

"Liberty finds no refuge in a jurisprudence of doubt." – Sandra Day O'Connor

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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

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BLANDFORD

Santa's Elves to the rescue, Raven 'ExtriCATed'

Santa's Elves, in the guise of Blandford's Volunteer Firefighters salvaged Christmas Eve and made an heroic rescue at the home of Judy and Mick Brennan on Otis Stage Road.

Judy said that the family was "celebrating Christmas Eve with our children and grandchildren and what an adventure unfolded." Raven, a black domestic cat, came along for the visit with granddaughter Julia, who had spent the night before with the Brennans.

As Julia and her dad, Conor, were getting ready to leave for home in South Hadley, Raven was nowhere to be found.

He was finally located in a heating duct in the attic. You know cats and curiosity. But Raven was stuck and out of anyone's reach, according to Judy. So the family called for help, dialing 911.

The call was toned to the Fire Department at 7:51 p.m. and stated, "Caller reports that



Blandford firefighters rescued Raven, the cat, from a heating duct. Submitted photo

CAT, page 6

BLANDFORD

Select Board hears tax proposal

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The Select Board heard the annual tax classification proposal from Harald Scheid, President of Regional Resource Group and Regional Tax Assessor.

The hearing was Wednesday, Dec. 20. The recommendation from the Board of Assessors was for "the Select Board to adopt a single tax rate to be applied to all classes of property in Blandford."

The Select Board voted, in accordance with Mass. General Law Ch. 40, sec. 56 to maintain the single tax rate.

The town has historically only ever had a single tax

TAX, page 6

BLANDFORD



By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The Town enjoyed a relatively calm 2023.

The Council on Aging continued to be an asset to the community throughout the year with the van available for transportation and the regular monthly breakfasts and luncheons. The COA is always available as a resource for seniors.

A number of grants were awarded to the town for road work, tree removal, library outdoor space and a free-standing solar powered information display unit among others, thanks to the efforts of Town Administrator Christopher Dunne.

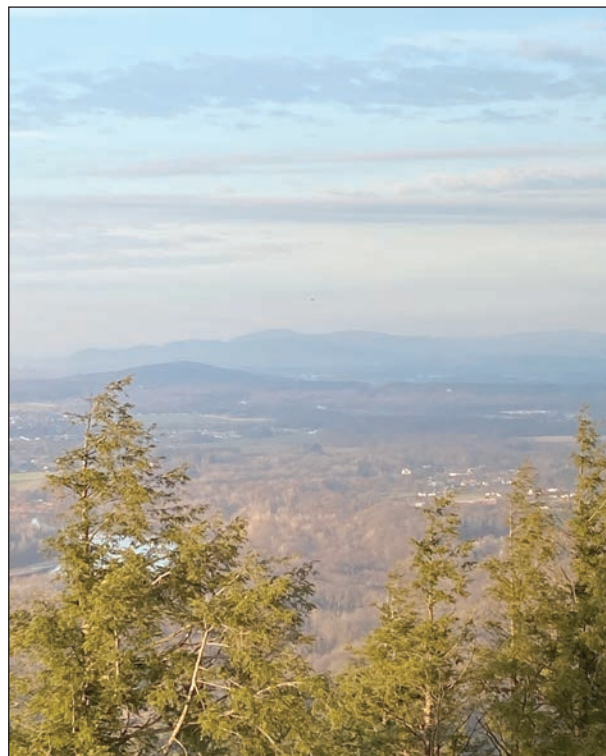
The Porter Memorial Library continued to play a part in serving the community. Events, both special and regular ongoing brought all ages to the

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Looking west from Skinner Mountain



This photo shows the Connecticut River below during a hike up Skinner Mountain earlier this month.



The view during the hike to Skinner Mountain shows Easthampton and South Hadley.



This is a view from Skinner Mountain as the sun started to set in the west. Turley Photos by Deborah Daniels



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HILLTOWNS

State Public Health Institute helps fund 413Cares Resource Portal

SPRINGFIELD – Local legislators presented a \$200,000 check from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts to support its 413Cares initiative, which connects people with the critical resources they need in an online portal.

The event took place at PHIWM offices, 127 State St.

The check presentation was attended by State Senator Adam Gomez, State Representatives Michael Finn and Carlos Gonzalez and an aide representing Senator John Velis, along with representatives from organizations partnering with the Public Health Institute on the 413Cares initiative.

The funding was secured for 413Cares in the FY2024 state budget as the result of a legislative earmark, sponsored by Representative Finn and Senator Gomez. Funding was secured through the Department of Public Health.

Launched in 2019 by PHIWM with the sup-

port of Baystate Health, 413Cares.org is an online community resource database for Western Massachusetts. The platform has reached more than 100,000 searches and over 111,000 interactions with programs in the region. Top searches were for housing, food resources and health-related resources.

PHIWM has received funding from the Commonwealth in the past two legislative budgeting cycles to support 413Cares, which is managed by PHIWM. Resources from the State have been used to collect data during and after the pandemic and have also been utilized to improve and update the 413Cares.org website, and raise awareness of the resource in the region.

Due to promoting awareness of the portal and building partnerships made possible by the state funding, in 2023 413Cares saw a 234% increase in website traffic over the previous year and a sharp increase in referrals through the website to com-

munity-based organizations. Feedback from users on the platform indicated that they found the services they need 71% of the time.

