

"You can not shake hands with a clenched fist," – Indira Gandhi

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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BLANDFORD

Church requests to move their sign

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Three Deacons from the First Congregational Church of Blandford approached the Select Board at Monday night's meeting to see about changing the location of the sign in front of the Main Street Chapel.

Anne Emo-Savery, Sean Oclair and Steve Hart asked about the process for moving the Church's information sign 40 feet from the building and ten feet to the left of its current location so as to be more visible.

SIGN, page 10

Russell Police STOP the Grinch from stealing Christmas at toy drive



The Russell Police Department held a toy drive last weekend to benefit the local Salvation Army. Shown from left are Lieutenant Sean Shattuck, Chief Kevin Hennessey, the Grinch and Officer Cameron Hess.
Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel

HUNTINGTON

Select Board approves pole location

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Representatives from NSTAR Electric Company, doing business as Eversource Energy and Verizon New England were present at the Dec. 4 Select Board meeting for a public hearing on a new, shared utility pole proposed for the area of 3 Laurel Road.

Desirae Dodge from NSTAR and Matthew Pronovost from TRC Companies, Inc. (an engineering firm), Acting Chair Bill Hathaway, Select Board member John McVeigh and Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin attended. Also present was one of the abutters, Linda Hamlin, who came in response to a postcard that announced the hearing, but not the reason for it.

The hearing was required under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 166, Section 22. Proposed is a mid-span pole that breaks up long distances between two existing poles, with the intent of preventing low hanging wires. Hamlin was concerned that other neighbors did not attend, possibly due to the lack of information on the postcard. Representatives agreed to communicate with them either in person or by letter. The request was unanimously approved.

Outdoor pavilion

Gateway Superintendent Kristen Smidy was next on the agenda, to discuss pursuing a grant to build an outdoor pavilion on Gateway grounds. Littleville is currently at full capacity for holding public events indoors. Gateway would propose building a pavilion similar in size to the one they've rented at Strathmore Park, which could be used for any number of school and community events. Smidy is looking at a Community Planning Grant that would require a 10% match, which she said could be met by monies from the district's Barr Foundation Grant, which are earmarked for community events.

During the discussion, McVeigh found an efficiency regionalization grant, which might provide up to \$200,000 for such a project if multiple towns partnered on the application. The Select board approved Smidy pursuing both funding opportunities, and coming back to the Select board (and

SELECT BOARD, page 3

RUSSELL

Strathmore Mill demolition on Select Board agenda

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

On Tuesday, Dec. 17, the demolition of the historic Strathmore Mill #1 in Russell will be on the select board agenda with mill owner Donald Voudren, Jr.'s presence requested.

At a heated special meeting of the Select Board with Voudren on Nov. 22 the town police and the Russell Building Inspector Jason Forgue confronted Voudren about how he would safely and timely demolish the building.

On Nov. 11, one por-

tion of the mill building collapsed with seven workers inside. Three were injured, two critically and one was life flighted out by helicopter. No supervisor had been present on the scene at the time of the collapse, according to police, and neighbors had been concerned about safety issues for weeks prior to the incident.

At the Nov. 22 meeting Voudren objected to the entire building being declared condemned by the Building Inspector. He said that there was no danger in the part of the building that had not collapsed. Strathmore Mill #1 has been abandoned since 1999.

Since that meeting, the south portion of the building near the access to Eagle Creek Renewable Energy has been secured with fencing, which was a request of the town. When contacted, Building Inspector Forgue said: "The emergency order notice from the DEP is still

in effect and it was confirmed it can be extended. [We are] still waiting permit application for the demolition. The clock has run out and fines are accruing daily. To my knowledge the Select Board is planning to vote at the next meeting to allocate funds for the demolition if the town needs to move forward. I do not have a budget for such a move and cannot do so until I know there are funds for it."

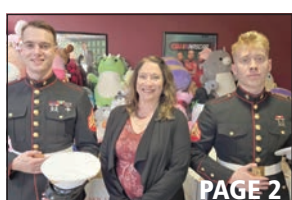
Select board Chair Tom Kulig says, "The town really wants the building down so we can open the [Woronoco] road. It depends on Voudren's response how we proceed."

A Russell town official had little faith that Voudren's plan for a condo development would come to fruition. Voudren submitted a proposed concept image to the town. The town official said: "He never had a con-

STRATHMORE, page 6



The south side of Strathmore Mill #1 has now been secured by fencing. On Tuesday, Dec. 17 the Russell Select Board will discuss status of demolition with mill owner Donald Voudren, Sr. of Huntington.
Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel



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HILLTOWNS

Hilltown Holiday Rocks – it's a cookie

Note: As part of the holiday season, Country Journal correspondents are featuring some of their favorite recipes.

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

For this recipe I did a riff on a recipe by Maida Heatter.

To my mind she wrote the best ever book on cookies. I used my mother's copy of "Book of Great Cookies" when I was a child and learned all the principles that really impact baking: using eggs and butter that are at room temperature, sifting the dry ingredients and measuring precisely.

A "rock" is a name for an old fashioned cookie that is cake-like in texture. I'm sure you can guess why I picked rocks for a Hilltown cookie. These are cookies for people who want something a little more sophisticated and healthier than a sugar cookie. They are great for the holidays as you get the flavor of cranberry and pumpkin.

A not so big secret: Libby's canned pumpkin is not pumpkin. It's butternut squash. Pumpkin is too inconsistent in flavor and water content. Knowing that, I broke into my ridiculous excess of honeynut squashes from this summer's garden and roasted a few up (400 degrees, cut side down, brushed with olive oil) till

the skins blister and you smell them caramelizing. I then mashed the insides and let them cool before proceeding.

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups flour
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp powdered cloves
1/4 tsp allspice
1 stick of butter (1/2 cup)
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
2 eggs, room temp
1 3/4 cup winter squash – use canned "pumpkin" or roast your own butternut or honeynut.
1 cup dried cranberries
1 cup walnuts or pecans – or leave them out

Directions

Set oven to 375 and spread out the baking racks, one to the bottom third of the oven, the other to the top. I use the convection setting. If you do not have this, simply check during baking to see they are browning evenly and rotate the sheets.

Sift the dry ingredients into a bowl and set aside. If you do not have a sifter, just use a clean, dry mesh strainer.

Cream together the butter and the sugar in a stand mixer (my preference, but a hand mixer is fine as well) for 2 minutes or until it is fluffy looking.

Add the two eggs and beat well.

Add the squash just till blended. It may look curdled, that's fine.

Slowly incorporate the dry ingredients until the dough comes together. It will look very wet compared to most cookie doughs. The great thing is that you do not have to refrigerate before baking.



These cookies have a lemon glaze.

Turley photos by Kathryn Koegel

Immediately place rounded teaspoonful dabs onto a cookie sheet, 12 - 15 to a sheet depending on the size. I always use parchment paper rather than greasing the pans as cleanup is so much easier. Leave more than an inch between each as they rise and spread.

Bake for approximately 18 minutes until the sides are browning lightly. Do not overbake.

Cool fully on wire racks if you have them, or just carefully slide the parchment paper with the cookies off. You do not want them to keep baking if left on the hot sheets.

While they are cooling make the glaze.

The Glaze

2 TBSP butter, softened
Finely grated peel of one lemon – the yellow part only
Juice of that one lemon
1 TBSP milk
1 1/2 cup powdered sugar
Combine the above with a mixer and blend until smooth with no lumps.

Take the back of a spoon or use a pastry brush and paint the tops of the cookies with the glaze

Let the glaze harden and serve. These are moist, cakey cookies that keep well in airtight tins.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE SEEKS VOLUNTEERS



Lisa Goding, executive director for It Takes a Village in Huntington meets up with from left, Marine Sargent Kyle Sinclair and Corporal Seth Anderson, who are stationed at Westover Air Reserve Base. The Marines operate Toys for Tots and It Takes a Village is one of the recipients of the program. Next week toys will be distributed to Hilltown families, who have expressed need. The organization still needs volunteers to help sort toys and coats to be distributed. People wishing to volunteer may visit hilltownvillage.org.

Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel

In the Azores I found reminders of Massachusetts

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

When you get on a plane from Logan Airport one evening and land in a tropical paradise just five hours later, you don't expect to find Massachusetts.

But, on a recent getaway to the Azores, I found a devotion to and knowledge of our state that was unexpected and profound. My journey took me to waterfalls, endless stone walls lined with hydrangeas, villages from the 18th century and the ruins of old mills. Was I in the warmed-by-the-Gulf Stream North Atlantic archipelago (it's been part of Portugal since the 16th century) or was I in my own home state?

A bit of a backtrack. I was invited by my college roommate to come along on her own "Finding Your Roots" discovery of where her grandfather had emigrated from. He was a sheepherder in the Azores island of Flores, the westernmost bit of Europe. He left in 1908 and became...a sheep farmer in the central valley of California. Once I discovered that Azores Airlines had once-a-week flights for about what you would pay to go to California, I was in, but absolutely flying blind. I knew nothing of this place except a photo I remember in an outdated geography book from elementary school. It showed a verdant land with almost neon green fields, black stone walls and deep blue-purple hydrangeas.

While that geography book was at this point at least 50 years out of date, it was accurate about what I would visually find. What I did not expect is that every Azorean had some kind of connection to Massachusetts and most had been here. Usually when I travel and people ask where I am from I pick either Southern California or New York City. They have all seen Baywatch, Law & Order and Sex & the City and it gives them some frame of reference – albeit a ridiculous one – for where I am from.

I have given up on saying "Massachusetts" in Europe as you get blank stares. Hotel clerks don't even bother to try to spell or say it when you check in. I arrived earlier than my friends

and booked a tour called "Hidden Gems of Sao Miguel Island" with a man named Joao. (Pronounced "zhu-wow".) He proved to be a font of knowledge on this particular island, the history of all the Azores and local botany. It was a tour guide match in heaven for a plant and history geek like me.

