaves behind his siblings and their families: Michelle Tyminski and her husband Charles Moore and their children Josie and Finn; Wynne Sarran and her children Nicholas and Sydney; TJ Tyminski and his wife Danika Tyminski and their children Jacobia and Gunnar; and Monique Tyminski and her husband Eric Matthews and their children Violetta and Nixon.

His laugh, it was such a joy. He laughed with his entire body. He will be greatly missed.

Calling hours will be held on Sunday, Dec. 14 from 1-4 p.m. at Firtion-Adams Funeral Service, 76 Broad St. A Mass will be held on Monday, Dec. 15 at 11 a.m. in Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church, 127 Holyoke Road, Westfield. Burial will be private. FirtionAdams.com.

Kathryn "Kathy" Ann Gawle (O'Brien), 69

Kathryn "Kathy" Ann Gawle (O'Brien), 69, of Huntington, peacefully passed away in her home surrounded by loved ones on Nov. 27, 2025, after a courageous two-year battle with cancer.



Kathy was born on Nov. 4, 1956, in East Orange, New Jersey and was raised in a loving family with her parents, Raymond and Eleanor "Ruth" O'Brien; her brother, Micheal and sister, Maureen. Kathy spent her childhood in Port Huron, Michigan before moving to Greenfield in 1970, where she graduated from Greenfield High School in 1974.

After graduation, Kathy began a fulfilling career as a banker for Northampton National Bank & Trust. After a decade working in local banking, Kathy switched careers and was hired by Young Roofing Company in Northampton, where she thrived as a roofer and sheet-metal mechanic for 29 years.

In 1991, Kathy met the love of her life, Dennis Gawle, on a blind date at a Jack-and-Jill where they immediately hit it off. They shared countless moments and memories, camped often and spent their time being the life of the party wherever they ventured. April 18, 1994, Kathy gave birth to her only child, Cody Gawle and on July 15, 1995, Dennis and Kathy got married on a beautiful sunny afternoon at Maplerest Farm in Easthampton. Despite a microburst on the morning of July 15, family and friends united to make their wedding day unforgettable.

Kathy devoted her life to being a loving mother, wife, sister, friend and coworker. Her home radiated warmth and embraced all who entered with an abundance of love and laughter. In her free time, Kathy enjoyed caring for her pets, reading, cooking, lounging by the pool, gardening, snowmobiling, making Christmas wreaths or simply enjoying television (General Hospital, NCIS, Outer Banks, Impractical Jokers, Family Feud, and the news.

During Cody's child-

hood, Kathy played a supportive role for his soccer team and became known as the team mom. The team mom accolade was well deserved as

it symbolized her loving nature towards the team and its families. Kathy never missed a game and when Cody entered high school soccer, she contributed by regularly volunteering to work in the gator shack, the concession stand at Gateway Regional High School. Kathy and Dennis were members of the Chesterfield 4 Seasons Snowmobile Club. Kathy was the club secretary and part-time bartender for club events. In 2020, Kathy was awarded the title of Snowmobiling Legend from the Hampshire County Legends of Snowmobiling for her contributions and dedication to the sport.

Kathy had a gift for finding and spreading love and joy everywhere she was present and if you asked her, no time was a bad time for a White Russian. Kathy will always be cherished for her warmth, kindness, contagious laughter, loving demeanor and the way she effortlessly made everyone feel embraced and special.

Kathy was predeceased by her father, Raymond O'Brien, her mother, Ruth O'Brien and nephew, Tommy Moszynski. She is survived by her husband, Dennis Gawle and their son, Cody Gawle, along with their pets G and Slate. Kathy is survived on the O'Brien side by her brother Micheal O'Brien and wife Charlene O'Brien, her sister Maureen O'Brien and three nephews, T.J. O'Brien, Spencer O'Brien and Chase O'Brien. Kathy is survived on the Gawle side by Cathy Young and husband Mark Young, Jan Barrett and husband Craig Barrett and her nephews and nieces, Dan Young, Timmy Young and wife Dawn Young and Pete Moszynski. Kathy is also survived by her grand nephews and grand nieces, Olivia Young, Georgia Young, Casey Young, Jaqueline Young, T.J. Young, Liam Young and her lifelong friend Caroline Abrecrombie.

