

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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German Christmas traditions celebrated by many

By Ellenor Downer
Editor
edowner@turley.com

One did not have to look beyond the Christmas tree to realize the influence of German Christmas traditions.

As Germans migrated to other countries, they brought the tradition of the

Tannenbaum or Christmas tree with them with its display of lights and ornaments. When supplies of evergreen trees diminished due to over cutting, artificial trees made of goose feathers took hold in the 1890s. In the 1930s, a toilet brush company, manufactured artificial trees from brush bristle inventory. Today, these

"fake" trees resemble the real thing without the fir tree fragrance.

Christmas tree

The Christmas tree takes center stage during holiday celebrations in Germany, evoking a profound sense of nostalgia and festivity. Within this cultural practice, families come together to partake in the ritual of embellishing the tree with ornaments, garlands and more. This act not only beautifies the tree, but strengthens familial bonds. Children as well as adult family members love to decorate the Christmas tree. In my family, my father always put on the lights and the angel for the top of the tree. My mother then placed her favorite ornament on the tree, followed by me and my brother.

Christmas pyramids

Christmas pyramids or Weihnachtspyramiden are wooden structures adorned with intricately crafted figurines. As the candles placed at their base flicker, an age-old mechanism sets these pyramids into gentle motion, creating a mesmerizing dance.

Christmas Markets

In the realm of German Christmas traditions, one cannot omit the enchanting Christmas markets, affectionately referred to as



A gold adorned nutcracker stands proudly. Christmas pyramids or Weihnachtspyramiden are wooden structures adorned with intricately crafted figurines. The heat from the candles at their base cause them to spin.

Submitted photos

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THE GRINCH VISITS THE HILLTOWNS



Welcome to Whoville received second place in the civilian open division in the parade of lights in Russell. Dick York is at the wheel of the tractor. More photos on page 12.

Photo by Ashleigh Thouin Blissfully Ann Photography

Stories that made the headlines and Country Journal's pages in 2025

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

JANUARY

January opened with one of the saddest stories of 2025: the valiant effort to save "Vox," a beloved sled dog owned by Marla BB of Hilltown Sleddogs in Chesterfield.

The 9 year-old Alaskan Husky was described on the company's website as, "The hands down most responsible, earnest and peaceful dog in the pack." While in Wisconsin to train the dogs, Vox stopped eating and was found to have an inoperable tumor that involved several key organs. Owner Marla BB

reported that one of the most important lessons of that experience was, "do not wait to show those you love, that you love them."



Also in January, the fourth continuance hearing on an application to cre-



ate a gravel pit on land between Goss Hill Road and the Westfield River was held. Bill Hull of Hull Forestlands had submitted the proposal to the Huntington Zoning Board of Appeals in 2024. The ZBA

required a number of outside studies before the project could be approved, including a traffic study, sound impact, silica dust, and hydrology. Both proponents and opponents to the project spoke at this hearing.

FEBRUARY

On Feb. 5, the Gateway Regional School Committee held a special meeting to hear concerns from 55 Chester Elementary School parents and staff members, reeling from Principal Vanna Maffuccio's leave of absence. And while everyone had an opportunity to speak, many were left frustrated by

not having their questions answered. Under the law, the school district was not able to publicly comment as to the reasons for Maffuccio's absence, the review process being undertaken, nor the expected timeline for a resolution. Chairman Jason Forgue introduced substitute principal Mark Fulton at the meeting. At their regular school committee meeting in February, it was announced that an independent investigator was being hired to conduct the review.

On Feb. 12, a group of domestic violence allies, advocates, and state/local police gathered at Gateway Regional for training in new domestic violence legislation on Coercive Control. This new law went into effect in August 2024 and broadened the ways that victims and survivors of domestic violence can seek legal protection, such as a restraining order. The law added civil complaints to domestic violence law.

In a topic that was carried on Select Board meetings through March, Huntington Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger put forward a proposal on Feb. 26 to bring his

job up to a full time position. Although Ellinger made a strong case for the need and the Select Board continued looking at the issue over a number of meetings, the increase in salary and eligibility for health insurance ultimately left them unable to endorse the plan at this time. The best shot for moving ahead on this, they said, was to create a regional fire chief position to cover a number of towns.

On Feb. 27, Gateway Superintendent Kristen Smidy again faced heat from Chester Elementary School parents about cold temperatures at the school, the result of both boilers malfunctioning over the weekend. The boilers were restarted early Monday morning leading officials to believe the school would be comfortable in short order. Such was not the case, as one boiler continued to malfunction and people in the building reportedly wore their coats, hats and mittens all day. Communications were further hampered by the continued absence of Principal Maffuccio. Parents took to social media on the

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HILLTOWNS

HUNTINGTON

Baby's First Christmas 2025



Catalina A. Ellershaw

June 28, 2025

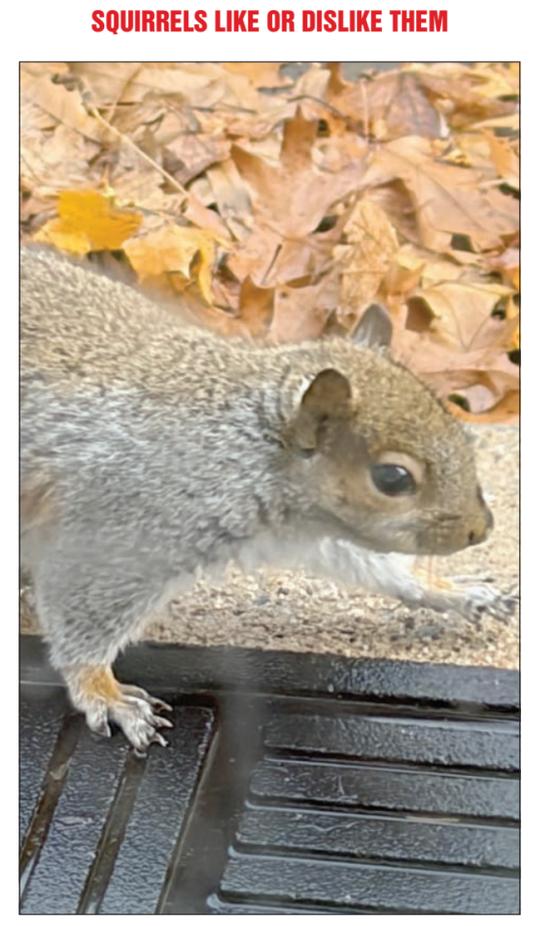
Parents: Steven and Brittney Ellershaw, Woodbridge, VA
Sister: Cheyenne
Grandparents: Terry and Marcy Wirt, New Kent, VA
Donald and Lorraine Ellershaw, Chester



Reece Robert Hopkins

September 24, 2025

Parents: Brian and Jennifer Hopkins, Westhampton
Grandparents: Bob and Joyce Dragon, Westhampton
Julie and Bruce Smith, Lyndonville, VT
Stacy and Greg Hopkins, Lyndonville, VT
Great Grandparents: Connie and Bob Dragon, Westhampton



SQUIRRELS LIKE OR DISLIKE THEM

The photographer named this squirrel. "Alvin." Squirrels are busy little creatures and seen everywhere. They love birdseed and especially peanuts.

Turley Publications photo by Deborah Daniels

GERMAN

from page 1

"Weihnachtsmärkte." They offer an array of holiday foods ranging from sizzling bratwurst to sugary roasted almonds as well as handcrafted gifts, carved wooden toys and ornaments.

Advent calendars

For young children, the days in December leading up to Christmas seem to take forever. For adults, the shortening days of the year make long nights that never end. Advent calendars, another German Christmas tradition, help make the time pass from the first day of the month to Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Advent, the arrival of a notable person, thing or event, in the Christian tradition noted the four Sundays leading to Christmas.

Advent calendars display the dates, Dec. 1 to Dec. 25 and often have pockets or tiny doors to hold a piece of candy or other small treat. There are advent calendar made of wood or some other durable material other than paper, which can be used year after year.

Embodying the spirit of German precision, the Advent calendars stand as a testament to Germany's cultural dedica-

tion to celebrating the holiday season.

Advent wreath

The Advent wreath is another German tradition adopted by many other countries. Many Christmas churches throughout the world observe Advent with the lighting of a different calendar for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.



The Advent wreath is made with evergreen boughs shaped in a circular. It has four candles: three purple and one pink candle with a white candle in the middle. Many wreaths use the same color candle such as blue, red or white.

The candle for the first week of Advent is the Hope or Prophet's Candle. The second week is the Love or Bethlehem candle. The third week is the Joy or Shepherd's Candle and is the final week is the

Peace Candle. The candle in the center of the wreath is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.



The Advent calendar is another German Christmas tradition. It marks the days of December to Christmas Day. Submitted photos

ve also includes a feast.

Christmas Carols

Singing Christmas Carols is another German tradition. During the festive holiday season, cherished carols such as "Stille Nacht" (Silent Night) and "O Tannenbaum" (O Christmas Tree) evoke a profound sense of nostalgia and camaraderie among celebrants. Singing is an important part of the holiday season.

Lebkuchen and Stollen

German Lebkuchen and Stollen are two baked items that are part of their Christmas tradition. Lebkuchen is a soft, nut filled ginger cookie. Stollen is a rum soaked spice cake.

Traditional Christmas drink

Feuerzangenbowle is another German tradition. This drink concoction involves a theatrical presentation that starts with a sugarloaf, drenched in rum, being set ablaze. The sugarloaf melts and drips into a steaming bowl of spiced wine, resulting in the popular holiday drink.