He was doing a warm-up with the group as we set off in his minivan from the capital city of Ponta Delgada, largest city on the islands with a population of 57,000 and wondered where we were from. I went for broke and said "Massachusetts" rather than my other options. He knew I. He loved it. He'd been all over it. And he was but the first of the Azoreans who professed their admiration for our state.

As Joao related, generations of Azoreans had come to Massachusetts seeking a better life and work. They settled in big clusters in the textile mill cities of Fall River and New Bedford. The Azores are ridiculously verdant and the climate is mild, but as volcanic islands always are in flux with some very dramatic eruptions and earthquakes, this was not a place with a diversity of income

AZORES, page 3



Like the Hilltowns, there are waterfalls everywhere.



The island Terceira has a 2:1 cows to humans ratio and stone walls that reminded me of Massachusetts.

Turley photos by Kathryn Koegel



A plaque mentioning New Bedford, Massachusetts in the Azores.

HUNTINGTON

Gingerbread decoration takes place Dec. 14

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Community Events Committee will be holding its annual Gingerbread decoration event on Saturday Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. at Stanton Hall. Prebuilt houses will be available with all the decorations needed. Refreshments will be provided. Preregistration is requested by emailing

communityevents@huntingtonma.us or calling 413-667-0085. The committee is also organizing a tour through town to see the holiday lights.

People who have lights or decorations and would like to be on the map are requested to sign up as soon as possible at the above email or number.

Public Health District holds survey

The Western Hampden County Public Health District seeks residents of Blandford, Granville, Montgomery, Russell, Southwick and Tolland to answer a five-question survey for the health district.

This feedback is important to the health district staff. People may email the Shared Services Coordinator Cailen Simonds with any questions at csi-monds@southwickma.gov or call 413-333-7455.

AZORES

from page 2

sources. Today, fishing, beef and dairy are the primary industries. Islands like Flores have a 3:1 cow to human ratio. Tourism is picking up again after a Covid lull and tends to long weekenders from Europe who scratch the surface of the nine islands.

Joao had close relatives in New Bedford and Boston and had been here often. He even went to high school here for a time. Yes, he knew what “Go Pats!” meant.

Joao brought up his love of John F Kennedy and noted a historical event I had never heard of. In 1958, Faial, an Azorean island with an active volcano, effectively blew its top spewing life-threatening lava, gasses and ash, making much of it unlivable. The then young senator sponsored the Azorean Refugee Act allowing 1,500 Azoreans to emigrate. Those people and their families carry on an intense gratitude for the generosity expressed by someone from Massachusetts that changed their lives. The subsequent 1965 Immigration Act made it easier for people from the Azores to join their relatives already in Massachusetts.

As heart-warming as that story is, the connections to Massachusetts go even deeper. The whaling industry was effectively created in Nantucket in the 18th century. Those whalers brought that industry to the Azores where sperm whales spend the summer months. Azoreans learned to whale from Nantucketers and worked on their ships, traveling back to Massachusetts. Whale oil was a primary source of light until the animal populations diminished in the late 19th century (See Moby Dick, written in Pittsfield by Herman Melville.) Now whale and dolphin watching is one of the biggest attractions on the islands.

An interesting plant came back to Massachusetts in some of those ships. The hydrangeas that give the Cape, Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard a distinct look each summer were brought here from the Azores. The white ones all over the Hilltowns are variants of the plant species more suited to our soils. The plant originated in Japan, but came to the Azores in the 18th century. In the 1880s they were used to shore up the lava stone walls and then went wild. The humid climate and acidic volcanic soils suit them just fine. Now people literally fly from around the world to see them in peak bloom July through early September. Even in early November a few were blooming and the flower clusters were larger than any I had seen in Massachusetts.

Plants aside, I continued to run into people with the Massachusetts connections. It’s very clear that some villages are supported by Azoreans who go back and forth. They work in the U.S. but the family might return in the summer or in spring for the all-important feast of the

Holy Spirit, which is called Pentecost in the Roman Catholic Church.

The churches, which are built out of the volcanic rock and white plaster, are often rebuilt due to earthquakes. Enter and view the altars and often you see it: literal connections to Massachusetts. People may have left, but their religious devotion and support of their culture continues. Each Easter season, groups form within communities which have built colored “Imperios” or shrines to the Holy Spirit. The shrines have an altar and store all the goods needed for the celebration. One person in the community is elected the “imperios” or emperor and keeps a symbolic tin crown. There is much processing through the towns and the event ends on Pentecost with a ritual soup. Yes., the brothy beef mixture (all those cows) into which stale bread is soaked is called Holy Spirit Soup or “sopa do espiritu santo.” That very soup had followed my friend’s grandfather to California and she remembered eating annually at Azorean get togethers. “Very soggy bread with beef and wild mint,” remembered my friend.

All in all I spent 12 days in this verdant and so unexpected place. It also made me think of the beauty and challenges of the Hilltowns. When the population was larger the Azores needed mills on each island to grind wheat and produce power. The islands are filled with dramatic and rocky stream beds that rage with water during the rainy season. Now they are abandoned and sit picturesquely near designation spots for waterfall viewing. There are waterfalls everywhere of exceptional height, some of them plunging thousands of feet down to the rocky coast. On the island of Flores I scrambled along a precarious volcanic path to come to a dark green pool where 12 waterfalls, like something created by computers for the movie Avatar, plunged.

So many Azoreans had to leave as work and resources were so limited. It sounded like the Hilltowns. What has replaced them and is now driving the economy? Well-managed tourism.

In the Hilltowns, the Civilian Conservation Corp put a generation of men to work building recreation facilities like those at the now almost abandoned facilities in Chester/Blandford State Forest. In the Azores, anyone unemployed is paid to work on hiking paths and conservation-oriented access to the various waterfalls. The new Azores is welcoming back not just the families of people forced to leave due to earthquakes, volcanoes and economic privation, but also eco tourists.

Visitors were doing guided ambling along trails to view scenic pools and spending money on hotels, restaurants and shops. Now, along with all those cows, managed tourism is the future of this land so connected to Massachusetts.

SELECT BOARD

from page 1

other town select boards) if needed, for final approval.

Gateway roof

Smidy also reported that they are continuing to look at the roof at the main Gateway complex, which has been problematic for years. Gateway completes its School Building Assistance construction program-which renovated the complex and built Littleville and Chester Elementary Schools-this year, but has to wait for two years to apply for a new project. In the meantime, the cost of materials continues to rise.

Smidy has met with Curt Robie, a local resident who was formerly in charge of facilities at Westfield State University, whose inspection reveals that it might be possible to do a “go over” instead of a full replacement. She will report back to the Select board when more is known on this, and invited them to see the roof for themselves.

Town Administrator

Town Administrator Peloquin announced an upcoming meeting that she and Highway Superintendent Brad Curry have with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to look at projects for the FY’25 Community

Development Block Grant and invited the Select Board to attend. She also announced that Mass Fish & Game may purchase nearly 60 acres of land on the Chester/Huntington line on Goss Hill Road. Finally, the board agreed to a proposal to close town offices to the public the day before a holiday. They will test this on Dec. 24 with town offices open from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Other business

In other business, the board appointed Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger as the town’s new representative to the Hilltown Community Ambulance Association and hired Jason Charboneau as a plow truck driver, and Phil Camp as the large truck operator for plowing and sanding, plus filling in as a temporary laborer until that position is filled. Board members also decided to submit a by-law at Annual Town Meeting that would instruct the Board of Health and Zoning Board to research and propose green burial options, so that homeowners might bury family members on their property. The Board wanted to measure public interest in this possibility, before spending funds on legal reviews.

The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



Was your IRMAA article incorrect?

Dear Rusty:

In a recent article about Medicare's "Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount" and how IRMAA affects Social Security taxes, you described which income gets included in the IRMAA calculation. You said it is "your combined income from all sources, including 50 % of the SS benefits you receive." That 50% number might be true in some cases, but I think a more accurate, general answer is that "your taxable SS benefit is what gets added to IRMAA." For example, we have enough income every year that we are always taxed at 85% of our SS benefit, so 85% of our SS values get added to our IRMAA. The way your answer reads, a reader of the article might think everyone has 50% of their SS benefit added to IRMAA.

Signed: IRMAA Victim

Dear IRMAA Victim:

I think you may have confused two terms I used when describing Medicare's "Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount" or "IRMAA." I also used the term "MAGI" (Modified Adjusted Gross Income), and it's important to distinguish between those two terms.

MAGI is what determines if the IRMAA provision applies, and IRMAA will affect how much your Medicare premium is. But MAGI is also used for another purpose - to see if your SS benefits are taxable. Your MAGI consists of your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) from your income tax return, plus any non-taxable interest you may have had, plus 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year.

IRMAA is a factor which will increase your monthly Medicare premium if your MAGI is over certain thresholds for your tax filing status. MAGI is used to determine if a higher Medicare premium applies, and it is also used to see if your SS benefits are subject to income tax.

Your MAGI does, indeed, always use only 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year (not 85% in some cases). That's because the SS contributions included in MAGI relate to SS contributions your employer paid on your behalf. Only half of your received SS benefits are used to determine MAGI because that's the amount of your SS benefits attributable to your employ-

SECURITY, page 5

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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.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Two bed rocks of democracy unscathed

Letter to the Editor

My hopes for what I saw as a reasonable and humane direction for our country has been undone by our national election. As I wade through the rubble of these hopes, two bed rocks of our democracy appear mainly unscathed.

One: the election itself was free, fair and seemingly free of corruption.

The other, our free press is intact, but deeply polarized with each side attacking the other as fake news. There is little new in this as our media has a history of printing half truths and outright lies. Early on, the war with Spain caused by what history recorded as Yellow Journalism with lies about the sinking of the battleship Maine, right up to the war in Iraq when the media blindly reported on weapons of mass destruction.

Now we have our recent election heavily influenced by cable news reporting what our legacy mainstream news media have repeatedly called out as lies. The truth is left

to the consumer to figure out.