DEATH NOTICES

GAWLE, KATHRYN "KATHY" ANN

Date of death Nov. 27, 2025

TYMINSKI, JONATHAN SYDNEY

Date of Death Nov. 30, 2025
Calling hours Dec. 14 from 1-4 p.m.
FirtionAdams Funeral Service, Westfield
Mass Dec. 15 at 11 a.m.
Our Lady of Blessed Sacrament, Westfield
Burial will be private.

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 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.

BUCKLAND

Historical Society 2026 calendar available for purchase

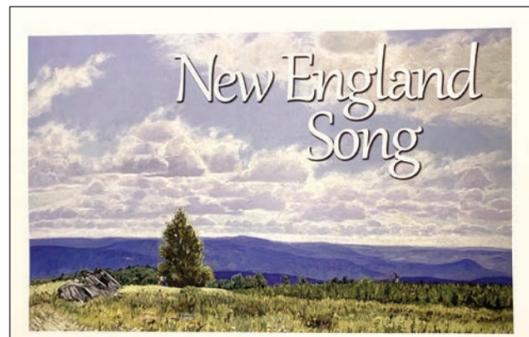
BUCKLAND - The Buckland Historical Society's beautiful, full color, 2026 Calendar of Robert Strong Woodward's oil paintings and pastels, entitled, "New England Song," is now available.

This year's calendar has 10 never-before-used paintings. There are seven oils and five pastels, each ideally representing their month. Its theme is based on Robert Strong Woodward's appreciation for music. This year's calendar is as broad a spectrum of Woodward's favorite subjects we have ever published.

Trees lead the bunch with five featured prominently, including an apple tree in bloom, a maple

with red buckets, the beech tree in Heath and an elm in Old Deerfield. There are three houses, one farm, and perhaps Woodward's finest window painting. There are two featured mountains, Purinton Hill in Buckland with the Deerfield River in the foreground, and Mt. Equinox in Manchester, Vermont and finally, four high pastures overlooking rolling hills in the distance.

For \$20, people can purchase this calendar at Andy's Oak Shop in Greenfield, Nancy Dole's Books and Ephemera in Shelburne Falls on the Buckland side, Buckland Public Library in Buckland Center or online at www.BucklandMassHistory.org.



New England paintings by Robert Strong Woodward (1885 - 1957)
The 2026 Buckland Historical Society Calendar

This is the cover of the 2026 Buckland Historical Society calendar. *Submitted photo*

CHECK OUT ALL THE

Turley Publications

www.turley.com

EARLY DEADLINE

In observance of **NEW YEAR'S** for Dec. 29-Jan. 2 newspapers there will be an **EARLY CLASSIFIEDS DEADLINE!** Place your advertisement no later than

Thurs., Dec. 26 at 3 p.m.

A TURLEY PUBLICATION

24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069 • 413-283-8393 • www.turley.com

EARLY DEADLINES FOR ADS & LEGAL NOTICES

New Year's will bring early deadlines for all ads & legal notices to run in TURLEY PUBLICATIONS the week of Dec. 29, 2025 - Jan. 2, 2026:

Friday, December 26 at 2 PM for January 1 issue

- Country Journal • The Register • Wilbraham-Hampden Times • Agawam Advertiser News

Monday, December 29 at 2 PM for January 1 issue

- Sentinel • The Journal Register • Ware River News • Barre Gazette

Tuesday, December 30 at 2 PM for January 2 issue

- Quaboag Current • Town Reminder • The Holyoke Sun • Chicopee Register

TURLEY PUBLICATIONS
24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
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Call us at 413.283.8393