Christmas Pickle

Incorporating a whimsical touch into the age-old tradition of adorning Christmas trees, some German households infuse a delightful element of surprise by discreetly concealing a pickle ornament amidst the lush evergreen boughs. This quaint custom, known as the "Christmas Pickle," has been a cherished holiday practice for generations. Children delight in the hunt to find the "Christmas Pickle."

Nativity Play

During the Christmas season, children eagerly participate in Krippenspiel, a Nativity play that reenacts the timeless story of Jesus's birth. They are complete with shepherds, angels and a humble manger. Many Christian churches hold Christmas pageants during the holiday season.

Other Christmas traditions

On St. Nicholas Day (Nikolaustag), Dec. 6 shoes are filled with surprises. St. Nicholas comes bearing small, but cherished gifts and delectable sweets. The day before, Dec. 5 marks the beginning of Krampusnacht in certain regions of Germany, where the ominous Krampus, the dreaded counterpart of the adored St. Nicholas is unleashed. Krampus roams the streets, punishing misbehaving children who end up on their lists of naughtiness.

Some wreaths have purple candles for the first, second and fourth Sundays and pink or rose colored for the third Sunday. The center candle is usually white. Although some wreaths have candles of a single color such as red, blue or white.

The circular shape of the wreath represents the eternal nature of God. The evergreen branches represents the everlasting life found in Christ.

Christmas Eve candlelight service

Candlelit church services for Christians on Christmas is a cherished tradition for Germans over time. Worshipers gather as the night deepens and hold a lighted candle. Many churches for safety sake use battery powered candles. On church in Central Massachusetts has a crystal candle chandelier, which they light on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve or Heiligabend is known as the "Night of Wonder." For Germans and Scandinavian countries Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 holds a special place in the hearts of its people, as it marks the cherished tradition of the Holy Evening. This is the big gift-giving day. The

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USDA INSP. BACON & EGGS 2 LBS PAK BACON, 1 DOZEN EGGS \$7⁹⁹ lb		USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN 5 LB BOX JUMBO RAW SHRIMP 6-10 CT FOR STUFFING..... \$37⁰⁰ ea

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CHESTER

First Day Hike takes place Jan. 1

CHESTER – Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers and the Department of Conservation and Recreation will hold a First Day Hike on Thursday, Jan. 1 at 10 a.m. at Sanderson Brook Fall.

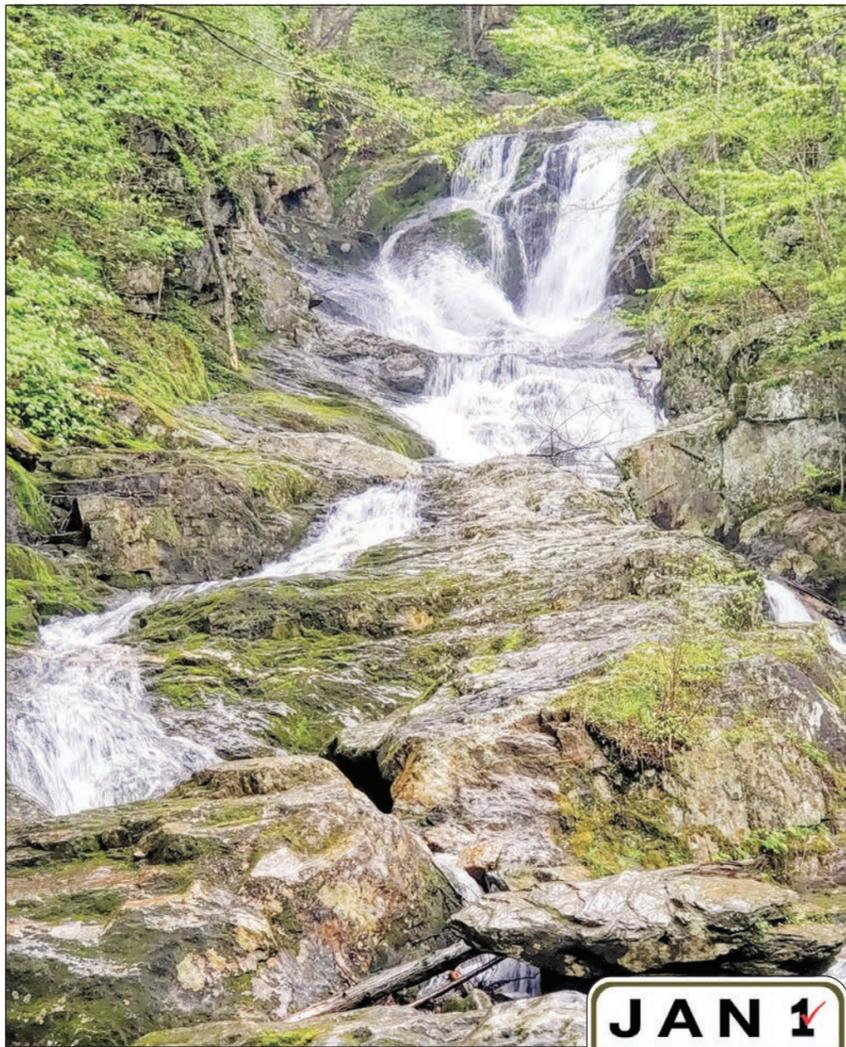
Hikers may park at the Sanderson Brook Falls lot on 631 Route 20 across from Bannish Lumber. The hike has an easy to moderate rating with some uneven footing. It is a two mile in and back. The spur trail to the waterfall slopes downward and is single track. Crampons and walking sticks are recommended if there is snow and/or ice.

Celebrate the New Year 2026 outdoors with the Hilltown Hikers and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and join the nationwide initiative led by America's State Parks to encourage people to get outdoors. On New Year's Day, hundreds of free, guided hikes will be organized in all 50 states.

Hikers across America will be participating in First Day Hikes, getting their hearts pumping and enjoying the beauty of a state park. Last year nearly 55,000 people rang in the New Year, hiking over 133,000 miles throughout the country.

The Chester Blandford State Forest includes remnants of small mining operations and the 60-foot cascade at Sanderson Brook Falls. The state forest was established in 1924 when local lumber companies sold the land to the state. The trail is a wide gravel road, which gently climbs upward.

The trail will cross three girder bridges, dog friendly and follow along Sanderson Brook then take the more narrow trail to the right which takes us to the bottom of the waterfall. They will hike rain or shine. Registration is required. Be prepared for winter conditions, snow and ice gear is recommended. People may register at <https://www.ticketleap.events/events/western->



Sanderson Brook Fall is one of the destinations on the First Day Hike with Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers and the Department of Conservation and Recreation on Thursday, Jan. 1 at 10 a.m. in Chester. *Submitted photos*

masshilltownhikers by car load.

Maps and bottled water are provided. Well behaved dogs are allowed. The event is volunteer lead.

Suggested donation is \$15. More details are available by visiting www.hilltownhikers.com.

People may email westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com or call/text 413-302-0312 if they have any questions. As always be prepared for rocks, mud and roots and

bring trekking poles.

For those who want to hike every weekend year-round, they may become a Hilltown Hiker member. They will get access to private Messenger Group Text with hike and event announcements that are member exclusive events. They may sign up by visiting www.HilltownHikers.com. They may follow on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Tees, hoodies, hats, patches and photos will



This is the First Day Hike logo.

be for sale by donation at the event. All events, maps, blog and photos are at www.hilltownhikers.com.

Tell Us What You Think



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Participate in our opinion pages, or contact us anytime with your feedback!

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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

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor



Why won't Social Security give me my benefits?

Dear Rusty:

I called the Social Security office, as well as went with my husband when he went to collect his Social Security. Because I work full-time at about \$800/week, they said I could not file for my Social Security. Yet I seem to read articles all the time about people doing so.

My husband just filed for his benefits and is now collecting them. Out of the two of us, his Social Security will be larger. Please advise me.

Signed:
Wanting my BenefitsDear
Wanting my Benefits:

If you have not yet reached your SS Full Retirement Age and you are working full time, you are likely being affected by Social Security's Annual Earnings Test, which limits how much you can earn while collecting Social Security prior to your FRA. Your FRA is somewhere between 66 and 67, depending on when you were born. The annual earnings limit for those collecting SS benefits prior to FRA in 2025 is \$23,400 (changes yearly) and, if that is exceeded, Social Security will take away benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. If you applied for your benefits and are still working, and were denied, it's likely because Social Security determined that your current annual earnings considerably exceed the earnings limit and, thus, you cannot collect benefits. That's because the penalty for exceeding the limit would be more than your benefit amount.

FYI, the earnings limit will go away when you reach your full retirement age so, after FRA, you can claim your benefits even if you are still working. Or if you stop working before your FRA you can collect your SS benefits at that time.

None of this means you are losing money, because your monthly SS payment will continue to grow until you later claim

(e.g., after you stop working, or only work part-time), or until you reach 70 years of age. When you later claim, your monthly benefit will be higher and, depending on your longevity, you may recover what you didn't get now because you are working. And that includes both your own SS retirement benefit and any spousal boost you may be entitled to from your husband.

So, my suggestion is this: as long as you are working full time and exceeding Social Security's annual earnings limit, continue to wait to claim your Social Security. Then, when you reach your full retirement age – again, between 66 and 67, depending on the year you were born or if you stop working before that, go ahead and apply for Social Security again.

At that time, your application will be approved, and you will be awarded your own earned SS retirement amount plus any additional amount you may be due as your husband's spouse. To be entitled to a spousal boost from your husband, your own FRA entitlement must be less than 50% of your husband's FRA entitlement. But the amount you get will be reduced if you claim before your full retirement age.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for informational purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

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.