Lies and half truths are inherent in a free press and it is unfair to single out the media for blame for reporting untruths from responsible authorities. Still they need to question authority deeper. It is my belief that print media, for the most part, occupies the moral high ground in the puzzling search for truth.

Your paper reports on events in our small quiet towns. Church suppers and COA events are obvious topics. Not easily reported are the under currents of the so called cultural wars which run rife in our communities. These divisions could perhaps be best brought up in letters printed from your readers. Lately such letters are not appearing. As one who has submitted letters refused publication by the CJ., I can only wonder how widespread this low level censorship has muted our ability as a community to bring up difficult topics.

Richard Mansfield
Worthington

GUEST COLUMN

Most Americans aren't obsessed with politics



The 2024 election is over, but the arguments about what it means are continuing. Did Donald Trump and the Republican Party win a mandate to govern as they wish? Did Democrats try too hard to appeal to their political base? Or not hard enough?

But drawing conclusions about the meaning of an election, especially about what it says about the American people, is difficult. Most voters simply aren't that focused on politics. They aren't obsessed with the latest news from Washington or what the candidates are saying.

As Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear writes in a recent New York Times column, "When most Americans wake up in the morning, they are not thinking about politics." They

are thinking about their jobs, their finances, their next doctor's appointment. They are thinking about feeding their families and getting their children off to school. They want to know their communities are safe.

"If you are staring at the cost of your child's prescription and wondering how you are going to pay for both it and your family's dinner," Beshear writes, "the offense of the day in Washington, D.C. or the latest crazy thing a politician said just isn't as important."

I couldn't agree more. Those of us who write about government and public affairs often forget that we're in the minority. For most people, they may follow the news, and most of them will vote; but politics, especially national politics, isn't at the top of their daily concerns.

One of the first lessons I learned when I was in Congress was that people care deeply about local matters. They pay a lot less attention to national issues. They are even less worried about international affairs.

CONGRESS, page 5

Election letters to the editor welcome

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 Monday to be considered for that

Friday'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 news-

paper 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.

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Letters to the editor should be 500 words or less in length. We require letter writers to include his or her name, town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

Research indicates that the brain doesn't fully mature until around age 25, but nonetheless: In Illinois (as in most states), 18 is the age at which a child is considered to be a legal adult. And it's when parents lose their right to that child's medical information.

That's why – if you want to be involved in your young adult's health care once they hit that magic age – you need their authorization under the Health Insurance Privacy and Accountability Act, better known as HIPAA.

HIPAA required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. The law doesn't care if your young adult is on your insurance and you're responsible for the bills. It also doesn't care whether your child is an 18-year-old college freshman or a 45-year-old out on their own.

Why your adult child needs a HIPAA form

Or maybe they were out on their own, but came back to the nest. Thanks to the pandemic and associated job losses, the share of adults ages 25 to 34 who lived with their parents reached historic highs in 2020, according to the U.S. Census: 22 percent of men and 13.4 percent of women.

The numbers aren't quite as high now, but they're still significant. In 2022, 19 percent of men and 12 percent of women in the 25-34 demographic cohabit with their parents. Young adults who are disabled or have mental or emotional disorders also tend to live with mom and dad.

Health issues arise unexpectedly – the young adult could be involved in a car accident, diagnosed with cancer or need an emergency appendectomy. You know my mantra: Be prepared with documentation so that health care can proceed according to your child's wishes.

Verbal authorization can take the place of a signed HIPAA release. Your child only has to tell health-care providers, "I authorize my parents to receive my medical information and be involved in my health-care decisions."

That works if the patient is awake and alert. But what if every parent's nightmare comes true? You get a phone call in the middle of the night that there's been an accident and your child is unconscious. Now what?

A spouse is considered by default to be authorized to receive medical information. If the partners are separated, though, does your child want their soon-to-be ex-spouse involved in their health care? If not, they need a HIPAA authorizing someone else. Your child may be single and not have anyone to designate.

If your child does end up in the hospital, the HIPAA authorization will come in handy. Because hospitals do not want to be fined for violating HIPAA, most will err on the side of caution and refrain from disclosing any information to family members without the properly executed documentation. Without this exchange of information, families can be left out of the loop and doctors may miss important family medical history.

As a companion to the HIPAA authorization form, it is also important for young adults to have a Health Care Power of Attorney so that someone will have the authority to make medical decisions on behalf of your child if they are incapacitated. Without this document, you may have to go to court in order to have someone appointed to make crucial medical decisions.

These aren't necessarily easy conversations to have with an adult child because no one – particularly a young adult who is healthy – wants to think about the possibility of illness or injury. And as parents we need to be careful that

we're not acting like mother hens and intruding on their privacy.

It might be worthwhile to have a trusted family member or advisor suggest your child should consider executing a HIPAA authorization and health care power-of-attorney, designating you or another individual of their choosing to be an authorized recipient of medical information and make decisions on their behalf.

HIPAA authorization and health care power-of-attorney forms are available on the Illinois.gov website, or an attorney can help you execute them. The signed forms should be shared with your child's health-care providers and kept in an accessible place in case they're needed.

We buy insurance and hope we never have to use it. Encourage your child to prepare a HIPAA authorization and health care power of attorney, and then hope they're never needed.

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of Northshore Patient Advocates LLC (NShore). She is also founder and CEO of Nurse Advocate Entrepreneur, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. Teri offers a free phone consultation to newspaper readers as well as to nurses interested in becoming advocates. Reach her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com.

Kissing balls for a new porch



It's really funny that sometimes I have to consult my own columns to remember how to do something.

You see, now that the front porch is done, there is a new area to decorate, an area well-suited for kissing balls! My daughter and I were at the local garden center and there were so many beauties for sale.

Of course it would break my budget to buy one to go in the middle of each pair of columns, so it looks like I'll be making them myself.

The first thing you will need is a styrofoam ball. One that is six inches in diameter would make a good size kissing ball.

Then gather a coat hanger and some wire cutters. Snip away the hook and straighten out the rest. Insert it through the middle of the ball and bend one end as a hanger.

About 18 inches will be showing; it will look better if you choose a gold colored hanger. If not, you can always cover it later.

Getting the piece of wire into the dead center can be difficult, so use a long

wooden pick to pre-make the hole. After that insertion will be easy.

Having a selection of greens on hand will make a pretty kissing ball. Scavenge the landscape for holly, yew, white pine, juniper and the like. Now it is time to insert clumps of greenery into the ball.

Styrofoam is very durable – great for holding all of these stems, but much more difficult to work with than floral foam. For that reason, all but the most rigid stems need to be put on wooden picks before they can be stuck into the ball.

Make small bunches of greenery about four inches long, holding their stems next to the pick and wrapping the attached wire to it. One by one insert these bunches into the styrofoam.

It is best to work randomly around the ball – setting the dimensions if you will, rather than starting in one place and working out. Being that it is round, it will be hard to put it down while working on it.

After a while you'll get into the swing of things by wiring a few bunches of greens, putting them in, wiring a few more and so forth. Finally, give it a good look. Is it a nice, round shape? Is there any foam showing? Where could it use a few berries?

Rose hips or winterberry, or even artificial berries will surely brighten it up, as will strands of ribbon wired to a wooden pick and inserted into the bot-

GARDEN, page 6

SECURITY

from page 4

er's contributions. Said another way, the SS payroll tax you personally paid while working was from your taxable income, so it is not included in MAGI. But the amount your employer contributed was not taxable by the IRS and, thus, is included in MAGI. So, it's the portion of your SS benefits attributable to your employer which is included in MAGI. Thus, the terminology that MAGI is "your combined income from all sources, including 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year" is correct. MAGI is what determines how much of your SS benefits are taxable, but your MAGI also determines if IRMAA applies to your Medicare premiums.

Your benefits are taxable if, as a married couple filing jointly, your total MAGI exceeds \$32,000. If your MAGI is over the first threshold but less than the 2nd threshold (\$44,000 for married filers) then 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year are included as part of your income taxable by the IRS. But if your MAGI goes over the 2nd threshold (\$44,000 for married filers) then up to 85% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year will be included as part of your income taxable by the IRS.

In short, MAGI determines how much of your income is subject to taxation. But MAGI is also used to determine if IRMAA applies. And how much your MAGI exceeds the separate IRMAA thresholds determines what your Medicare premium will be.

So, the article correctly states that IRMAA only counts 50% of the SS benefits received because that is what is included in MAGI (which is what determines if IRMAA applies). But the amount of SS which may be taxable income by the IRS could be up to 85% of benefits received during the tax year if your MAGI is high enough.

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CONGRESS

from page 4

Their concerns are much closer to home.

In my district, the experience was the same whether I was visiting with constituents in cafes, speaking to service clubs or meeting with reporters and editors at local newspapers. People, whether they were Democrats or Republicans, were focused on their communities. They wanted to talk about a new factory, a planned road project or the local school system.

People do pay attention to the national economy, because it affects their lives. They may not know the latest inflation or unemployment numbers, but they know when costs go up for gas, groceries and housing. They care about crime, but their focus is on community safety.

It's true, of course, that Donald Trump has upended our politics, putting himself at the center of every issue.

The decline of local newspapers, coupled with the rise of talk radio, cable TV news and social media, has nationalized our politics. Tune in CNN or Fox News, and you might think every national issue is a matter of life and death.

Politicians often amplify this thinking as they compete to turn highly motivated voters in a tight election. But that's not most Americans. Most care

deeply about their families, their neighbors and their communities. They want the government to share those concerns.

Beshear is a Democrat who has twice been elected governor of a state that just voted 65-35 for Trump. He recommends a focus on kitchen-table issues as a way forward for his party.

"The focus of the Democratic Party must return to creating better jobs, more affordable and accessible health care, safer roads and bridges, the best education for our children and communities where people aren't just safer but also feel safer," he writes.

In fact, that should be a good agenda for any politician, Democrat or Republican. Meeting the people where they live and trying to improve their day-to-day lives isn't just good politics. It's good governing. We'll all be better off if our elected officials remember that.