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FIREWOOD

DRYFIREWOOD Oak/maple, cu/split/ delivered, \$300 a cord, \$285 for 2 or more. Edwin Wroblewski Logging, 413-824-0731. *Buying standing timber, paying good money.*

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Seasoned cut & split \$325.00
All hardwood.
Tree length available
*Also have seasoned softwood for outdoor boilers (Cheap).
Quality & volumes **guaranteed!!**
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(413)477-0083

MORE HEAT LESS WOOD. Central Boiler Classic Edge HDX Outdoor Wood Furnace. EPA Certified. Titanium Stainless Steel. \$2K Tax Credit. Call (508)882-0178

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WANTED TO BUY

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BUYING Bottles, Crocks, Jugs, Pottery, Costume Jewelry, Toys, Games, coins, sterling, Glassware, Silver-plated items, watches, Musical instruments, typewriters, sewing machines, tools, radios, clocks, lanterns, lamps, kitchenware, cookware, knives, military, automotive, fire department, masonic, license plates, beer cans, barware, books, oil cans, advertising tins, hunting, fishing, signs, and more.

Donald Roy (860) 874-8396

ALWAYS BUYING ALL ANTIQUES:

Musical instruments, guitars, horns, keyboards, vintage electronics, jewelry, coins, watches, military cameras, sports memorabilia, art, sterling signs, automotive, hunting, advertising, radios, ham radio equipment, audio equipment, toys, one item or entire estate.

Call Paul 413-206-8688.

SWIFT RIVER SUPPLY

We buy guns.
Federal and state license.

413-658-5690.

Classified Advertising

DEADLINE

FRIDAY AT NOON

JUNK REMOVAL

A Call We Haul FAST REMOVAL
Junk, Appliance, Cleanouts.
We load it & take it.
413-531-1936
CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED

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A B Hauling and Removal Service

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Cellars, attics, garages cleaned, yard debris. Barns & sheds demolished. Swimming pools removed. Cheaper than dumpster fees and we do all the work. Lowest rates. Fully insured. (413)283-6512, cell (413)222-8868.

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PJ's Electrical MASTER ELECTRICIAN
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Fully licensed and insured; Master Electrician on staff. Call for all your electrical needs. No job too small. Senior citizen and Veteran Discount. A veteran owned company. MA License #8101A1. Call John at (413) 206-6509. *Every customer gets a free gem stone.*

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Residential/Commercial
Fully Insured • Free Estimates
413-351-1147

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NRA Certified Basic Pistol Course with Live Fire for License to Carry permit \$140. Matt Marcinkiewicz muscione@hotmail.com 413-537-0620

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(413) 687-5552

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Fast, dependable service. Free estimates. Fully insured. Call Joe Sablack 413-436-9821, Cell 413-537-7994

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NEIGHBORLY CLEANING & CARE is looking for mature, responsible adults with own transportation, experience and references for a housekeeping position. Hours 7:30- 2:30. Call Nancy today (413)267-4297 or (413) 544-0864.

Read your local newspaper online at www.newspapers.turley.com

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FOR RENT

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ALL REAL ESTATE advertised herein is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation, or discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination." We will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. All persons are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised are available on an equal opportunity basis.

QUAINT WEST BROOKFIELD BROOKHAVEN LAKE by babbling brook, I-shaped 2bdm. ranch, 2/1/2 baths, finished basement, walkout slider, enclosed front porch. Enjoy nature trails, very quiet private area. \$2850/monthly rental fee. Bernice Stone 774-262-6667.

FOR RENT

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.