POETRY CORNER

Giving Us Christmas

Hark! We listen for the bells, of winter,
Not to die-out - on the sleigh;
Tho' wheels, and sheet-iron frame the creature,
However you get along your way.

For much was given us to keep going -
Some rich pagan lore out of Germany;
Mistletoe handed down from the romantic Oak,
On yonder British Isles across the sea.

And tho' hungering still along a snowy
Path - it was the Victorian victory:
To give us Christmas as we
Know it, - and the tree.

And we set it midst faiths heartfelt music
And the miracle of still being free.
Charles Barnes

EDITORIAL

Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus

By Francis P. Church in 1897

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say that there is no Santa Claus. Papa says "If you see it in the Sun, it is so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with

the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to our life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your Papa to hire men to watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, or even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else as real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, maybe 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.



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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countryjournal@turley.com



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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

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Stuffing the sock a Christmas tradition

By Deborah Daniels
Guest Columnist

How much stuff can you stuff in a Christmas stocking? Well that was all you had to fill for Christmas in the 1800s. Given the cold weather of late, it seems amazing they would have had a stocking to spare to hang for Christmas. Layers were their only protection from the cold.

Those stockings were hand knitted and much needed for immediate wear. But wet weather necessitated them to be hung by the fire to dry and that is how the treat filling began. Folklore has it that St. Nicholas dropped coins down the chimney into the stockings hung by the fire.

Originally the tale went it was gold coins given to provide a dowry for a young woman too poor to wed her sweetheart. Then the story evolved from giving gold coins to placing oranges in the stockings. Oranges were a rare treat and much valued as a gift in the 1840s. Oh if life could be so simple, to give a gift of a piece of fruit for Christmas?

It was Clement Clark Moore who first described the Christmas Eves of yore as receiving a stocking stuffed with fruit and candy and maybe even a coin if you were very lucky. Molasses was a popular candy, but when it was used as a stocking stuffer, that was a disaster never to be repeated. It certainly ruined a sock when the candy melted into the wool. Fruit was a much safer sock filler and still considered very much a treat even into the early 1900s.

By the 1950s gifts were getting a life of their own. Those hand made socks and mittens were being left lying forlornly under the tree. A 1954 New York Times article was titled "Gifts to Make the Christmas Stocking Plumper" all available for \$2 or less.



The red felt with white trim were the traditional 1950s era Christmas stockings.

Turley Publication photos by Deborah Daniels

This patchwork design make popular Christmas stockings.

The pressure was on to knit and sew puppets, make doll clothes and to save popsicle sticks for building things. Home made popcorn balls and fudge were very much appreciated treats. People became very creative despite the image you might have of Barbie dolls and Lionel trains sets reigning as supreme gifts.

Originally socks were made to come up to your thighs and garters were needed to hold them up for both men and women. Those would never do for holiday socks too much filling needed. Home sock makers were rescued by the automatic knitting machine created in 1858.

Although the Reverend William Lee had first invented the knitting machine in 1598. Nevertheless a tradition endured for many kids to have a Christmas stocking made by Grandma. How many of you have a home-made Christmas stocking?

The traditional red felt Christmas sock with white trim came about in the 1950s. It was store bought and hung by the chimney in the hope that St. Nicholas would fill it. Never mind many homes had no fireplace, it was promi-

nently displayed where Santa could not miss it.

It was filled with the simplest things such as candy, a real kid pleaser, scraps of cloth to fashion doll clothes with, popsicle sticks to make your own tinker toys and shoe boxes decorated to become your very own rock, bug or leaf collection kit. Store bought toys soon took over making life a whole lot more complicated for parents. But those parents were also finding it hard to

make time to create gifts and Mattel and other toy makers were hard at work making enticing toys that mostly did not fit in a Christmas stocking.

The magic of a filled Christmas stocking continues, so release the inner kid and indulge in a little treat for yourself. Place it in a Christmas stocking and be sure your name is on it. Happy Holidays!



A 1950 photo of stockings hung with high hopes.



Submitted photos

This picture inspired the Christmas stocking story. It is a photo taken sometime between 1890 - 1920 by the Allen sisters, artistic photographers in Deerfield.



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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.



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

CHURCH DIRECTORY



Your Community Church

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-fduamqHYeekw5w
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.

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
pvaglfe@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.

event with many calling Smidy directly. "People should be mad about it," Smidy said. "I am not downplaying it. They're not wrong that it was unacceptable and it was poorly handled. It will not happen again."

Also in February, Steven V. Cormier announced an upcoming series of community talks about the building of Knightville and Littleville Dams based upon the research he completed for his most recent book, "The Sacrificial Land," which was published last year.

MARCH

March opened with the announcement on March 1 that Health Education Teacher Abbey Keeler was Gateway's recipient for a 2025 Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Principal Dr. William Sullivan praised the nomination, "Ms. Keeler is an extraordinary teacher who genuinely cares about each of her students, always going above and beyond to support their needs and growth. She is very involved in many aspects of school life and her impact is palpable. She is a team player who inspires her colleagues and students alike."

Also in March, the Huntington Public Library launched a new speaker series called "A Day in the Life." In honor of Women's History Month, the March 15 speaker was Air Force Reserves Veteran Brenda Chaloux, who spoke about a day in the life of a flight medic. Chaloux served for 22 years as a flight nurse in the Air Force Reserves and retired as a Lt. Colonel. In the military, she was deployed to Qatar, Macedonia, Kosovo and Washington D.C., where her role was the management, care and transport of American wounded warriors from originating facilities to more definitive care, other bases or home. Books about women in the military were also available for patrons who wanted to learn more.

The fourth annual Trivia Night benefit for the Gateway Education Foundation was held at the former Blandford Elementary School on Saturday, March 22. The evening included the trivia contest, a door prize raffle and 50/50 raffle, which together raised over \$3,500 for the Foundation. GEF formed in 2012 to enhance the educational opportunities of students in the Gateway Regional School District. At the time of the event, GEF had funded 125 projects totaling \$119,000 for "out of the box" learning opportunities such as author visits, interviews with holocaust survivors and a field trip to study the physics of roller coasters.

When Huntington Police Chief Robert Garriepy was appointed to the job in February 1994, he held the record, since broken, as the youngest chief in the Commonwealth. His retirement was publicly announced at the Huntington Select Board meeting on March 26. The board reluctantly accepted his retirement and thanked him for his service to the town. He left his position on June 27 after over 31 years of service to the town.

APRIL

A contingent of Gateway students and staff traveled to the Boston State House on April 8 to testify before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means about the need to equitably fund rural schools. Eighth graders from Christopher Mosher's social studies class at Gateway Regional School and fourth graders from Chester Elementary School advocated for chang-

es to the Chapter 70 formula. Julie Kelley from the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools wrote in her newsletter, "The 4th grade Gateway students completely stole the show though, by testifying that less than 50% of districts benefit from the current funding formula and 50% is a failing grade. That comment immediately hit home to everyone in attendance and was extremely impactful."

The 70th Annual Westfield River Wildwater Races, which included canoes, kayaks and stand up paddle boards, took place on Saturday, April 19 with warm temperatures and overcast skies-what many racers called perfect conditions. There were 24 competitors in the expert race and 155 registered in the classic race. Longtime racer and for many years race organizer Jeff Defeo completed his 50th race this year. Defeo said he started racing right out of high school in 1974.

Thanks to a \$9,500 Veterans Heritage Grant from the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board, the Russell Historical Commission was able to secure a permanent home in April at Strathmore for a plaque honoring the employees of the Strathmore Paper Company, who served in World War I. Originally arranged by the paper company's owner Horace Moses, the 150 pound tablet was once housed in a community building in Woronoco that Moses built for his employees and their families. From there it went to the VFW and later to a closet in the Russell Select Board office. The tablet was dedicated at the Council on Aging picnic last spring.

Also in April, the Country Journal announced an upcoming "March for a Match" to be held at Look Park on May 18, to try to find a kidney donor for Goshen resident Adam Gagne. At age 15, Gagne achieved the rank of Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America. As an adult, he went on to lead scout troops for 33 years and helped another dozen teenagers get to the rank, with three of them bestowing their mentor pins back to him. One of those former scouts-David Jeffway-was part of the team of organizers for this event.

MAY

A continuance of a yearlong public hearing to consider a gravel pit on Hull Forestlands was held at Stanton Hall on Tuesday, May 6, with 52 people attending. The meeting was over in about 20 minutes, with the applicant asking to withdraw their application without prejudice and the Zoning Board voting their approval. An application being withdrawn with prejudice would mean that the application is dismissed. By withdrawing without prejudice, the applicant can legally reapply in two years.

Dr. William Sullivan, Gateway Regional School Principal, announced that fourteen juniors were inducted into the Dana O. Webber Chapter of the National Honor Society on Wednesday, May 7. This marked the 61st induction ceremony for the school. It began at 6 p.m. in the Gateway Performing Arts Center. Inducted were Jeffrey Antonellis, Bow Briggs, Theodore

DeAngelis-Page, Kathryn Harding, Ana Holmes, Elizabeth Kadzik, Jake Marchbanks, Eliza Mueller, Lily Peloquin, Grace Renauld, Justin Rucki, Desmond St. Martin, Ashley Taske and Michael Whitaker.

The 34th Anniversary of Chester on Track, took place on Saturday, May 17. This growing event was held at the Chester Railway Station and Museum, at Emory Park, and at numerous sites throughout downtown Chester. It included an opening parade, train show, live music, children's activities, historical reenactments and food. The Chester Postmaster used a commemorative postal cancellation on outgoing mail for that day, designed to celebrate the little-known first use of helper locomotives to climb the grade over the Berkshires, beginning in 1841.