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

WORTHINGTON



On Wednesday, Oct. 23, Ron McBride, Worthington Rod and Gun Club member presented Jon Green from Gun Owners Action League, a \$5,000 check.

Rod and Gun Club supports GOAL

WORTHINGTON – The members of the Worthington Rod and Gun Club at their October meeting discussed their concerns of the new law dealing with Chapter 135 of the Acts of 2024 (H. 4885). At this same meeting, the members voted to make a donation of \$5,000 to support Gun Owners Action League’s legal action on H. 4885.

RUSSELL

STRATHMORE

from page 1

crete plan for the site. Many claims have been made and nothing has come of it.”

Concerns remain among residents over the danger of the building as images of the various mill complexes in Woronoco have been on local news. YouTube has several videos posted

with hundreds of views of people breaking into the condemned buildings as an adventure activity. On Nov. 24, a man and a woman who were trespassing at mill #2 were arrested by Russell and state police. They were arraigned in Westfield District Court for criminal trespass the following day.

Police called to STM when resident ignored moderator

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

WORTHINGTON – On Monday, Dec. 10 the police were called to the Worthington Special Town Meeting when resident Gabriel Unger contradicted town bylaws to let the meeting proceed.

Town Moderator Kevin O’Connor asked for police presence and select board chair Charlie Rose made the call.

“At the first motion, Unger objected to going ahead with the meeting due to so few people attending. Kevin [O’Connor] heard him out and Unger requested a delay saying the meeting was anti democratic,” says Rose. “The Moderator explained the rules set out by the town, but Unger would not stop. It got more heated.” Rose said O’Connor warned Unger that if he did not sit down his actions could result in the police being called, but Unger did not comply. Rose had the police cell number and made the call.

By the time Detective/Sergeant John Scobie was on site the meeting had returned to order. “Everything passed unanimously,” said Rose “We did vote to appropriate and transfer \$112,606 from the General Stabilization Fund to balance the budget.”

“The General Stabilization Fund is not an ‘emergency fund,’ said Rose. “It is basically a town fund where we have traditionally put our free cash into and used to fund mostly capital items, like a new truck. But it’s like tapping into our savings account to balance the budget. We approved a budget last spring that was out of balance with the hope that things might change by fall through increased tax revenue or decreased expenditures. Since it was still out of balance, we used the available funds to balance the budget. We are at the levy limit, so short of requesting a vote on an

increase in that in order to increase taxes to pay for the difference this was the solution.”

To Unger’s concerns about attendance, Rose had also been worried about the issue of numbers on a rainy, snowy night. He said he had made a call to the fire department to have their members attend so that the mandated quorum of seven registered voters was reached. The total number of attendees was estimated by Rose at 12 - 15.

Should more town residents have cared enough about this vote to attend? Said Rose: “People have busy lives. If 150 show up for town meeting that’s 10% of the voting community and a huge turnout. What do you expect?”

“Should we be more engaged?” asks Rose. “Not necessarily. People do what is important to them.”

When reached for comment, Unger, who had run for select board chair this year against Rose said: “I have been consistent since running about this lack of effort to advertise meetings besides their one email (two weeks ago) and two bulletin boards. The town even sent out an email today at 5 p.m. and there was no mention. I have no regrets for my attempts to represent the 98% of registered voters that were not present.”

“I refused to vote on any of it because while our bylaws require seven people at a town meeting,” said Unger... It was not honoring our residents to vote on anything tonight and I asked that we reschedule and that the select board makes a better effort to tell residents.”

Unger asked that town meetings be accessible by video conference. “You can’t vote by Zoom,” said Rose, citing town bylaws. “We also can’t do it by absentee ballot. It has to be in person. There are no exceptions. You can’t vote unless you are there. I get frustrated with people who do not know the rules but do not care.”

OPINION

GARDEN

from page 5

tom. Wired ribbon is a good choice since it has a little shape; less droopy so to speak.

It will be surprising just how much greenery it takes to make a kissing ball. When I am making wreaths or decorations of any sort I always continue harvesting even after I think I have enough, just as a bit of insurance. It’s always better to have extra than have to stop everything and go picking again.

One little factoid for cruise ship trivia: “Kissing bunches” in Old England were comprised of two intersecting circles of greens that were often decorated with fruit as well as figures of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The “kissing” aspect came from the sprig of mistletoe that hung on the very bottom of the sphere – evoking the same response it does when hung by itself today.

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.





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Deadline for photos and forms is Monday, December 16, 2024

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CHESTERFIELD

Congregational Church holds Christmas Bake Sale

CHESTERFIELD – The Chesterfield Congregational Church, Route 143 in Center of Chesterfield, will be having its biggest and best Christmas bake sale ever on Monday, Dec. 23 from 1-6 p.m. and on Tuesday, Dec. 24 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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

Bread choices will include sourdough loaves, English muffin, eggnog fruit and various quick breads. Fancy cake choices will include cranberry orange, lemon and pecan fruit, Irish Christmas cake, rum cake with pecans, orange chocolate and many more. Pie choices include apple (regular or crumb top), mince, and pecan. Whoopie pies offered will be chocolate with vanilla filling. Coffee cake choices will be cranberry upside-down and banana walnut sour cream.

Breakfast casseroles choices will include sausage, vegetable, herb and blueberry French toast. Candy items will include white chocolate brittle, pecan pralines and almond roca.

This year will also feature many locally hand-crafted items as well as locally made products such as soaps, honey, lavender sachets, kitchen accessories and decorative items (perfect for gifts or stocking stuffers).

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.



SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Holyoke Community College announces fall graduates

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College, 303 Homestead Avenue, lists the fall graduates.

These members of the Class of 2025 were recognized at HCC's second Fall Graduate Reception on Monday, Dec. 2, in the college's Leslie Phillips Theater and will also be invited to participate in HCC's 78th Commencement exercises at the MassMutual Center in Springfield on May 31, 2025.

Local fall graduates are: Cheyenne Elizabeth Russell of Blandford, Marcus Hickley of Easthampton, Justin Isaiah Malek of Easthampton, Jessica June Thomas of Easthampton, Stephanie Marie Raftery of Florence, Julian John Mayhew Skowron of Florence, Caleb Labonte of Huntington, Leah Ansaldo of Northampton, Owen Aptekar-Cassels of Northampton, Nancy Baez-

Zayas of Northampton, Alexandria Ann Casavant of Northampton, Zachary Harold Fox of Northampton, Olivia Iarossi of Northampton, Zeynep Ibic of Southamptn, Charles Dean Little of Southamptn, Shea Olivia Merriam of Southamptn, Meredith Megan Mielke of Southamptn, Eve Katherine Bartlett of Westfield, Jillian Elizabeth Carter of Westfield, Vanessa Renae Crowley of Westfield, Alison Elizabeth Fisk of Westfield, Curran David McKenzie of Westfield, Moriah Jessica Morris of Westfield, Jacob Foster O'Connor of Westfield, Amber Rose Plante of Westfield, Raymond Lee Rivera of Westfield, Hana Sadique of Westfield, Meagan Lee Vogel of Westfield, Ryan Darryl Whitelock of Westfield, Alyssa J. Wiatrowski of Westfield, Joseph Daniel Wilcox of Westfield and Samuel F. Yesu of Westfield.

CHESTER

Hamilton Library lists events

CHESTER – Hamilton Memorial Library will hold an Ugly Sweater Designing Contest on Tuesday, Dec. 17 from 4-6 p.m.

Participants should bring a sweater along to create the most hideous holiday garment possible while enjoying popcorn and cocoa. Limited extra sweaters will be available by calling 413-354-7808.

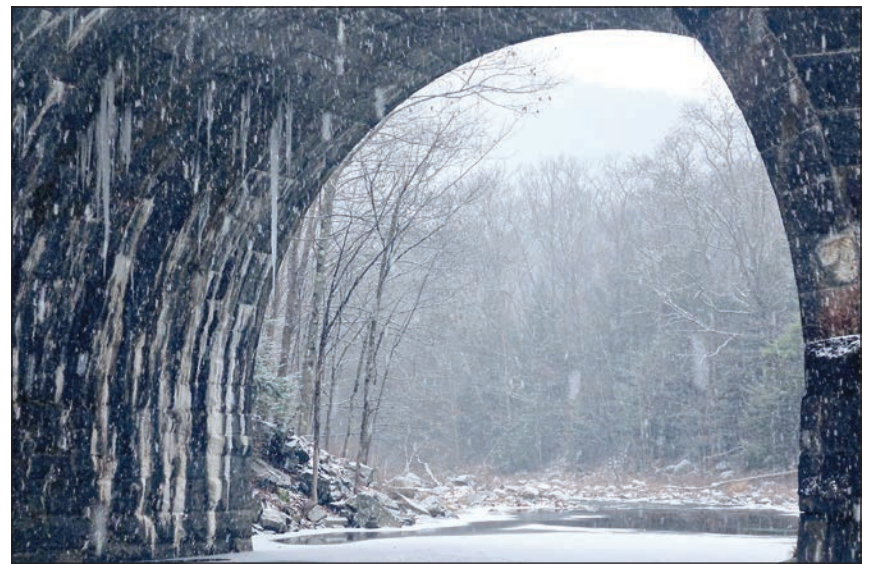
Library Book Club meets every third Wednesday of the month, Dec 18 at 4:30 p.m. They are lightening up the mood this month with this heartwarming tale, "Christmas at the Island Hotel" by Jenny Colgan, which takes place on a small island between Scotland and Norway. Christmas is in the air as char-

acters from different walks of life come together, new friendships and appreciation arise as a fancy new hotel prepares to open and local secrets come to light. Refreshments will be served. Extra copies are available at the library or online by visiting CWMARS.org.

Drop in holiday craft for children take place on Saturday, Dec. 21 from 10 a.m.-noon. Children will enjoy a doughnut and hot cocoa and have fun creating a special holiday craft.

The library will be closed on Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Wednesday, Dec. 25 for Christmas. They will have alternate hours on Tuesday, New Year's Eve from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and we will be closed on New Years Day, Jan. 1, 2025.