Post your job openings in our classifieds. **WE GET RESULTS!** Call 1-413-283-8393

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MAIL TO: Classifieds, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069 DEADLINES: **FRIDAY AT NOON**
or call: 413-283-8393

CATEGORY:			
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
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
37	Base Price \$34.50	38	Base Price \$35.00
39	Base Price \$35.50	40	Base Price \$36.00

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____
Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Number of Weeks: _____ X per week rate = \$ _____
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Card #: _____ Exp. Date _____ CVV _____
Amount of charge: _____ Date: _____

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Suburban Residential
Circulation: 59,000

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Grand views from Prospect Hill in Chester looking over the Westfield River Valley.



Jim Moore stand in the mine main opening.

Submitted photos

Hikers visit quartz quarries

CHESTER – All of the quartz mined in Chester occurs in igneous formations known as hydrothermal veins.

This type of vein is formed by a hot, watery solution into the surrounding rock, usually into a pre-existent crack. Hydrothermal veins often contain valuable minerals, including gold. The old time gold miners often searched for quartz outcroppings in the hills hoping to strike gold.

The veins quarried for quartz in Chester, however, are pure quartz. There are several quartz quarries in



People can see the slot where a timber fit in to reinforce the mine shaft entrance.

Chester one off Round Hill Road, one in Chester center, Black Pool Quarry and here on Prospect Hill high above the Chester Granite and Polishing Works. The pure white rock was brought down the mountain on sleds using pulleys ending up just about where the Granite Saw parking lot is on Emery

Street where team moved it to the finishing mill on Walker Brook.

The Prospect Hill quarry was mined in the latter half of the nineteenth century by James Keefe. The quartz was processed in his mill near the junction of Walker Brook and the West Branch. This mill had a bad

reputation among old timers in town. It is said that a man would work six months in this mill and then drop from silicosis caused by inhaling quartz dust. The quartz was used for, among other things, glass-making, watches and as a lining for kilns. These hills are rich with minerals.



A beautiful piece of quartz found on the run where quartz was brought down the mountain to Emery Street on sleds with pulleys.

PUBLIC NOTICES

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD25P1366EA
Chester E Danek
Also known as:
Chester E Danek, Jr.
Date of Death: 04/07/2025
CITATION ON PETITION
FOR SALE OF
REAL ESTATE BY A
PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVE**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Sale of Real Estate has been filed by: **Frances H Couture of Mooresville, NC** requesting that the court authorize the Personal Representative to sell the decedent's real estate at a private sale.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/17/2025.

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

Witness, **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: November 14, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
12/11/2025

**TOWN OF MIDDLEFIELD
PLAYGROUND
EQUIPMENT AND
INSTALLATION PROJECT
REQUEST FOR BIDS**

The Town of Middlefield is seeking Bids for the purchase and installation of a new play-

ground system for ages 5 through 12 years of age by a Contractor in the center of Middlefield at 172 Skyline Trail adjacent to the Middlefield Senior Center. The Town is also requesting the Contractor to furnish and install required playground border timbers and stakes shown for existing swing sets and Monkey Bar Area. Measurements of the areas to receive the timbers are in the Bid Documents. The Contractor will also be responsible for providing and installing a new geodesic cloth barrier to cover all areas to receive safety barrier fill by others. All new and existing areas will be prepared by others for the installation of the border timbers by the successful Bidder. Safety filling of each area will also be provided and installed by others. The plan calls for the use of approved rounded wood chip bark mulch per the state required depth. The successful playground contractor shall provide at least a one-year warranty on all parts and labor. Extended warranties are welcomed.

Bid documents will be available starting on Monday December 1, 2025, and will be available until 2:00 P.M. on December 22, 2025. Bids documents can be requested by contacting the Town of Middlefield Administrative Assistant Mark Doane at middlefieldassistant@gmail.com or by calling the Middlefield Town Hall at 413-623-2079 ext. 2. Bids can also be picked up from the Middlefield Administrative Assistant Office located in the Select Board Office 188 Skyline Trail Middlefield, MA 01243 on Mondays from 1:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. and Wednesdays from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. The Select Board Office is located in the Town Hall, 188 Skyline Trail Middlefield, MA 01243. There is no cost for Bid Documents. It is suggested that Bidders view the site of the new playground system which will be constructed on the site of the existing playground adjacent to the Middlefield Senior Center located at 172 Skyline Trail in Middlefield, MA. All Bids must be received by the Middlefield Administrative Assistant no later than Monday December 22, 2025, at 2:00P.M.