Gateway's student awards ceremony was held on Wednesday, May 28 and provided academic, athletic, scholarship and extra curricular awards to the student body. Taking top awards for the Class of 2025 were Valedictorian Olivia MacIvor, Salutatorian Jesse Balboni, and Golden Achievement Award winner Cynthia Papillon.

JUNE

Former Chester resident Harriet Gilman turned 104 on June 3, and received the Golden Cane at a ceremony at Armbrook Village in Westfield the following day with family, other residents, elected dignitaries and a contingent of friends from the hilltowns. She was also present for a special celebration at the First Congregational Church of Chester held June 1. The town of Chester had previously presented Gilman with a Golden Cane on her 100th birthday in 2021. Gilman attended a one room school on Skyline Trail in Chester and graduated from Chester High School as Valedictorian. She went on to the Massachusetts State College (now UMASS) in 1943 and majored in home economics. After following her husband Jim through a distinguished military career, they returned to her childhood home on Bromley Road to run a blueberry farm.

The Journal also ran a story about brothers Michael and Brian Lupario, who started Western Mass Hemp in 2019 to find a holistic solution to the pain and discomfort they'd seen among family members who have Multiple Sclerosis (MS). They grow hemp on a two-acre plot in Chesterfield. Once the hemp flowers are har-

vested, they produce their products in the Drowsy Kitchen, a commercial kitchen available for rent to small vendors in Chester. They give farm tours throughout the summer and sell their products online at WesternMaHemp.com and at community events.

In a virtual meeting held on June 25, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation announced a five-year project to restore the widely known "green bridge" in Huntington that starts at the intersection of Routes 112 and 20 and crosses the West Branch of the Westfield River and the CSX Railroad. About a half-dozen community members attended the live meeting. The construction is expected to start around April 2026 and be completed within 5 years and 2 months. It is estimated to cost \$26,527,329.33 and will be funded by the Commonwealth; however, Federal sources will be sought if such funding becomes available. During non-winter conditions, people can expect one lane of traffic over the bridge managed by a three-way stoplight.

This year marked a great deal of change for the Gateway Regional School District. In addition to the departure of the superintendent, 2025 saw the retirements of Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk and District Treasurer Deb Kuhn. Curriculum Director Deanna LeBlanc left to become Curriculum Director for Maynard Public Schools. In a reorganization spearheaded by Smidy before leaving, former visually impaired teacher Amy Mason became Business Manager and former Administrative Assistant Stacy Stewart was named Human Resource Director. Joan Tuttle, who had worked at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for nearly twenty years, was named Gateway's Director of Accountability and Grants. Art teacher Christine O'Malley, who served Gateway for 29 years, was the final retiree recognized at the School Committee's annual reception held on June 11.

JULY

Huntington's new Police Chief Brian Kowal was sworn in by Town Clerk Michelle Fieldstad-Booth in a ceremony that took place on Tuesday, July 1. Kowal replaces the town's retiring police chief Robert Garriepy, who served in that role for over 30 years. Present were Kowal's girlfriend Caitlin McCue, Selectboard Chairman Roger Booth, Town Administrator Jennifer Pelouquin, Garriepy, and Mike O'Neil from the Massachusetts State Police. The event entailed taking the oath of office, having his chief of police badge pinned, and photos being taken for posterity.

Also in early July, the Huntington Community Events Committee announced their summer music series lineup on the town green, at the corners of Rt. 20 and Rt. 112. Music was available every Thursday evening from July 10 through Aug. 21. Music lovers were invited to bring their lawn chairs (but not their pets!) to enjoy these performances. Regardless of weather, the show went on with performances moving into Stanton Hall when necessary. A special Appreciation Picnic for the town's residents kicked off the series on July 10.

On July 16, former Gateway student, teacher, assistant principal and principal Todd Gazda returned to the district as Interim Principal at Chester Elementary School for the 2025-2026 school year. He grew up in Middlefield and had previously lived in Chester before leaving to become Superintendent at Ludlow for nine years and Executive Director at the Collaborative for Educational Services for four years. "My goal is for every child to feel valued, feel they belong, and when they go home, they can't wait to tell their parents what they learned," Gazda said.

That same day, the Grey Catbird Studio had a change of business. Sherri Church, new owner of the Grey Catbird Gift Shop opened in the former Gino's pizza space. Displaying the work of 77 local artisans, the shop showcased a range of items including barrettes made from silver spoons, wooden bowls, jewelry, pottery, greeting cards, natural cosmetics, bags, hats, sweaters, afghans, toys, books, and walking sticks/canes among them. Selling and relocating the gift shop gave the pottery studio (located next door) owner Dale Rogers the space she needed to grow

her art classes. Sadly, just a few weeks after opening, the gift shop suffered severe smoke damage from a fire and closed.

Huntington resident and local author Steve Hamlin published his second book: "Travel on \$50/day (or less!): Camping in the U.S. and Beyond." The book chronicles lessons from his transition from tent to van camping and the challenges and rewards of seeing the country on a budget. This new tome is available in ebook and paperback form from Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Hamlin's first book, "Birds of Eastern North America: An Adult Coloring Book" came out in 2017.

AUGUST

New attendance records were set over the first two days of the 103rd Littleville Fair, which opened Aug. 1 under sunny skies, low humidity and comfortable temperatures. The Littleville Fair continued to feature ongoing renovations to the old grounds and buildings, numerous food options, live music, animal contests, a petting zoo, and some interesting attractions, such as a blueberry pie eating contest, cross saw competition, and frying pan throwing contest. Oxen and tractor pulls were augmented by a children's pedal tractor pull. And the always popular demolition derby drew such a record crowd this year that Saturday's cars filled up the fairground and were parked along Kinnebrook Road and all the way down to Dayville Dam-about 3/4's of a mile away.

The Gateway Regional School Committee held an executive session on Aug. 5 and successfully negotiated a three-year contract with their choice for Gateway's next Superintendent, Dr. Melissa Matarazzo. After about an hour, the committee returned to open session and unanimously voted to approve that contract. Matarazzo began on Aug. 15 at a prorated salary for the first year of \$155,000. Matarazzo was previously the Chief Administrative Officer for Studer Education, an educational consulting firm.

Despite the many efforts of individuals and organizations, a historic home on Chester Hill was demolished on Aug. 18. Dating back to 1769, the home was built by area residents to entice the Reverend Aaron Bascom to become the first minister in the then frontier town of Murrayfield and serve what later became the First Congregational Church of Chester. A joint statement read, "The Chester Historical Commission and the Chester Historical Society are devastated by the loss of the Reverend Aaron Bascom House on Skyline Trail. Shortly after its founding in the mid-1980's the Chester Historical Commission reached out to the owner to discuss the historic importance of the house and options that may be available for the restoration of it. After that initial contact, all further attempts to communicate with the owner were not successful."

Middlefield resident Kim Baker was inducted into the Corvette Hall of Fame in Bowling Green, Kentucky on Friday, Aug. 29, 2025. Baker won his first race at Lime Rock Park almost exactly 40 years to the day before the induction ceremony. In fact, Baker won so many races in the 1980's the Corvette was temporarily restricted from competing in the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) races in 1988. When the SCCA reinstated the Corvette in 1991, Baker and his team promptly took another world challenge championship. Three people-representing racing, Corvette enthusiasts and GM-Chevrolet employees-have been inducted



Two days later, 34 seniors graduated from Gateway Regional on Booster Field. The commencement guest speaker was Superintendent Kristen Smidy, who had started her job at Gateway when the Class of 2025 started high school and had earlier announced that she was leaving Gateway to become an Associate Director of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Valedictorian Olivia Melvor was the first graduate to the stage and handed Dr. William Sullivan a glass container with

"Class of 2025" painted on it. One by one, as the seniors were called to the stage for their diplomas, each dropped a golf ball into the container, in support of their principal's favorite hobby.

Also in May, the Country Journal announced a new health service in the hilltowns. The Wellness on Wheels bus from Baystate Medical is available to all area adults on the first Thursday of each month. Located at the Pioneer Valley Assembly of God Church, 63 Old Chester Road in Huntington, the bus is on site from 9 - 11:30 a.m. There is no fee and people's insurance is not charged. An RN is available to conduct blood pressure screenings and A1C (diabetes) point of care test, which uses a finger prick. Results on both screenings are available immediately.

annually since 1998.

We also covered a new business in Huntington in August. "We're looking to serve both the homeowner and the contractor," explained Jon Groff, owner of Integrity Trailer Sales and Repairs—a new business on the site of the former Smith's Sled Shop on Route 20 in Huntington. Integrity Trailer offers a range of sales and services including trailer repairs, parts sales (for those who want to do their own work), selling and installing replacement truck beds, installing tow packages, and installing strobe or reverse lights for plow contractors and emergency personnel. In the Fall, Groff also opened a UHAUL dealership on the site where he rents trucks, vans and trailers and sells moving supplies to save hill-towners a trip out of the area.

A 44-star American flag dating back to the 1890's was donated by Sherry (Kenyon) Henry to the Chester History Museum, located at 221 Route 20 in Chester. The museum, which is run by the Chester Historical Society, was open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. every Sunday through September 28, giving the public a chance to view this item. According to John Hultman, President of the Chester Historical Society, the flag measured 15 feet by 24 feet and went into effect in July 1890 when Wyoming became the 44th state to join the union. It was only used until July 1896, when Utah became the 45th state.