ENJOYING WINTERY SCENES IN THE HILLTOWNS



This is a snowy winter scene at the Keystone Arch Bridge in Chester.



This standard poodle loves the snow.

Turley photos by Kathryn Koegel

REGION

Black bears facts topic of Berkshire Green Drinks event



DALTON – Nathan Buckhout, a wildlife biologist with Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife, will speak at the January Berkshire Green Drinks event on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025.

This free hybrid event will take place online via Zoom and in person at The Stationery Factory, 63 Flansburg Avenue. The in-person social gathering will begin around 5 p.m.; the presentation and Zoom meeting will start at 6 p.m.

Buckhout will review black bear facts, talk about some of his research on black bears in the state and discuss some common misconceptions and human-bear-related issues that commonly occur and how people can prevent conflicts with them. Additionally, Nate enjoys discussing all types of wildlife and welcomes all questions about any wildlife during the question and answer session following his presentation.

People may learn more and RSVP by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/Jan2025-Berks-Green-Drinks>.

Nathan Buckhout is an Air Force Veteran who was born in Easthampton and graduated in 2007 with a B.S. in behavioral science from the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. He then went on to get his Master's in wildlife conservation biology from UMass Amherst in 2014, where he researched spatial-temporal factors affecting human and black bear interactions in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Nathan has worked as a seasonal wildlife biologist in Kodiak, Alaska, Great Smoky Mountains and Yellowstone National Parks, and Tongass National Forest in Hoonah, Alaska; he began working for MA Fish and Wildlife as a wildlife biologist in 2014 and continues to do so. In his free time, Nathan loves to fish, hunt, hike, camp, travel, garden,

read and take care of his "hobby" farm with his wife and three-year-old daughter.

Berkshire Green Drinks, formerly Pittsfield Green Drinks, is an informal gathering on the second Wednesday of the month that is free and open to everyone with any environmental interest. A guest speaker talks about an environmentally related topic for approximately 30 minutes beginning at 6 p.m.; the presentation is followed by a discussion and Question and Answer. The drinks aren't green, but the conversations are. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join and bring along questions.

Berkshire Green Drinks is sponsored and organized by the Berkshire Environmental Action Team. For more information regarding Berkshire Green Drinks, people may email Chelsey Simmons at chelsey@thebeatnews.org or call 413-464-9402.

BLANDFORD

Kathy's Closet offers treasures for everyone

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – She's got the map of Ireland on her face and the gift of gab to go with it. Couple that with a sense of humor and lots of compassion, and you have Karen Yvon.

Meet her once and you become friends instantly.

If you've been in Blandford long enough, you will remember the former Route 23 restaurant, Snow's Steak House, which then became Executive Paintball and the building was eventually purchased by Karen and Gregg Yvon.

The infamous 2008 ice storm wreaked havoc and collapsed the roof on what was the restaurant part of the building. The couple rebuilt the room on the existing footprint allowing space for a kitchen and bathroom.

This is now Kay's Closet.

The 55-year-old mother of two, now adult, Emily, 29 and Bobby, 28 got off to a rocky start when the family came to Blandford almost 30 years ago. Attempting to join a mom and tot playgroup once held at the former Town Hall, she knocked at the door, which was subsequently slammed in her face having been told the playgroup was "full."

Living closer to Otis, she worked at Katie's Country Store for 20 years and substitute taught at Farmington River Regional School District where she was also a para-professional with individual students.

She knew people, who had excess children's clothing and families who could use these items. She kept a list of who had what and who needed it and carted it around in the trunk of her car.

There was never any cost or monetary exchange made. She provided a needed service within the community.

After the rebuilding had been completed, she decided she would function better with that space as a base. And Kay's Closet evolved.

She accepted clothes for all ages and genders and house-hold goods and gave them to those in need and freecycled anything not picked out and taken.

Promoting the Closet is done



Karen Yvon and visitor Angel Williams from Chesterfield discuss the fine points of an English 1828 Pittsfield commemorative plate.



Roberta Sarnacki stopped in to browse.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm

through friends and only by word of mouth. She said her effort saves people in the area from having to trek to Westfield or Pittsfield to the Salvation Army or Good Will.

She is not, as she will tell you immediately, a licensed charity organization; there is no letter acknowledging a donation of clothing or household items. There is no charge to take whatever strikes your fancy.

Only recently, this year, has she suggested to her visitors that she would welcome a small contribution to help offset her electrical costs. No one has objected.

Besides clothing, she will accept just about everything, including bigger items such as furniture or lawn furniture. She will also do 'house cleanouts' and dispose of everything.

"I have met people who I never would have met if not for doing this," she said. And she is well connected. She knows lots of different people in all different capacities so she can reach out for information or assistance easily.

Kay's Closed is open on Friday starting at 9 a.m. and on Saturday from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. and Sunday if someone can only make that day. All shoppers should make an appointment; call or text Karen at 413-237-3277 to let her know. This is so she can plan her schedule, if necessary, around any work or if the weather is bad or her driveway needs to be plowed.

Today, she is the Director of the

Council on Aging in Otis and is working at developing regular programming for

her seniors. An upcoming event is flower arranging.

TREE LIGHTING TOOK PLACE SUNDAY



Dr. Hazel Holman, from left and Nancy Ackley stand by the refreshment table after outdoor caroling Sunday evening at the Historical Society after the annual tree lighting.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm



The Blandford Historical Society turned on the tree lights Sunday evening. Pastor Ciprian Droma led the caroling on the lawn and attendees enjoyed Pamela Rideout's Hot Chocolate and Nancy Ackley's Christmas cookies afterwards.

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BLANDFORD

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOST CRAFT FAIR



Deb Kuhn, left, with Joanne Froppier from Huntington shopped at the annual craft fair at the Historical Society. Kuhn said, "We came to see all the wonderful homemade stuff."



Vinnies and Nancy Loring of Otis admired Barbara Blairs' Country Wood Crafts.



Deb Kuhn made a purchase from Becky Greene's Around the Bend Creations craftily designed using repurposed items. *Turley photos by Mary Kronholm*

SANTA PAWS



Santa with Jasmine Brown at the Blandford Animal Hospital Saturday morning. Pets and their owners could have photos taken with Santa. There were all sorts of treats available as well, for both pets and humans. *Turley photo by Mary Kronholm*

Cultural Council Chair announces funding awards

BLANDFORD – Cultural Council Chair Susan Racine announced the funding awards.

They included: Music Brings Communities Together through the Becket Arts Center of the Hilltowns, \$500; The Blandford Fair Art Show, \$500; Gateway Regional High School: MassMOCA Field Trip, \$200; Build Your World, Hilltown

Community Health Centers \$500 and Introduction to Wool Sculpting, Tracy Kochanski \$575.

Other awards were Mother Goose – In Person, Puppets, Rhymes, Song, Dance; Mary Jo E. Maichack \$495, Sevenars 57th Anniversary Season, Sevenars Concerts, Inc. \$800; Hofbrauhaus Bavarians, Mike Spencer \$800; Littleville Fair, Community

Fair Association of Chester, Chester Hill and Littleville, Inc. \$300 and The Theft of Dignity, Dennis Wise: \$680

An amount of \$247 was held back for administrative functions giving a total outlay of \$7,347.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council, through lottery funds, provided \$5,700. The mission of the town's Cultural

Council is to support cultural programming that directly benefits the citizens of our town and its neighboring Hilltown communities. This programming includes: concerts, plays, art shows, library programs and classes in our community and in-school and field trip cultural programming for the students at the Gateway Regional Schools.

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BLANDFORD

Special Town Meeting to take place Dec. 20

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – There will be a special town meeting on Friday, Dec. 20 at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall for the express purpose of moving monies.

Voters will have nine articles to consider for moving funds from Free Cash, Capital Projects and one from the Highway Department fuel account.

The sum of \$50,000 is asked from Free Cash to cover health benefits for retirees. The next transfer from Free Cash is requested to go to the Reserve Fund.

Articles 6, 7, 8 and 9 also ask voters to transfer from free cash \$522.55 to cover last fiscal year's invoices from Harpers Payroll Service; transfer \$8,703.57 to Highway Garage Maintenance/Repairs to cover previous fiscal year invoice from Western Mass Environmental, which will

require a 9/10 majority vote to accomplish.

The final two articles request \$15,000 to the New Town Hall Maintenance and Repairs account and an additional \$15,000 to Accounting Services.

The additional sums from Capital Projects include \$40,000 for the purchase of a new Council on Aging vehicle and \$8,000 to the External IT Support/Computer Software account to cover the

cost of upgrades not included in the FY 25 budget.

The sum of \$1,220.88 is requested from the Highway Vehicle Fuel account to pay for a previous fiscal year invoice from Dennis K. Burke, Inc. that was not included in the encumbrances.

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrara said that there will be another Special Town Meeting "likely in January specifically for the Fire Department project."

RESIDENTS ENJOY PANCAKE BREAKFAST



Enjoying pancakes and all the trimmings are Kim Chaffee, Erin Sirica, Jeffrey Antonellis, Nicole Daviau and Todd Chaffee.



This photo shows the new curtains at the pancake breakfast.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm

SIGN

from page 1

Town Administrator

Since the Zoning Board of Appeals is lacking members, the Select Board must function in this capacity. There is an application process that must be followed, and board member Theodore Cousineau told the deacons, "There has to be a paper trail."

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrara reported for Highway Superintendent Rene Senecal to the board that there are so far three applications and a fourth coming for the position of Highway Superintendent. The town has also received several applications for a Highway Department laborer.

She has worked with the Finance Committee to draft a letter to all departments for fiscal year 2026 budget preparation. There will be some additional forms for departments regarding grants and grant applications.

Town Hall generator

Kinsley Power Systems has made an on-site inspection of the Town Hall generator and determined it is not running as efficiently as it should. There is a new switch to be installed which will help efficiency. The board asked Ferrara to relay that to Kinsley to see if that will change the cost of their inspection, which came in at \$2,589. Elm Electric did get in touch with Ferrara and they are making progress towards having an operational generator.