All bids must be delivered to the Town Administrative Assistant's Office located in the Middlefield Town Hall 188 Skyline Trail Middlefield, MA 01243 in sealed envelopes with Playground System Bid printed on the envelope by 2:00 P.M. on December 22, 2025. No Bids will be accepted after that time and date. Bids will be opened immediately after the close of Bidding at 2:05 P.M. in the Middlefield Town Hall. The project will be awarded immediately after Bids are opened and the project shall begin when weather conditions and site preparations are completed. All work in this Bid shall be completed no later than April 24, 2026.

Note: Massachusetts Prevailing Rates are required to be paid on this project. Questions can be directed to Ann Marie Visconti Chair, Middlefield Select Board by calling 413-623-2079, 413-433-2729, or by email: middlefield.amv@gmail.com.
12/04, 12/11/2025

**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
Central Massachusetts
Division
10 Mechanic Street, Suite 301
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 792-7600
(508) 795-1991
www.mass.gov/ago
ANDREA JOY CAMPBELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL
October 14, 2025
Suzanne C. Lemieux,
Town Clerk
P.O. Box 265
Middlefield, MA 01243
Re: Middlefield Annual Town Meeting of May 3, 2025 -
Case # 11996
Warrant Articles # 32 and 33
(General)**

Dear Ms. Lemieux:
Article 32 - We approve Article 32 from the May 3, 2025 Middlefield Annual Town Meeting.

Article 33 - We take no action on Article 33 because it is not a by-law amendment and is therefore not subject to the Attorney General's review and approval under G.L. c. 40 32. Under Arti-

cle 33 the Town voted "to establish a 'strong' fire chief statute [under]...MGL Chapter 48, Section[s] 42, 43, and 44." General Laws Chapter 48, Section 42 provides in relevant part:

Towns accepting the provisions of this section and sections forty-three and forty-four, or which have accepted corresponding provisions of earlier laws may establish a fire department to be under the control of an officer to be known as the chief of the fire department. The chief shall be appointed by the selectmen, and shall receive such salary as the selectmen may from time to time determine, not exceeding in the aggregate the amount annually appropriated therefor. He may be removed for cause by the selectmen at any time after a hearing. He shall have charge of extinguishing fires in the town and the protection of life and property in case of fire. He shall purchase subject to the approval of the selectmen and keep in repair all property and apparatus used for and by the fire department. He shall have and exercise all the powers and discharge all the duties conferred or imposed by statute upon engineers in towns except as herein provided, and shall appoint a deputy chief and such officers and firemen as he may think necessary, and may remove the same at any time for cause and after a hearing. He shall have full and absolute authority in the administration of the department, shall make all rules and regulations for its operation, shall report to the selectmen from time to time as they may require, and shall annually report to the town the condition of the department with his recommendations thereon; he shall fix the compensation of the permanent and call members of the fire department subject to the approval of the selectmen. In the expenditure of money the chief shall be subject to such further limitations as the town may from time to time prescribe. The appointment of the chief of the fire department in any town or district having a population of five thousand or less may be for a period of three years.

Because Article 33 is a vote to accept a local option statute, and not a by-law, it is not subject to

the Attorney General's review and approval. For that reason, we take no action on Article 33. However, votes to accept statutes are supposed to be filed with the Secretary of State's Office and if the vote involves a financial matter, with the Department of Revenue/Division of local Services as well. The Town should consult with Town Counsel with any questions on this issue.

Note: Pursuant to G.L. c. 40, § 32, neither general nor zoning by-laws take effect unless the town has first satisfied the

posting/publishing requirements of that statute.