SEPTEMBER

The town of Williamsburg, Massachusetts had an influx of visitors on Saturday, Sept. 13 for their annual Grange Fair, a town-wide tag sale, and their first ever "porchfest." Porchfest was a new addition to the Grange Fair weekend and visitors were able to stroll the downtown area to see free, live performances from a diverse lineup of musicians. Performers included Louise Coombe, Michael Ewen Madden, Paired Down, Stephen Katz, Holly Muñoz, Stلالuna, Don Chiulli, Wild Thyme, and Electric Castle, and a singalong with Jennifer Black.

Also on Sept. 13, fire departments and emergency

responders from area towns gathered at the Knightville Dam pavilion to celebrate Charles "Chipper" Dazelle's 43 years of service to the Huntington Fire Department. Dazelle officially retired as a Deputy Fire Chief on July 30 and had started as a young firefighter in the town. The celebration was hosted by the Huntington Fire Association and included Dazelle's family, friends, well-wishers and members of the Montgomery Fire Department, Chester Fire Department and Hilltown Community Ambulance. Dazelle's service to the town extended well beyond the fire department. He served the water and sewer department for 36 years; the Huntington Highway Department for 28 years; and as a town Constable for 25 years. He is now in his third year as the Superintendent of the Chester Highway Department.

Dale Rogers' "Empty Bowls" project launched on Sept. 27 and continued on the next three Saturdays: Oct. 4, Oct. 11 and Oct. 18. Rogers, master potter Linda Siska, and their students from the Grey Catbird Pottery Studio created over 200 bowls for the events, which were held across the hilltowns. For a \$25 donation, patrons could select a bowl and, as a thank you, receive a serving of chicken noodle or vegetable soup (made by Moltenbrey's Market) and a dinner roll (made by the Mennonite youth group). All of the funds raised went to the Food Pantry at the Pioneer Valley Assembly of God Church, which has seen a rise in the number of people using the pantry while grappling with a 50% cut in funding.

OCTOBER

Friends, current and former staff, dignitaries, patients and well wishers gathered at the Worthington Historical Society on Saturday, Oct. 4 to celebrate the Hilltown Community Health Center's 75 years of providing quality health care in Western Massachusetts, as well as 55 years as a Federally Qualified Community Health Center. As was pointed out by Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Michael Purdy in his opening remarks, HCHC's Federal designation predated the national health center movement by 15 years. Awards were given to staff on the basis of votes by their peers. Five individuals were honored with Founders Circle Awards: Roy and Helen McCann, Mary Allison, Steffen Plehn, John P. Musante, and Arlo Guthrie.

The plight of local farm stand owners was also the subject of an article in October. Most of the farm-stand owners interviewed reported a rise in patrons underpaying or taking items and not paying at all. One stand even had a customer pretend to reach into the cash box to pay, only to make off with the goods AND the cash. These stands are more than just a side hustle for the families: many of them rely on the proceeds to help with the cost of maintaining livestock that produce the food, such as chickens, goats, and cows. One stand supports a horse rescue operation on their farm.

October was National Book Month and the Russell Town Library announced their new Library Director, Jennifer Waldorf. A former staff member at the library, Waldorf stepped up when previous director Dawne Piers-Gamble decided to cut back. Waldorf said she doesn't plan to make a lot of changes and will keep going on the good path they are already on. They have just started sending out an electronic newsletter, which lists new books and upcoming events. She encourages people who want to stay up to date with what's going on to subscribe by emailing rpdirector162@gmail.com or calling 862-6221.

Our interview with paranormal podcaster Patricia Baker ran just in time for Halloween. Baker's podcast, Supernatural Girlz, has released over 550 episodes with topics ranging from UFO's to the afterlife and everything in between. Supernatural Girlz has been ranked in the top 3% of podcasts globally by Apple Podcasts. It reaches thousands of devoted listeners every Tuesday evening through YouTube and Rumble, and provides lead-

ing-edge conversations with scientists, mystics, authors and experiencers of the extraordinary.

NOVEMBER

Area Veterans visited Gateway schools in November to help teach students about life in the military and the purpose of the holiday. On Friday, Nov. 7 local members of the American Legion Ruth Kennedy (who served in the U.S. Air Force) and Jim Cortis (U.S. Navy) read the picture book "Rolling Thunder" by Kate Messner. Kennedy explained that the book tells the story of the annual motorcycle ride to Washington D.C. to keep the memory of MIAs (Missing in Action) and POWs (Prisoners of War) alive. Kennedy and Cortis were also at Gateway Regional School and later Littleville Elementary School on Monday, Nov. 10 along with a number of other Veterans who visited with individual classrooms and spoke with students about their military service. Students and staff organized a hallway tribute for the Veterans at the end of the day, waving flags and clapping as the former service people walked down the hall.

On Saturday, Nov. 8, Chiefs from the Huntington and Westhampton Fire Departments met with State Senator Paul Mark to share issues that they are facing due to unfunded mandates, an uncertain grant funding outlook, prevailing wage limitations, and anticipated equipment needs that arrived two years ahead of schedule. Among the items discussed was funding needed for a shared water cistern between the two departments, challenges small towns encounter due to the prevailing wage state requirement, and Verizon's recently announced decision to no longer support the analog emergency radio system in use by most fire departments—two years ahead of schedule. As a result, the interoperable radio system that is currently in place between the towns of Huntington, Montgomery, Russell, Chester, Blandford, Westhampton and the Hilltown Community Ambulance, which is vital

during mutual aid responses, will no longer work and is estimated to cost over \$700,000 to replace with digital radios.

Fifth graders at Chester Elementary School braved inclement weather on Monday, Nov. 10 to make improvements to a trail to the West Branch of the Westfield River, located behind their school. This was the fourth day of work for Anne Marie MacDonald's class on the project, funded by a grant from the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Committee. Earlier this fall, MacDonald's students researched the invasive species that existed along the trail: Barberry, Burning Bush, Knot Weed, Multi Flora Rose, and Oriental Bittersweet. Armed with their research, they tagged the invasives by tying them with pieces of red yarn. On the 10th, the students returned with Pete Westover and Andy Vecchio from Conservation Works, who provided tools and instruction on not only removing the invasives but also creating a new, easier trail to the river that, when finished, can now be used by the younger grades in the spring and fall to access this outdoor learning space.

DECEMBER

December opened with a look at the many hilltown groups helping families secure food, clothing and gifts for the holidays. These items are available thanks to the work of Hilltown Community Health Center's Family Center, It Takes a Village, the Pioneer Valley Assembly of God Food Pantry, Gateway Regional School's National Honor Society (NHS), the Blossom Center, Hilltowns CARE, and the Huntington Public Library.

The schools are also taking part in food and clothing drives for those in need. Chester Elementary School students crushed their goal of collecting 200 foot items for the local pantry, so Interim Principal Todd Gazda upped the ante from the original award of an extra recess. If the kids could bring their total up to 350 items, he would let them tape him to the cafeteria wall. By the time school closed for the

Thanksgiving break, the students had brought in 540 items and Gazda kept his promise at an assembly on Friday, Dec. 5.

Gateway also held their annual Sr. Citizen Brunch and Concert on Thursday, Dec. 4. Inclement weather on third pushed the event forward a day and resulted in some people being unable to attend (due to a COA bus trip from the hilltowns). Nonetheless, a delicious brunch was created by the food services staff and served by members of the high school's National Honor Society. From there, guests adjourned to the Gateway Performing Arts center to hear music from six performing groups from Gateway Regional School.

Town Administrator Andrew Alward completed his first three months of employment with the town of Chester. The former 3-term selectman from the town of Millville spoke about the fiscal and legislative challenges faced by small towns and spoke about two key projects for 2026: selling the old Chester Elementary School building and updating the town's policies and procedures.

Alward also organized a Select Board meeting held on Monday, Dec. 8 between town personnel and board members from the Chester Railway Station and Museum to iron out the last steps in moving an old train car to the museum's location on Prospect Street. Currently, the rail car is waiting next to the railroad tracks behind the Chester Common Table Restaurant for the final phase of its journey, which started at Bernie's Dining Depot in Chicopee on Nov. 25. The meeting allowed timeframes and details to be worked out between the museum, the contractors hired to oversee the move, and various town departments including the fire department, highway department and police department, who are all planning for emergency contingencies while the only road from town to Prospect and Emory Streets is closed for the railcar move, scheduled for noon on Monday, Dec. 22. This event will be covered in the Dec. 31 edition of the Country Journal.

Happy New Year

Happy Holidays & Thank You for Supporting Local Journalism

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NORTHAMPTON

Cooley Dickinson marks 10 years collaboration with Mass General Brigham

NORTHAMPTON – Among the many milestones of 2025, Cooley Dickinson Hospital marked 10 years since welcoming the first patient to its state-of-the-art cancer center and a decade that Cooley Dickinson and Mass General Brigham have been providing world-class cancer care to the Pioneer Valley community.

“This is a tremendous milestone for Cooley Dickinson, Mass General Brigham and the thousands of patients and families who have benefitted from this exceptional collaboration,” said Kevin Whitney, DNP, RN, president and chief operating officer of Cooley Dickinson Hospital.

“We are committed to combining the personal care of a community hospital with access to world-renowned medical experts. That is the promise of offering Mass

General Brigham Cancer Institute care here at Cooley Dickinson Hospital.”

Ahmad Daniyal Siddiqui, MBBS, medical director of Medical Oncology at the Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute at Cooley Dickinson Hospital, explains that the majority of cancer care is provided in the community setting.

“Patients, who need chemotherapy or radiation therapy have access to Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute experts, right here in the community, who follow same treatment regimens, protocols and safety guidelines as the experts in Boston. Treatment is coordinated by a collaborative Mass General Brigham cancer team, that enables patients to remain close to home, surrounded by family and friends, and in a familiar environment.