Other business

She had questions about an account labeled Town Water Accounts, with \$32,000 set aside for the current fiscal year. The funds cover water costs for town buildings and the invoices will be forwarded to the accountant to be paid.

The board signed off on an Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission report and seasonal population statistics.

The board reviewed the detailed All Department Expense Report with figures from July 1 to date and discussed various accounts including Water, Town Hall Expense, Tree Warden expenses, Highway Department equipment/repairs and overtime. Some accounts are nearly exhausted but this will be corrected at the upcoming Special Town Meeting.

Several accounts have unexpended funds from prior years and no one was quite sure how to access those monies.

Any expenses for the water tank installation have to be referred to the Water Department to make sure the contract and grant funding papers are in order. No expenditures prior to completion of the paperwork can be reimbursed from the grant.

The Select Board will meet at 6 p.m. prior to the Friday, Dec. 20 Special Town Meeting at 7 p.m. They will not meet on Monday, Dec. 16 because of the Friday session.

REGION

MassDOT and RMV recognize older driver safety awareness week

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Registry of Motor Vehicles are raising awareness about the unique challenges facing drivers, who are 65 years of age and older and encouraging families, friends and providers to initiate critical conversations about driver safety and mobility.

During Older Driver Safety Awareness Week, which runs Monday, Dec. 2, through Friday, Dec. 6, valuable information is shared to help inform driving decisions. This informational campaign promotes a wide range of resources that encourage discussions around older driver safety. The theme for this year, from the American Occupational Therapy Association, is "Understand, Be Proactive, Plan" to highlight the importance of building understanding as a means to planning and making decisions involving older drivers.

"Older Driver Safety Awareness Week is a reminder to all of us to support older drivers year-round with the resources they need to make informed decisions about mobility and road safety," said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. "Every user of our transportation system deserves to feel safe, and we are committed to making older individuals who drive have the information and support they need to make the best decisions for themselves



and others."

"Driving is an essential everyday task for many older adults, and it is important to recognize when action is needed to preserve safety," said Registrar of Motor Vehicles Colleen Ogilvie. "This year, we're encouraging individuals to engage in early planning discussions with families and friends and to use the resources we've developed to navigate any changes in driving ability. By working together, we can support older drivers in making informed decisions about their mobility options."

Decisions about driving ability should never be based on age alone. However, changes in vision, reflexes, physical fitness, and cognitive fit-

ness may cause safety concerns. Most older adults outlive their ability to drive safely by an average of seven to ten years, according to AAA Traffic Safety Foundation. Being proactive about safe driving skills, learning ways to identify changes early, and intervening as soon as possible can help older drivers maintain safe mobility.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the U.S. population of people 65 and older increased by 30% between 2013 and 2022. Additionally, in 2022, the number of traffic deaths involving a driver 65 years of age and older was the highest since at least 1975. NHTSA reminds motorists that simply getting

older doesn't mean it's time to hang up their keys, but they should evaluate how they – or loved ones – drive.

The RMV offers the following resources and workshops for older adults and providers:

Visit the RMV's website for older driver resources and learn more about older driver safety.

Attend one of the RMV's free Safe Driving workshops, which can be requested by community organizations and associations that cater to older individuals:

Shifting Gears – rules of the road, defensive driving, and safe driving tips.

The Driving Decision – advice for families and providers who are concerned about a person's ability to drive safely.

View RMV's video, Shifting Gears, which highlights how age-related changes can affect a person's ability to drive and how everyone can support older driver safety and mobility.

Review "Your Health and Driving Safety" to learn about license policies and procedures, driving evaluation programs, warning signs of unsafe driving, and to identify alternatives to driving.

All RTAs in Massachusetts provide reduced fare programs for seniors who ride public transportation on RTA services – and 13 of the 15 RTAs are currently participating in fare-free service for all ages.

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WESTHAMPTON

WINTER WONDERLAND



This brook in Westhampton is a common winter scene.

Turley photo by Deborah Daniels

LENOX

Winterland Festival to be held on Saturday, Dec. 14

LENOX – On Saturday, Dec. 14 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. the Lenox Chamber of Commerce will be holding a Winterland event on Church Street.

The annual event to welcome the Holiday season will have 8-10 artisan craft vendors, food, doughnuts with Santa, music and cheer on upper Church Street from 51- 67 Church St. Attendees can shop with local merchants as they offer holiday specials or browse the Artisan Crafters present for unique gifts for friends and family. There will be products from artisan crafters include handcrafted jewelry, candles, maple syrup products, alpaca hats and mittens, glassworks and much more.

Children can meet with Santa from 10 a.m.-noon and receive specially crafted doughnuts from Shire Donuts for \$5. Live entertainment will be provided by Christine Bilé from noon-2 p.m. at 51 Church St.. Also at the 51 Church St. lot, Antimony Brewing will have their beer truck there serving their locally brewed

craft beers as well as Charlie's Bistro Truck serving up delicious fare for the event. Restaurant Cello will be serving hot cocoa and cookies at their spot along with brunch service.

The Lenox Chamber will be raffling off a basket filled with lots of goodies valued at \$250. Raffle tickets are \$10 and all proceeds will be donated to the Elizabeth Freeman Center as will the proceeds from Donuts with Santa. Attendees can also enjoy the Holiday Tree Walk where Lenox businesses have individually decorated trees complete with a hidden pickle for the kids to hunt for. Maps will be available at the Lenox Chamber table at the event.

The local downtown merchants will also have holiday specials and plenty of gift ideas for the season. Some will be offering other treats to enjoy while shopping. Clothing, blankets, home goods, toys and even great artwork can be found at sale prices. For more general information, people may visit lenox.org.

FLORENCE

Florence Bank Financial Group announces name change

FLORENCE – The Florence Bank has changed the name of its financial services division from Florence Savings Bank Financial Group to Florence Financial Group, effective Nov. 4.

In addition to being shorter and less cumbersome, the new name and branding better reflect the bank's position as a local wealth management team that combines Florence Bank's quality customer service with an innovative and comprehensive approach to managing and protecting assets.

"Florence Financial Group offers personalized investment services for people at every stage of life, and while our name has changed, our experienced team and the securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network® have not," said Florence Bank President and CEO Matt Garrity.

Commonwealth Financial Network® is an independent financial advisory firm with a successful track record of performance and client support. As part of the rebranding effort, a new

website and logo have been created for the division, and team members' email addresses have changed. No changes will be made to customers' portfolios, account logins or passwords.

New email addresses for team members in the financial division are: Nicole Domnarski, financial advisor, ndomnarski@florencefinancialgroup.com; Amy Santarelli, financial advisor, asantarelli@florencefinancialgroup.com and Adam Kittredge, operations manager, akittredge@florencefinancialgroup.com.

To learn more about Florence Financial Group, people may visit FlorenceFinancialGroup.com. To learn more about Florence Bank, people may visit FlorenceBank.com.

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

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Request for Pricing

The Town of Cummington is seeking a contract price for a demolition and cleaning project at the Berkshire Trail Elementary School located at 2 Main St., Cummington, MA 01026.

Scope of work: To remove and dispose of all metal lockers from common hallways. Remove and dispose of all furnishings left in designated areas. Remove and dispose of all items left in closets in designated areas. Leave all designated areas broom clean.

Sealed Bids: Sealed bids must be received by **Wednesday, December 18, 2024** at noon addressed to the Selectboard of the Town of Cummington at the Community House 33 Main St., Cummington, MA 01026

Site Visit: Interested parties can visit the site on **Friday, December 13, 2024** at 10 a.m. at 2 Main St., Cummington, MA. Drawings indicating the designated areas will be issued at that time.

Condition: Winning Bid Contractor must complete the work by **Sunday, January 12, 2025.**

The Town of Cummington is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Town of Cummington prohibits discrimination and harassment of any kind based on race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, genetic information, pregnancy, or any other protected characteristic as outlined by federal, state, or local laws.

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at Noon for	:	at Noon for
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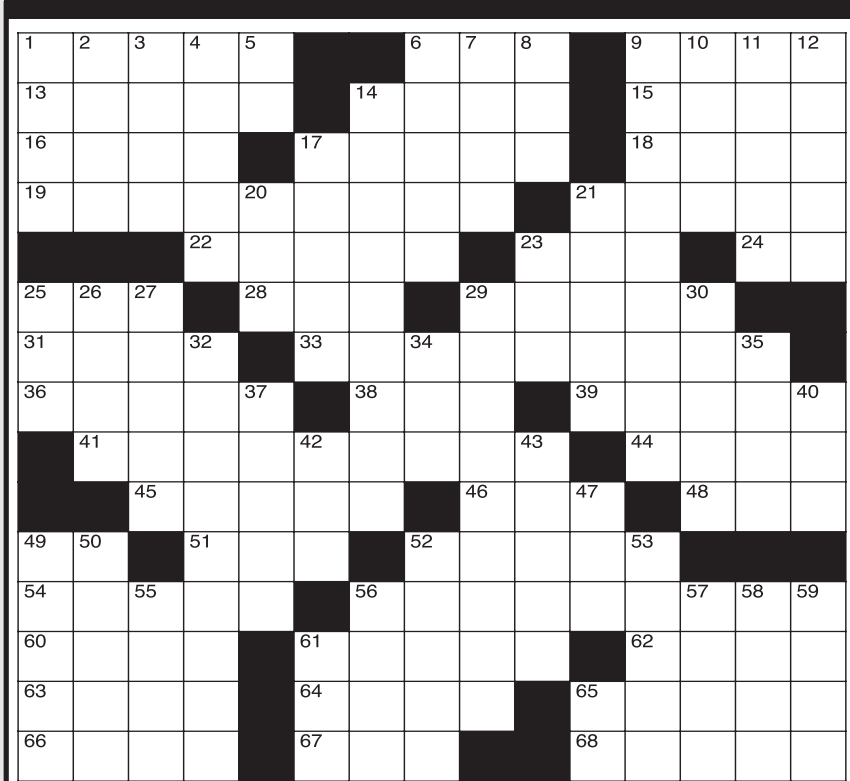
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BECKET