Very truly yours,
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12/04, 12/11/2025

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Principal Gazda rewards students for successful food drive

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

CHESTER – “Why did the Principal agree to be taped to the wall?”

Dr. Todd Gazda asked his students at Chester Elementary School on Friday, Dec. 5. The answer? “He wanted to hang out with his students.”

That week’s “Friday funny” brought appreciative laughter from his students, because at that moment Gazda was quite literally taped to the wall of the school’s cafeteria. Originally, Gazda had promised students an extra recess if they met the school’s goal of collecting 200 items for the food pantry at the Pioneer Valley Assembly of God Church. Students quickly earned the extra recess and Gazda knew he had to up the ante to keep the students collecting through the entire time-frame so he told them if they reached 375 items they could tape him to the wall of the cafeteria. The day before the Thanksgiving break, students had brought in 540 items, crushing both goals.

The excitement was palpable as students arrived in their gym at 2 p.m. “We’re gonna duct tape the Principal to the wall,” 10 year-old Logan S. from Chester said, when asked why everybody was so excited.

Before the big event of taping the principal, the Media Club presented their video about Chester Elementary School. Their teacher explained to the school that the project had involved choosing a topic, researching it, conducting interviews, writing and practicing a script, recording the video, editing it, and adding in animations. In their video, students reported that Chester Elementary School used to be in an old, small building and didn’t even have WiFi. Dr. Gazda had attended that school as a child. Their new school was built in



Fifth grader Blake S. received a Superhero Cape award during Chester Elementary School’s Dec. 5 assembly. A student from each grade received an award for positive traits like kindness, respect, and helpfulness.

2003 and was a better place for kids to learn. They also acknowledged their beautiful playscape, which went up in 2024.

Teacher Heather Cabral then talked about the four traits of Chester Elementary School students: respect, responsibility, kindness and safety. Superhero Cape winners were announced, with a reminder that not everyone can win, that students were expected to be good sports and encouraged to be happy for their friends. Receiving a superhero cape and mask for the remainder of the assembly were Haidar S. (K), Chloe S. (Grade 1); Luke T. (2); Tuyuba S. (3), Maddy S. (4) and Blake S. (5). Their nominations featured words like kind, polite, helpful, welcoming and respectful.

Cabral then announced

that the focus for December would be safety, and reviewed the rules of playground safety during the winter months. Students who want to slide on the hill on school grounds must be wearing snow wear and must go down the hill feet first. At this point, Gazda announced that the school would soon acquire enough sleds for everyone to use during winter recess, which was met with tremendous applause.

From there students moved over to the cafeteria and began the long process of taping their principal to the wall. Standing on a couple of milk crates, Gazda began to disappear as teams of two students began taping him to the wall with long strips of colorful duct tape. After over 30 minutes of moving through the process, staff



Airborne, Chester Elementary students taped Dr. Todd Gazda, Principal of Chester Elementary School, to the wall of the school’s cafeteria. The moment of truth occurred when staff removed the milk crates he had been standing on and he remained in place on the wall.

added a couple of extra tapes for good measure. In the spirit of safety month, his arms were kept free and gym mats were placed on the floor in front of him in case the tape did not hold.

Finally it was time to remove the milk stands and see if Gazda would remain in

place. He did.

After a few minutes of hanging in place, Gazda peeled himself off of the wall and congratulated the students on their successful food drive. He stressed the importance of what their service would mean to families in need this season.

Later, Gazda noted that the day had obviously been important to the students. Other than three children who were away on a family vacation, only two students of the remaining 121 were absent, giving them a 98% attendance rate for the day.

HCC lists fall 2025 graduates

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College announces graduates at the end of the fall 2025 semester.

The college held a fall graduate reception for members of the Class of 2026 on Monday, Dec. 1, in the college’s Leslie Phillips Theater. They will also be invited to participate in HCC’s 79th Commencement exercises at the MassMutual Center in Springfield on May 30, 2026.