“In some cases, it does

make sense for people to go to Boston for care and in those instances, we make sure that patients receive the right treatment in the right place. We coordinate their care with subspecialty physicians at Mass General Brigham and provide local support as seamlessly as possible.”

A cancer diagnosis can be scary and anxiety-provoking for patients and their families. The teams of doctors, nurses, and support staff who work at the Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute at Cooley Dickinson Hospital are available to help. Nurse navigators meet with newly diagnosed patients to assist with access issues, coordinate appointments and assist with referrals to community resources. Oncology social workers understand that a cancer diagnosis impacts patients and families physical and emotionally and pro-

vide support for issues related to cancer diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. They also provide assistance in accessing local community resources. In addition, palliative care providers support patients who are facing serious illnesses, focusing on reducing stress and pain, coordinating care and enhancing quality of life. They also offer resources and support for a patient’s family members and loved ones.

According to Joel H. Schwartz, MD, former interim medical director of Medical Oncology for the Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute at Cooley Dickinson Hospital, “the relationship between Cooley Dickinson and the Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute has delivered countless benefits to patients and providers alike.”

Cooley Dickinson caregivers participate in month-

ly updates with specialists from across the Mass General Brigham system, sharing innovations in care and treatment as well as important research advances emerging from national meetings. Liaison roles have been created in breast cancer, gastrointestinal oncology, hematology, thoracic oncology and urologic oncology to enable CDH providers to have immediate expert support in managing complex treatment plans. Through this relationship, patients also have access to clinical trials where novel therapies are emerging for the treatment of various malignancies.

Caring for patients also includes attending to logistical details. For patients who need to see experts in Boston, Cooley Dickinson offers a free round-trip, daily shuttle service to Mass General Hospital, Brigham and

Women’s Hospital and Mass Eye and Ear in Boston.

The 28-passenger, wheelchair-accessible shuttle bus is equipped with free Wi-Fi and runs Monday through Friday, excluding major holidays that are observed by Mass General Brigham. Patients are permitted to have one companion to ride the shuttle with them and reservations are required. For more information, visit cooleydickinson.org or to make a shuttle appointment, people may call 413-966-8011. In addition, Cooley Dickinson began offering complimentary valet service at its Main and North entrances Dec. 1.

Since the Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute opened at Cooley Dickinson 10 years ago, thousands of local patients have had access to world-class care and compassion and experienced firsthand the benefits of this extraordinary partnership.

Faces of Grief exhibit spotlights personal stories of loss

NORTHAMPTON – Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice and The Garden: A Center for Grieving Children and Teens announce a collaborative photography exhibit with Springfield Technical Community College titled Faces of Grief.

This exhibition will run from Tuesday, Jan. 20 to Friday, Feb. 6, 2026, at the Carberry Fine Arts Gallery on the Springfield Technical Community College campus, 1 Armory Square, Springfield with a public reception scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Faces of Grief invites viewers into the intimate world of loss and remembrance. Under the guidance

of Professor Sondra Peron, STCC darkroom photography students will capture portraits of grieving individuals holding, wearing, or displaying objects that connect them to loved ones who have passed away. Each portrait will be developed as a gelatin silver print and gifted to the participant following the exhibition.

“Grief is often a silent experience,” says Shelly Bathe Lenn, Bereavement Coordinator at Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice. “This project offers a powerful way to honor those who have died and to open up conversations that help us feel less alone.”

Lenn, who has led

grief support groups across Western Massachusetts since 2002, uses creative rituals and dialogue to help individuals navigate the complexities of mourning. Her work with The Garden and Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice continues to foster healing spaces for children, teens, and adults.

The Faces of Grief exhibit aims to de-stigmatize grief and transform discomfort into connection. All are welcome to attend the reception and view the portraits that reflect love, memory, and resilience.

For more information or to participate, people may call Shelly Bathe Lenn at 413-727-5749.

DA’s Office awarded \$60,000 grant

NORTHAMPTON – The Northwestern District Attorney’s Office received a \$60,000 grant

through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program.

Administered by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security’s Office of Grants and Research, the grant assists with a wide range of public safety efforts, from officer training and community-based violence prevention programs to technology upgrades and forensic improvements.

The \$60,000 awarded to the NWDAO will support several critical public safety initiatives, including:

Proactive Investigations: The Massachusetts State Police Hampshire/Franklin Detective Unit and the Northwestern District Anti-Crime Task Force (NDATF),

in partnership with NWDAO prosecutors, will continue proactive efforts to identify and disrupt online criminal activity involving exploitation of minors and vulnerable adults.

Technology and Evidence Management: NDATF will acquire secure storage equipment to preserve seized mobile devices during long-term digital investigations.

Domestic Violence and Coercive Control Training: NWDAO will train law enforcement on recognizing and responding to reports of coercive control and other non-physical abuse in intimate partner relationships.

Emergency Medical Professional Training: Funding will support training for emergency medical personnel on intimate partner violence and non-fatal stran-

gulation.

Public Awareness Campaign: NWDAO will develop and distribute intimate partner violence awareness posters on local bus routes ensuring that victims and survivors have access to resources and support information in the community.

District Attorney David E. Sullivan stated, “Online exploitation and domestic violence occur at an alarming rate, often out of public view and behind closed doors. This funding is critical to our efforts to address these serious issues and strengthen the community safety net for our most vulnerable residents.”

The NWDAO serves Hampshire and Franklin counties and the town of Athol, working to ensure public safety through prosecution, prevention, and community partnership.



Northampton Fire Department responded to a fire Tuesday, Dec. 16 on Fort Hill Terrace in Northampton. Submitted photo

Fatal fire being investigated

NORTHAMPTON – One person is deceased after a residential fire on Fort Hill Terrace Tuesday, Dec. 16 at night, said Northampton Fire Chief Andrew Pelis, Northampton Police Chief John D. Cartledge, State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine, and Northwestern District Attorney David E. Sullivan.

Northampton Fire/Rescue responded to 29 Fort Hill Terrace just after 9:20 p.m. following a report of a structure fire. While en route, they received additional information that a person might be trapped inside.

Firefighters arrived to find heavy smoke and flames at the two-story, single-family home. Northampton Police offi-

cers were already on scene and had attempted to make entry, but were forced back by high heat and fire conditions.

Firefighters immediately began an attack on the fire. When they made entry to search for occupants, they located one person who was pronounced deceased at the scene. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will determine the cause and manner of death.

One other occupant was able to escape. Firefighters battled the flames for about an hour before bringing it under control. The first companies at the scene did not hear smoke alarms sounding.

The origin and cause of the fire are

under investigation by the Northampton Fire Department, Northampton Police Department, State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal’s office and State Police detectives assigned to the Northwestern District Attorney’s office. They are supported by the Department of Fire Services’ Code Compliance and Enforcement Unit.

The fire departments of Easthampton, Hadley and South Deerfield provided mutual aid at the scene. The Whately Fire Department and Williamsburg Fire Department provided station coverage. The Department of Fire Services deployed a Rehab Unit to support firefighter health and safety.

WESTHAMPTON

Westhampton Public Library announcing upcoming January programs

WESTHAMPTON – The Westhampton Public Library, 1 North Road, is open Monday and Thursday from 2-8 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday from 9 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

The library will be closed Thursday, Jan. 1 and Monday, Jan. 19. To place a request for curbside pickup, people should email westhampton@cwmars.org or call 413-527-5386.

Recurring library programs include: computer help with Bob Miller, second and fourth Mondays from 10 a.m.-noon; knitting group Mondays at 6 p.m.; yoga Mondays at 6 p.m.; Scrabble group Tuesdays at 2 p.m.; book group fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m.; walk-in wellness clinics with Westhampton’s public health nurse first and third

Wednesdays 10-11:30 a.m.; coffee and chat Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-noon; energy advocate office hours third Wednesdays at 1 p.m. (Jan. 21) and tech connect drop-in tech help Thursday, Jan. 22 from 2-4 p.m.

Yoga is drop-in, first-come/first-served and registration is not required. People should check Facebook and the town calendar for updates on yoga at the library. Holidays may impact schedule.

CFCE playgroup meets Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. Story time with Emily is Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

There is a rotating schedule of after school fun at Westhampton Public Library every Thursday at 3:30 p.m. All children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult or sibling 12 years of age or older.

There will be no Lego Club due to the holiday.

Open crafting is the second Thursdays Jan. 8 at 3:30 p.m. Switch Happy Hour is the third Thursday, Jan. 15 at 3:30 p.m. Comics club is the fourth Thursday, Jan. 22 at 3:30 p.m. Drop-in games is the fifth Thursday, Jan. 29 at 3:30 p.m. Teen craft nights are the third Thursday, Jan. 15 at 6 p.m. This month’s craft will be a moth and lunar phases wall hanging. Teens should email Emily at ewayne@cwmares.org to sign up.

Thanks to a grant from the Northern Hilltown Council on Aging and Tech Connect: Success for Older Adults, the following devices are now available for a three-week loan: Android Galaxy Tablet, Casio Keyboard, Kindle Paperwhite EReader,

HP Chromebook Laptops. For more information, people may visit <https://tinyurl.com/439y6p3d>.

On Thursday, Jan. 22 from 6-8 p.m. Mary Cleary will be at the library for a watercolor workshop. People can access their inner artist by learning watercolor techniques to compose a unique work of art. Supplies provided. They may sign up at the Westhampton Library as space is limited or register by emailing westhampton@cwmares.org or calling 413-527-5386. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Public Library and the Lyn Keating Programming Fund for sponsoring this program.