Art Center to celebrate Hannukah Dec. 15

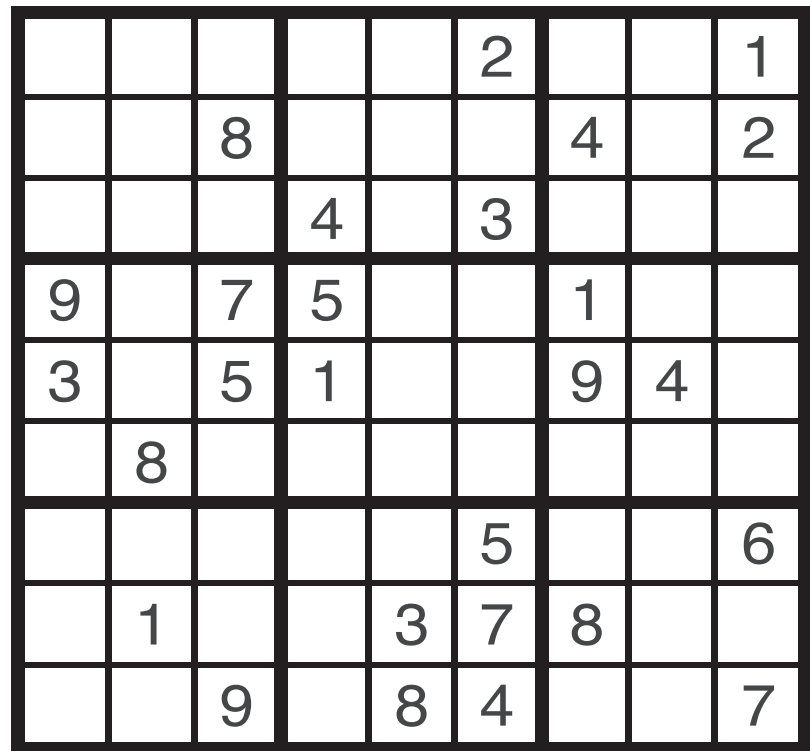
BECKET – The Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, will celebrate Hannukah with light, laughter, traditional refreshments, stories and song on Sunday, Dec. 15 from 5-7 p.m. The fee is \$10 for non-members and free for members. For tickets and more information, people may email becketartscenter.org.



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Thou ___ do it
 - 6. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
 - 9. Brainstem part
 - 13. Town in New York state
 - 14. Little (Spanish)
 - 15. Continent
 - 16. Retch
 - 17. Short-billed rails
 - 18. Small period of time (abbr.)
 - 19. Confused
 - 21. A team needs one
 - 22. Woman in ancient times
 - 23. Republican Party
 - 24. Spanish be
 - 25. "The Godfather" character Johnny
 - 28. Not around
 - 29. City in Zambia
 - 31. A type of beginning
 - 33. Numb
 - 36. Gurus
 - 38. Small, gray-headed
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. One-time Aaron
 - 39. Vehicle type
 - 41. Disorders
 - 44. One point east of southeast
 - 45. Indian soldier
 - 46. Tree type
 - 48. Midway between south and southeast
 - 49. It cools your home
 - 51. Corn comes on it
 - 52. Ship's deck
 - 54. A way to bake
 - 56. Improvised
 - 60. Butterfly genus
 - 61. Baseball fields have them
 - 62. Designated space
 - 63. Discharge
 - 64. Two of something
 - 65. Once more
 - 66. Part of your face
 - 67. Tax collector
 - 68. Cassia tree
- 2. Wings
 - 3. Overly studious person
 - 4. They protect your valuables
 - 5. The Volunteer State
 - 6. Non-hydraulic cement
 - 7. Horse mackerel
 - 8. Jackson and Diddley are two
 - 9. Splendid displays
 - 10. Mountain in NE Greece
 - 11. A daughter or your brother or sister
 - 12. German surname
 - 14. Having more than one husband at a time
 - 17. Romanian city
 - 20. Energy
 - 21. Makes less hot
 - 23. Gas diffusion electrode
 - 25. Former CIA
 - 26. Set an example for others
 - 27. Support of a particular person
 - 29. One from the Big
 - 30. Mountain range
 - 32. Violate the sanctity of something
 - 34. Supervises flying
 - 35. Talks
 - 37. Persian male given name
 - 40. Born of
 - 42. Forcibly take one's possessions
 - 43. Discounts
 - 47. Knockouts
 - 49. Posh Colorado destination
 - 50. Form of therapy
 - 52. British rock band
 - 53. Type of virus (abbr.)
 - 55. The U. of Miami mascot is one
 - 56. Volcanic crater
 - 57. Middle Eastern nation
 - 58. Sinn ____, Irish organization
 - 59. Ethiopian lake
 - 61. Bits per inch (abbr.)
 - 65. Equally

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

- ARIES**
Mar 21/Apr 20
Your pioneering spirit is in full swing this week, Aries. Embrace new challenges and don't hesitate to get out front and take the lead. You just might inspire others with your confidence.
- CANCER**
Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, nurture your relationships this week, particularly if work has garnered most of your attention of late. Pay attention to your own needs, too, and enjoy some relaxation.
- LIBRA**
Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, surround yourself with positive influences this week. You want others supporting you at every turn while you take on an important project that comes up.
- CAPRICORN**
Dec 22/Jan 20
Revisit your goals and make a plan for the future. Remember to take the people closest to you into consideration. Do not trample them in the process of getting ahead.
- TAURUS**
Apr 21/May 21
Make finances a priority. A bit of budgeting could ease some of the financial stress that has been affecting you lately. Indulge in a small luxury as a reward for hard work.
- LEO**
Jul 23/Aug 23
Employ your natural charisma to forge new connections and network at upcoming events, Leo. You are good at sharing ideas and expressing yourself with confidence.
- SCORPIO**
Oct 24/Nov 22
Use your intense focus and attention to detail to delve into projects that require those specific skills, Scorpio. In fact, someone may ask you to work on a project for these traits alone.
- AQUARIUS**
Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, collaborate with like-minded individuals who are ready to think outside the box. It is amazing what you can accomplish when you multiply your power.
- SAGITTARIUS**
Nov 23/Dec 21
Embrace the unknown this week. Let yourself get led off in different directions from those you normally travel, Sagittarius. Who knows what you may find along the way?
- GEMINI**
May 22/June 21
Conversations could be interesting this week, Gemini. You're curious about what others do when they are home behind closed doors. Don't pry too much.
- VIRGO**
Aug 24/Sept 22
Tackle one job at a time and focus on what is important to get done. It can be easy to get sidetracked by side projects. Or that might be your way to procrastinate.
- PISCES**
Feb 19/Mar 20
You might need to warm up before the creative energy starts to flow, Pisces. Don't worry, once you have the right inspiration, things will begin moving at a rapid pace.



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

V	N	N	E	S		S	R	I	E	S	O	N		
N	I	V	G	V		R	I	V	P	T	I	W	E	
V	E	H	V	S		E	S	V	B	E	R	E	P	
T	F	I	H	S		K	E	M	R	I	H	S		
		P	O	L		R	O	O	C	O		A		
E	S	S		K		A	O	A	P	O	S			
E	B	E	S	S		A	V	R	V	S	I	D		
N	V	D	E	S		M	V	D	S	E	G	V	S	
		G	N	I		E	F	N	U	D	D	E	S	
		V	L	O		D	N	V	I	M	V	T	O	
S	E		P	O		G	T	A	R	I	S			
H	O	V	O	C		D	O	D	O	E	B	E	R	
C	E	S	N			S	V	O	S	F	E	V	R	
V	I	S	V			O	O	O	D	N	V	E	T	O
N	O	N	P			S	S		T	S	N	V		C

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

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ESTATE SALE hosted by **Yellow Bear Market.** December 13, 9am-4pm; December 14 9am-5pm. Records, DVDs, CDs, kitchen tables and chairs, bureaus, collectibles, Hot Wheels, Star Wars, tools, electronics, household items, mountain bike, smoker, snowblowers and much more. Like us on Facebook for videos, sales and more @Yellow-BearMarket. 184 Main Street, Russell.

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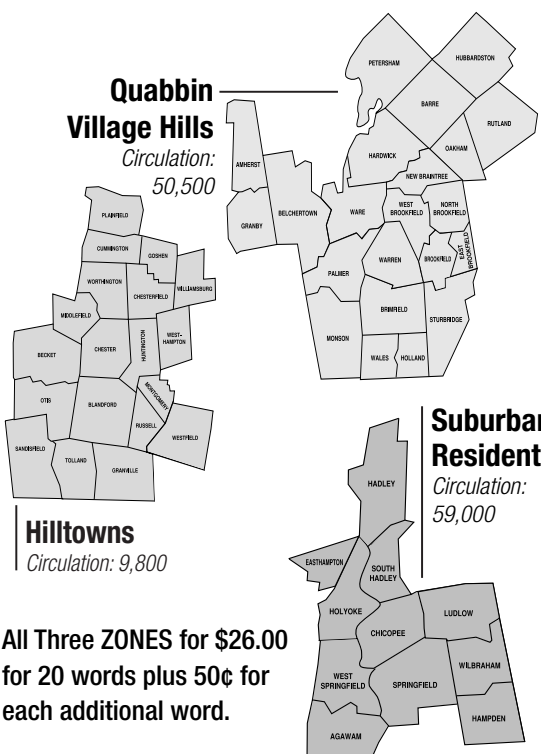
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OBITUARIES

Olivine Allaire

Olivine Allaire of Westfield passed away on Nov. 29, 2024, after complications from a procedure several months ago. Olivine, or "Ollie" as her friends called her, was born and raised in Chester and was the only daughter of Arvilla Allaire, who predeceased her in 1984.