Local graduates include: Gavin Downer of Easthampton, Jeremiasz Galicki of Easthampton, Stien Kusuma of Easthampton, Kyle Thoma of Easthampton, Oliver King of Florence, Megan Tierney of Florence, Teagan Andross of Haydenville, Sarah Belote of Northampton, Ryan Gould of Northampton, Ted Guglielmo of Northampton, Beatrice Parent of Northampton, Brie Wilber of Northampton, Nallely Maria Abreu Garcia Pittsfield, Ruby Chicoine of Russell, Jessa Craig of Southamton, Emerson Folta of Southamton, Liam Packey of Southamton, Damien Pearson of Southamton, Laila Skawski of Southamton, Britny Bonilla of Westfield, Amanda Dupelle of Westfield, Isek Flaherty of Westfield, Salma Haleemdeen of Westfield, Grace Hanagan of Westfield, Tahjae Hernandez of Westfield, Olivia Irving of Westfield, Cole Jasmin of Westfield, Shannon Lyman of Westfield, Solimar Navarro Nunez of Westfield, Gabriella Rivera of Westfield, Noah Rivera of Westfield, David Santiago of Westfield, Courtney St. Peter of Westfield and Liv Florek of Westhampton.

Hampshire Regional High team takes third place

SPRINGFIELD – Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts celebrated the success of its 20th Annual Stock Market Challenge, held on Tuesday, Nov. 18, at its new home at Western New England University.

The milestone event brought together hundreds of students, local sponsors and volunteers for an exciting day of hands-on financial education and friendly competition. More than 375 middle and high school students from 16 schools across the region participated in the fast-paced Wall Street simulation, testing their teamwork and decision-making skills as they raced to build the highest portfolio value. Each team started with a virtual \$1 million to invest in more than 50 fictitious stocks, with trading “days” lasting just 60 seconds.

By the final bell, Putnam Vocational Technical Academy’s “Hearts Sold Separately” claimed first place in the student competition, with the “Four Musketeers,” also from Putnam Vocational Technical Academy and third place to HRHS Broker Bros” from Hampshire Regional High School.

The adult evening session saw the team from MassMutual take the top spot in the corporate challenge and a team from Western New England University lead the collegiate group. Other runners up included Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company, Country Bank and Florence Bank.

“This year’s event was especially meaningful

as we celebrated 20 years of empowering students to learn about investing and financial literacy in such a fun, engaging way,” said Amie Miarecki, JAWM president. “Seeing the excitement on students’ faces as they strategized, collaborated and competed reminds us why this event is so impactful.”

The Stock Market Challenge would not be possible without the support of generous sponsors and dedicated volunteers. This year’s presenting

sponsor was St. Germain Investment Management, with NBT Bank, Holyoke Credit Union, Country Bank, Health New England and Western New England University serving as gold sponsors. Additional sponsors included Elms College, Balise Motor Sales, and Westfield Gas and Electric among others.

Since its founding, the event has introduced thousands of students to the fundamentals of investing, financial decision-making and teamwork, while also

building awareness of career opportunities in finance and business.

Junior Achievement Worldwide is the world’s largest organization dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to own their economic success, plan for their future and make smart academic and economic choices. JA learning experiences are delivered by educators and community volunteers and provide relevant, hands-on experiences that give students ages 5

through 25 knowledge and skills in financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship. JA was founded in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1919, making Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts the organization’s first chapter. Today, it serves thousands of young people in Western Massachusetts and parts of Worcester County and Vermont who participate in JAWM learning experiences annually. For more information, people may visit jawm.org.



The team HRHS Broker Bros. from Hampshire Regional High School of Westhampton took third place. The team are from left, Ismael Jeffords, Connor Perkins, Jaymes Goddard, Damian Pasiut, Ethan Neylon, Amie Miarecki and Terrell Joyner.

Submitted photo