On Thursday, Jan. 29 at 6 p.m. local educator, Julia Volkman will discuss her recent TEDx talk on how

common teaching practices inadvertently work against the brain’s natural learning systems. She is an educator, researcher and mentor, who has been teaching students and mentoring educators in both private and public school settings since 1997. She is a faculty member of the Brain Health Initiative, a guest lecturer for Harvard University’s Neuroscience of Learning course and the founder and president of Maitri Learning, an educational project devoted to evidence-based and child-centered learning.

Volkman earned her AMI 3-6+ diploma from the Montreal Montessori Training Centre, a bilingual program, and her master’s degree from Harvard University, where her graduate research on the Montessori movable

alphabet earned the Harvard Dean’s Prize for Outstanding Research.

On Saturday, Jan. 31 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. people can come and discover with Roslyn new ways to use writing, drawing, humor, self-compassion and more to bring greater peace and joy into their life and relationships. This workshop will be presented by Roslyn Malkin, Ph.D. She is a personal and spiritual mentor, author, family business consultant, world traveler and lover of bad puns. People may visit liveyourgreatness.net. Light refreshments will be provided. Optional, people may bring a small object to help create a sacred space. To register, people may call 413-527-5386 or email westhampton@cwmares.org.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Mount Holyoke College announces new scholarship fund

SOUTH HADLEY – The life and groundbreaking legislative career of Mount Holyoke College alum Congresswoman Nita Lowey '59, the first woman to chair the powerful House Appropriations Committee, will be celebrated through a new scholarship fund.

The college announced that, thanks to the Lowey family's generous endowment, the Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey Scholarship Fund will assist MHC students studying politics and public policy.

"Nita started her change making right here on campus, as so many of our

students do through student activism," said Mount Holyoke College President Danielle R. Holley. "A daughter of Mount Holyoke, Nita carried the mission of the College to educate students for purpose and leadership directly into the halls of Congress for service."

"This scholarship fund is a testament to Congresswoman Lowey's 32-year career as a political trailblazer," said Heather K. McDonald, associate vice president of development at Mount Holyoke College. "Her boldness and tenacity will be reflected by generations of Mount Holyoke

College students who push past limits and bring change to their communities and the world."

Lowey made history by winning a seat in Congress in her early 50s in 1988 and, over 16 terms, rose to one of the top positions on Capitol Hill as the first woman chair of the House Appropriations Committee. During her tenure in Congress, Lowey sponsored and cosponsored numerous bills, including the International Violence Against Women Act, Protect Access to Birth Control Act, The Heroes Act and Further Continuing Appropriations Act.

Her legacy of principled leadership and advocacy inspired generations of Mount Holyoke students and alumni, including students participating in the College's Semester in D.C. program. Lowey passed away in March 2025 at 87 years old.

"Nita believed that education had the power to transform young people's lives. Her time as a student at Mount Holyoke was a seminal experience and an enduring inspiration for her. Nita worked tirelessly during her 32 years in Congress to create and support programs that empower women and children. From

family planning to equal status for women in medical research, international education and after-school programs, Nita's impact was deep and wide," said Stephen Lowey, on behalf of the Lowey family. "In recognition of Nita's leadership and many accomplishments on behalf of education, a bipartisan Congress honored her by naming the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the international Nita M. Lowey Basic Education Fund. Our hope as a family, by endowing the Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey Scholarship Fund at

Mount Holyoke, is to continue her legacy of empowering students through education to become leaders and pursue positive change in the world."

Those wishing to contribute to the Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey Scholarship Fund may do so by either emailing giving@mtholyoke.edu, by calling 1-800-642-4483 (1-800-MHC-GIVE) or by visiting mtholyoke.edu/mhc-give. On the website, under "I would like my gift to support," please select "other" and write "Nita Lowey Scholarship Fund" in the comments section.

WESTFIELD

Brent Bean named vice president/business development officer

WESTFIELD – James C. Hagan, president and CEO of Westfield Bank, announces the appointment of Brent Bean as vice president and business development officer.

Bean, who previously served as assistant vice president, business development officer, has been appointed to vice president, business development officer and will continue to establish relationships with new and existing customers focusing on commercial credit needs throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut.

"Brent brings a valuable mix of experience, market knowledge and a genuine commitment to helping our region's businesses achieve their financial goals," said Allen J. Miles, executive vice president and chief lending officer at Westfield Bank. "He works with businesses across Massachusetts

and Connecticut, bringing the full power of the Bank's commercial lending capabilities to current and future customers."

Bean joined the bank's business and government deposit services department in 2020, before moving to the commercial lending department. Prior to that, he spent many years as director of corporate and government relations at Westfield State University.

He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from American International College and a Master of Public Administration from Westfield State University. He is active within the local community, currently as a member of Westfield



Brent Bean

State University's Fundraising Committee and has been an At-Large City Councilor for the city of Westfield since 2002.

For more information about Westfield Bank, people may visit the bank's website at www.westfieldbank.com.

Westfield Bank, headquartered in Westfield, is a federally chartered savings bank organized in 1853 and is the largest publicly traded bank headquartered in Western Massachusetts. Currently, the bank has twenty-five branch offices, forty-nine ATMs and an additional thirty seasonal ATMs and serves Hampden and Hampshire counties in Western Massachusetts and Hartford County in Northern Connecticut.

Westfield Bank promotes Anja Paier and Michael Mirski

WESTFIELD – James C. Hagan, president and CEO of Westfield Bank, announces new title appointments for two key employees, Anja Paier and Michael Mirski.

These appointments recognize the success and impact each of them continues to have in their respective areas.

Anja Paier who previously served as assistant vice president, branch manager, has been appointed vice president, branch manager and will continue to manage the Bank's 39 Morgan Road office in West Springfield. She joined Westfield Bank in 1988 and has worked in numerous management and customer-facing capacities across multiple locations. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the West Springfield Lions Club and the Exposition Area Alumni Scholarship Fund, is a past member of the Southwick Rotary Club, and is a past recipient of Rotary International's Paul Harris Fellow and Western Mass Women Magazine's "Top 25 Women to Watch" in the banking category.

Michael Mirski, who previously served as assistant vice president, branch manager, has been appointed vice president, branch manager and will continue to manage the bank's 560 East Main Street office located in Westfield. With over forty years of banking experience, he joined Westfield Bank in 2023, having served in various officer and management roles at banks throughout the local area. Active in the community, he is the President and past Treasurer of the Agawam Center Library, a past Board Member for Springfield Revitalize CDC and past member of the Southwick Rotary Club.

"Anja and Michael bring experience and expertise to their roles, consistently leading their teams to meet the needs of our customers and



Anja Paier



Michael Mirski

communities," said Kelly A. Pignatere, First Vice President and Manager of Retail Banking and Business & Government Deposit Services. "These appointments recognize their continued success and the growth of their respective branches."

For more information about Westfield Bank, people may visit the bank's website at www.westfieldbank.com

Westfield Bank, headquartered in Westfield, is a federally chartered savings bank organized in 1853 and is the largest publicly traded bank headquartered in Western Massachusetts. Currently, the bank has twenty-five branch offices, forty-nine ATMs and an additional thirty seasonal ATMs and serves Hampden and Hampshire counties in Western Massachusetts and Hartford County in Northern Connecticut.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Notice of Chester Special Permit Granting Authority Public Hearing
Special Permit Review for a Proposed Earth Removing Project located at 15 Kinnebrook Road, Chester, MA 01011

The Planning Board of the Town of Chester, as the special permit granting authority, will hold a public hearing to conduct a special permit review for a proposed addition of a removal of earth and gravel operation located at 15 Kinnebrook Road, Chester, MA.

The public hearing will be held as follows:

Place: Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Council on Aging room

Date: January 28, 2026

Time: 5:00 pm

The special permit review is for a proposed addition of a removal of earth and gravel blasting operation which includes crushing of ledge and trucking out dirt at 15 Kinnebrook Road. The purpose of this removal is to create a parking area.
12/18, 12/25/2025

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 01/07/2026.

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: December 17, 2025

Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
12/25/2025

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. HD25C0286CA

In the matter of: Margaret Aileen Ranen CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME A Petition to Change Name of Adult has been filed by Margaret Aileen Ranen of Montgomery, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:

Margaret Aileen Lufkin
IMPORTANT NOTICE
Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 01/16/2026.

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.
WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: December 12, 2025

Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
12/25/2025

SOUTHERN HILLTOWNS Public Hearing – Monday, January 12, 2026, at 6:00 PM

FY 2024 Performance Hearing & FY 2026 Application Forum

The Town of Chester, on behalf of the Towns of Huntington, Middlefield and Russell, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will conduct a performance hearing regarding the town's ongoing FY24 Community Development Block Grant Programs. The hearing will take place at 6:00 PM on Monday January 12, 2026, in person at the Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA 01011.

The hearing will review the projects funded through the town's FY24 Community De-

velopment Block Grant Program including Phase II of the Prospect Street Improvement Project, public social services, and housing rehabilitation. These activities received funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Massachusetts CDBG program.

This hearing will also serve as the first public forum to solicit community input on potential activities to be included in a potential Southern Hilltowns FY26 Community Development Block Grant application. All community members and stakeholders are

invited to share thoughts on potential CDBG-eligible activities to be included.

All persons with questions or comments regarding the performance hearing will have an opportunity to submit comments up until and through the public hearing. Please submit comments to Joe Hagopian at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission @ jhagopian@pvpc.org or 413-781-6045. Persons who require special accommodations should contact the Town prior to the hearing date at 413-354-7760.
12/25/2025

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.