Ollie graduated from Chester High School in 1968 and was class Valedictorian. During high school she spent summers as a lifeguard at the town pool in Chester, always caring for those in the small, tight-knit community. After high school, she pursued a degree in education from Westfield State University and played basketball, softball and volleyball while there.

Upon graduating, Ollie started teaching for the Gateway Regional School District, a life-long career that gave her great pride. Olivine leaves behind a brother and best childhood friend, David Zucker and his wife, Elizabeth Bunker of Langdon, New Hampshire, as well as her first cousins, Claire and Edward Willey, Stephen Salvini, Vivian Salvini and Patricia Wingate. Ollie had a special relationship with her niece Sherry (Allaire) Meissner and Sherry's siblings Tommy Allaire, Patty Ziter, Terry Alaire, Becky Nugent, Debbie Thomas

and David Allaire. Olivine also had many close friends including Kathy Mastromatteo, Marylou Moccio and Marilyn Spedding, and her dearest friend, Kathy Bulat, who faithfully cared for Olivine over the past year.

Olivine's vocation was a calling to something deep in her heart, as she was a loving soul who took care of everyone around her. She adored animals and rescued many dogs over her lifetime, Riley, Molly and Annie were among her favorites. Ollie enjoyed her summers spent in Westerly, Rhode Island and Thursday night pitch games with friends Phyllis, Beverly and Walter. She touched many lives and will be missed by all who knew her.

A Liturgy of Christian Burial was held on Dec. 11, 2024, at 10AM at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church, 127 Holyoke Street, Westfield, followed by a private burial. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to a local animal shelter and carry on Olivine's legacy of caring for those most in need. New England Funeral & Cremation Center, 25 Mill Street, Springfield, MA has been entrusted with the arrangements. Please visit Olivine's memorial page at www.nefcc.net for expressions of sympathy.

Kenneth "Kenny" Breton, 75

Kenneth "Kenny" Breton passed away Thursday Dec. 5, 2024. Born on March 7, 1949 to Henry Breton and Marcella (Fontana) Breton in Springfield.

After graduating High School he enlisted in United States Navy. He later worked as a Conductor for Conrail Railroad. His train routes taking him to Selkirk, New York and Boston.

Kenny enjoyed hunting at the deer camp with his life long friends and only trout fishing in the local rivers. His love for the outdoors, animals and gardening led him to establish KRAKA Farm.

Our Dad, Grandpa and Uncle Kenny instructed us in his ways of how to fish, collect eggs, clean chicken coops and pick blueberries. He enjoyed walking through the farm fields through snow, to pick the perfect Christmas Tree because it was free.

He was preceded in death by his Father, Mother and sister Lorena. He is survived by his children, Amy Breton, Kara Rousseau (Scott) and Aaron Breton (Melissa Occhipinti), his brother Gary Breton



(Kathy) nieces Ashley Breton and Brooke Breton. Grandchildren Kaia Ortiz, Jarod, Joshua, Jake, Jenavieve, Jamieson, Juliana (Rousseau) and Aubrey Breton. His brother from another mother, Rick Arkoette and his wife Mary, their children that he truly thought of as his own Jeff Arkoette, Susan and Michael Pieciak, Emilee and Forest Cote and Joanna Arkoette. Kenny also leaves behind his loving and tolerated gardening partner, Linda Narzyski

(Syracuse, New York).

His loud gruff voice, laughter and stubbornness will be missed. The pride and love for his family lives on.

Calling Hours will be held Thursday, Dec. 12 from 4-6 p.m. at the Curran-Jones Funeral Home, 109 Main St., West Springfield. A reception will be held following the calling hours. All other services will be held privately and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions can be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, TN 38105

Joan Marie Deacon, 92

Joan Marie Deacon, a cherished resident of the Berkshire area in Massachusetts, passed away peacefully on December 2, 2024, at the age of 92, at her daughter and son-in-law's home in California. Born on April 12, 1932, in Westfield, Massachusetts, to Leslie G. and Catherine E. (Adzima) Slater, Joan spent her formative years in Westfield, where she attended school.

Joan married George F. Deacon, with whom she shared 64 wonderful years until his passing in 2015. Together, they raised their family on Russell Mountain before retiring to the town of Russell. From 2021 – early 2024, Joan was a resident at the Arbors Assisted Living residence in Westfield. In June 2024, Joan moved to CA to live with her daughter, and son-in-law until her death.

Joan was employed for much of her professional life by the Gateway Regional School District, serving as an administrative assistant at Russell Elementary School and later at Gateway High School in Huntington. Her career also included office manager for Dr DeRose and for Donna's Children Doll Shop in Westfield.

A devoted member of her community, Joan was actively involved in the First Congregational Church of Westfield, where she led and participated in numer-



ous roles and committees. In recent years, she attended the Westfield Evangelical Free Church, continuing her lifelong commitment to her faith and community.

Joan is predeceased by her beloved husband, George, and her son, John (Jack) F. Deacon (Susan). She is survived by her son, Mark E. Deacon of Westfield, and her daughter, Diane D. James (H. Lee James) of California. Joan leaves behind her cherished grandchildren, Matthew Deacon (Amy) of Westfield, Kristina Deacon of NC, Jaime Thompson (David) of VT, Jennifer Alba (Edwin) of CT, Whitney James, and Kathleen (Katie) James of CA, as well as her step grandson's, Jereme L James of CA and Joshua L James of FL. Her beloved great-grandchildren, Thatcher Thompson, Ryan Deacon, and Eric Deacon.

A celebration of Joan's life will be held on May 31, 2025, at 11 am at the Russell Pond Cemetery in Woronoco Heights, where she will be laid to rest beside her husband, George. Pastor Jesse Kahler will officiate the service, followed by a reception at The Westwood Restaurant. Joan's legacy of love and dedication will be fondly remembered by all who knew her.

DEATH NOTICES

ALLAIRE, OLIVINE "OLLIE"

Died Nov. 29, 2024
Private burial

BRETON, KENNETH "KENNY"

Died Dec. 5, 2024
Calling hours 4-6 p.m.
Curran-Jones Funeral Home
109 Main St., West Springfield
Reception following calling hours

DEACON, JOAN MARIE

Died Dec. 2, 2024
Celebration of Life May 31, 2025
Russell Pond Cemetery in Woronoco Heights

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



This was one of the saw mill foundations along the trail.

Hikers travel to mill site

Saturday's hike took us to Plainfield to see and learn about the mills along River Road.

We only saw just a portion of the history here as the snow was deep. A magnificently preserved section of Plainfield, loved it. The Plainfield mill site contains remnants of three mill foundations that date from the early 19th century through the first decade of the 20th century.

The three mills show the progression in waterpower technology that reflects the industrial changes that occurred nationwide at the time. They vary in size and complexity and their different wheel configurations portray changing production practices and waterpower design. Water delivery systems to the mill appear to have changed over time, perhaps reflecting the shifting water regimes that accompanied the re-forestation and farm abandonment trends that swept the 19th and 20th century Massachusetts landscape.

There is much to be learned from the physical remains of the former industry and habitation found in our hills: old stonewalls foundations, wells, mills and kilns create a snapshot of what the landscape might have looked like at some point in the past. Courtesy Plainfield Historical Society.



Tom, Frank, Melanie, Marty and Frankie gather at the old saw mill.

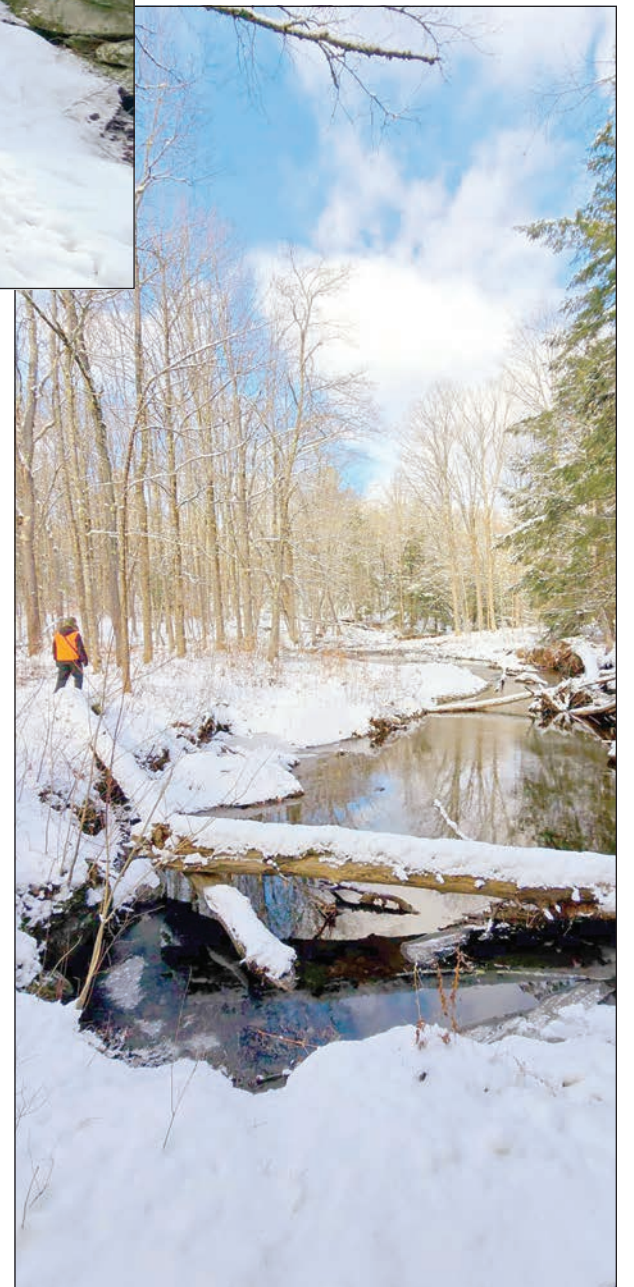
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The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers are shown on the Old River Road.



This is an aerial view of the saw mill foundations.



This was once the mill pond created when the Mill Brook dam was standing



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