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Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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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.

WINDSOR

First Day hike set to take place at Tamarack Hollow

WINDSOR – A First Day hike to a waterfall and boreal spruce- fir forest snowshoe will take place on Thursday, Jan. 1 from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Tamarack Hollow Nature and Cultural Center, Savoy Hollow Road.

Director and naturalist Aimee Gelinis M.Ed will lead a hike or snowshoe trek on the recently conserved land and trails and a cascading waterfall along with winter boreal/northern forest tree ID, wildlife tracking and forest ecology. This is supported from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Berkshire Environmental Endowment a Crane Funds. Program fee is \$20 per person and \$5 snowshoe rental fee if trails require snowshoes. Participants may also bring their own snowshoes. Program will be a hike if conditions do not require snowshoes. Registration is required by emailing full_circle_o@yahoo.com.

Tamarack Hollow Nature & Cultural Center and Gaia Roots World Music present every Monday West African and Caribbean drum and song classes with Aimee Gelinis at the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, Pittsfield at 5:30 p.m. beginner and 6:30 pm. advanced. Registration is required for all new students. Class cos is: \$10 per class per person. Drum rental fee is \$5. For registration or for more information, people may email: full_circle_o@yahoo.com.

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Light cavalry
5. Coconut palms
10. Rounded knob
14. Central Japan city
15. Sandwiches
16. Shape produced by a curve
17. Ancient region in modern-day Syria
18. French modernist painter
19. Grandmother
20. Mammary gland of cattle
22. Rocky peak
23. Secret plan
24. Songs to one's lover
27. More (Spanish)
30. Father
31. Chinese principle underlying the universe
32. Ballplayer's accessory
35. Together
37. A person's brother or sister

CLUES DOWN

1. Two-toed sloth
2. Fat from a pig's abdomen
3. Romanian city
4. Specifies
5. Rounded, glaciated valley
6. Spoke
7. Collection of sacred books
8. Extravagantly theatrical
9. Very fast airplane
10. Forearm bones
11. Ancient kingdom
12. Legitimate: __ fide
13. Semitransparent gemstone
21. Counsels
23. Head honcho
25. Cool!
26. Touch lightly
27. Extract money via taxation
28. Dyes
29. Cloying sweetness
32. Sodas
33. Coastal village in Guam

34. Chemical ring
36. The bill in a restaurant
37. Car mechanics group
38. One-time presidential candidate
40. Health care for the aged
41. Wise persons
43. Passage with access at one end
44. Make a wound
46. America's spies
47. Roof of the mouth
49. Plants of the lily family
50. Pinkish-red color
51. Vaccine developer
52. Mottled citrus fruit
53. A place to store garden tools
54. Rare goose native to Hawaii
57. Popular Hollywood pig
58. Musician Clapton
59. A move exposing one to danger
61. Historic Spanish soldier
62. CNN's founder

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES
Mar 21/Apr 20

If you are feeling half-hearted about what you are working on, then put it off for a little bit and focus on something more interesting this week, Aries. You can use the rest.

CANCER
Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, you may have the courage and the confidence to deal with whatever life throws at you right now, but not everyone is as dedicated as you. Make allowances for others this week.

LIBRA
Sept 23/Oct 23

You have reason to be suspicious of someone's motives this week. Just don't go to extremes and start reading into every message or nuance, Libra.

CAPRICORN
Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, usually you couldn't care less what other people think about you. But this week it seems important to get another person's approval for your actions.

TAURUS
Apr 21/May 21

Make it your business to remind others not to take life so seriously this week, Taurus. The best way to do that is to show them how to laugh by example.

LEO
Jul 23/Aug 23

Sensitive feelings are coming to the surface and you are not sure what to do about them. You won't find peace of mind until you have dealt with them.

SCORPIO
Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, you might look super confident on the outside, but underneath you get anxious like everyone else. At some point this week you may need to ask for some help.

AQUARIUS
Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, be careful when dealing with someone in a position of power. They may have sights on a promotion you also hope to earn. Keep your cards close to the vest.

GEMINI
May 22/Jun 21

Your thoughts are on an important decision that you need to make, Gemini. It's best to wait a few days before you get into the thick of things. You need to mull all possibilities.

VIRGO
Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, some unexpected news could come your way between now and the weekend. It may seem like a lot, but in the grand scheme of things, it will only be a minor issue.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov 23/Dec 21

It is easy to believe you have enemies around every corner, Sagittarius. Although you might have rubbed a few people the wrong way, most people actually are on your side.

PISCES
Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, some people believe the world is full of doom and gloom, but you know that every day is what you make of it. Brighten the days of others with your positivity.

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

SUDOKU

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!

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!

answers

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

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

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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 **Friday, Dec. 26 at 3 p.m.**

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EASTHAMPTON

bankESB raises \$42,000 for local food pantries

EASTHAMPTON – Matthew S. Sosik, president and CEO of bankESB, announced that the bank's fifth annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraising drive raised \$42,000 for local food pantries.

This brings the program's five-year total to \$161,734.92. The appeal is part of bankESB's charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, which reflects the bank's commitment to making a difference in the neighborhoods it serves.

Throughout October, the bank invited customers, employees, and members of the community to donate at bankESB branches. All donations received were matched, dollar for dollar, by bankESB and the total divided among

food pantries in Western Massachusetts communities the bank serves.

Each of these participating food pantries received \$3,000: The Best Life Food Ministry in Agawam, BUCC Helping Hands Cupboard Food Pantry in Belchertown, Easthampton Community Center Food Pantry in Easthampton, Easthampton Congregational Church Food Cupboard and Oasis Kitchen, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Chicopee, The Hadley Food Pantry in Hadley, Hilltown Food Pantry in Goshen, Lorraine's Soup Kitchen, Margaret's Pantry in Holyoke, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Inc. in South Hadley, Northampton Survival



Shown from left are Jessica West, AVP, branch officer, bankESB; Robin Bialecki, executive director Easthampton Community Center and Robyn Michaud, branch manager, bankESB. Submitted photo

Center in Northampton Not Bread Alone in Amherst, Southampton Community Cupboard in Southampton and Westfield Food Pantry in Westfield.

"On behalf of bankESB, I'd like to thank all those who generously donated to our Neighbors Helping Neighbors fundraiser to help fight food insecurity in our communities," said Sosik. "We're pleased to host this annual appeal and that so much was raised to help families in need this holiday season and into this new year."

Founded in 1869 as Easthampton Savings Bank, bankESB is headquartered in Easthampton and has 11 locations throughout Western Massachusetts.

RUSSELL

Russell Public Library announces news and events

RUSSELL – The Russell Public Library, 162 Main St., is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3-7 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

The library will be closed Jan. 1 through 3, Jan. 17 and Jan. 19, 2026.

The adult monthly book club will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 6 from 6-8 p.m. The book is "Tom Lake" by Ann Patchett. Books are available at the library. To register, people may call 413-862-6221 and leave a message, email rpldirector162@gmail.com or come in and

sign up at the library by Monday, Jan. 5.

The February adult monthly book club on Tuesday, Feb. 3 from 6-8 p.m. The book is "Raven Black" by Ann Cleeves. Books will be available by mid-January.

On Friday, Jan. 9 from 3-5 p.m. adults may learn the game of Mahjong. Materials and step by step directions will be provided to learn this game of skill and chance. They should register by email at rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message or come in and sign up at the library by

Thursday, Jan. 8.

On Tuesday, Jan. 13 from 6-8 p.m. there will be a creative quilting workshop. Quilting involves using strips of paper that are rolled, looped, curled, twisted and otherwise manipulated to create different shapes, then glued together to create decorative designs. Decorate a framing mat, ornament or make cards. Materials will be provided. People may register by email at rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message or come in and sign up at the library by Friday, Jan. 9.

Children may join Miss

Dawne for "Dinosaur Day" on Wednesday, Jan. 14 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. They will read, handle real fossils and see how many of their feet can fit in a dinosaur footprint. Then they will build paper plate dinos to take home. There is no fee. They should register by email at rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message or come in and sign up at the library by Tuesday, Jan. 13.

On Saturday, Jan. 24 from 2-4 p.m. for "The Forgotten Valley," a slideshow presentation prepared by Chad Donovan-Hall featuring the families, homes

and points of interests that were located with-in Knightville and Indian Hollow before construction of Knightville Dam. There is no fee. People may register by email rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message or come in and sign up at the library by Thursday, Jan. 22.

For adults, who enjoy working on puzzles, the library now have an ongoing community puzzle set up in the front room for people to tackle. They may enjoy a warm drink from the coffee table as they work on the puzzle.

Holy Family Parish lists Christmas Mass

RUSSELL – Holy Family Parish, 5 Main St., will hold Mass on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 at 4 p.m.

The Mass intention that evening will be for Henry Daglio offered by his son, Marty and wife, Pam.

On Thursday, Dec. 25, Christmas Day, Mass will be held at 9 a.m. There will be only one Mass offered this day. The intention of this Mass is for an enduring peace among all peoples. The parish welcomes people to join then in celebrating the birth of our Lord and His everlasting love for all.

PARADE OF LIGHTS



Taking first place for first responder/professional category in the Russell Parade of Lights was the Holyoke Fire Department. Photos by Ashleigh Thouin Blissfully Ann Photography



First place in the civilian/open division went to the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers. They had a truck pulling a float, which had a bubble/snow machine on it.



Ray Reed drove this tractor with the inflatable Santa and trees. It won third place in the civilian/open division.



Third place went to the Chester Fire Department antique fire truck.



Second place in the first responder/professional category went to the Huntington Fire Department.