This year, the state resources are funding three new regional partners to provide outreach, promotion and support of the platform: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Quaboag Hills Community Coalition, and the Hilltown Community Health Center. This is in addition to existing regional partner Community Action Pioneer Valley, funded by Baystate Health.

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts was formed over 20 years ago with the goal of using data and its convening power to create collaborative partnerships in building a public health system through a health equity lens. The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts is building this through community engagement, collaborative partnerships, research and evaluation and policy advocacy.

MassDOT announces the winners of name a snowplow contest

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces the winners of the second annual, Name A Snowplow contest for statewide elementary and middle school students in Massachusetts.

The winning plow names are Flower Plower, Edward Blizzardhands, Glacier Gobbler, Polar Pathmaker, Snow B Wan Kenobi, The Snolar Express, Sleetwood Mac, Snow Place Like Home, Snowhemian Rhapsody, The Mayplower, Snow Monstah and Fast and Flurryous.

This contest received entries from public school

classrooms from across Massachusetts. The contest chose names for 12 MassDOT snowplows that will be in service during this 2023/2024 winter season. The purpose of the contest is to celebrate the snow and ice season and to help recognize the hard work and dedication shown by public works employees and contractors during the winter season.

“Keeping our roads across Massachusetts clear and safe every winter is a tough job. We are glad to see educators engage their students in a fun competition that pays tribute to this essential public service,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica

Tibbits-Nutt. “I want to congratulate the winning classrooms and look forward to seeing all of the snowplows in the field.”


Winning submissions for K through fourth grade: District 1 Chester Elementary School in Chester, fourth grade teacher Mikayla Menin, plow name Flower Plower; District 2 Franklin Avenue Elementary in Westfield, first grade teacher McKenna Mortimer, plow name Glacier Gobbler; District 3 Heritage School in Charlton, third grade teacher Beth Simoncini, plow name Snow B Wan Kenobi; District 4 Linden STEAM Academy in Malden, fourth grade teacher Katie Carter, plow name Sleetwood Mac; District 5 Brookfield Elementary School in Brocton, fourth grade teacher Catelynn Maloney, plow name Snowhemian Rhapsody and District 6 UP Academy Dorchester in Boston, fourth grade teacher Katherine Brea, snow plow name Snow Monstah.

Winning Submissions for fifth through eighth grade: District 1 Buckland Shelburne Elementary School in Shelburne Falls, sixth grade teacher David Conlon, snow plan named Edward Blizzardhands; District 2 Mahar Regional in Orange, eighth grade teacher Kyle Magoffin, snow plow name Polar Pathmaker; District 3 Burgess Elementary School in Sturbridge, fifth grade teacher Melissa Forni, snow plow name the Snolar Express; District 4 William Diamond Middle School in Lexington, eighth grade teacher Cecilia Vosland, snow plow name Snow Place Like Home; District 5 Orleans Elementary School in Orleans, fifth grade teacher Cirrus Farber, snow plow name the Mayplower and District 6 Pollard Middle School in Needham, seventh grade teacher Ken Lundberg, snow plow name Fast and Flurryous.

Applications for the Snowplow Naming Contest were submitted by Friday, Dec. 1. There was no limit to the number of applications that could have been submitted per school.

A selection panel composed of MassDOT employees chose two elementary school classroom winners that are located within each of the six Highway Division districts. The winning submissions were evaluated based on two grade-level categories: 1) kindergarten through fourth grade and 2) fifth grade through eighth grade.


For more information on the contest, people may visit <https://www.mass.gov/name-a-snowplow-contest-2023-24>.



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The 2024 Career & Education edition publishes **the week of January 10th-12th**
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MIDDLEFIELD

Middlefield announces events

MIDDLEFIELD – The Select Board’s final meeting of 2023 will be on Friday morning, Dec. 29 at 10 a.m.

Meetings are typically alternate Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m., but the board will consider Friday morning meetings if there is positive feedback for that time. The next scheduled meetings will be 6:30pm Wednesday Jan. 10 at 6:30 p.m. and on Wednesday, Jan. 17 the board will meet with the Finance Committee to begin shaping the budget for next year.

The Finance Committee has been handing out Budget Request forms to all departments. They can be returned to the Finance slot at Town Hall.

Administrative Assistant, Mark Doane, will be reducing hours to Mondays from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and Wednesdays prior to evening Select Board meetings. Doane can now post calendar items and minutes to the new

town website.

People may visit www.Middlefield-ma.com for the new email addresses for all departments. The old website (middlefieldma.net or site) will be unavailable after Friday, Jan. 5, so all departments are asked to finalize their new email addresses and migrate any old emails they intend to keep before that deadline.

Coffee and Chat with Select Board member Tamarin Laurel will be on Saturday, Dec. 30 from 10-11 a.m. at the Middlefield Library. These chats are held on every other Saturday and other dates are Saturdays, Jan 13, and Jan 27. It is an informal setting for any questions and comments from constituents.

Town Administrator, Sean Curran’s, luncheon postponed from December, will be on Saturday, Jan. 13 at noon at Town Hall. It is open to all Middlefield residents.

COA lists menu

MIDDLEFIELD – The Middlefield Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail on Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024 will serve lunch at noon.

The menu is eat in or take out. The choice is vegetable lo mein or meatballs with red sauce, pasta, summer squash and French Bread. People should call 413-623-9990 to reserve a meal the previous Friday, Dec. 29. Suggested donation is \$3.

The Northampton nurses will hold a blood pressure clinic and presentation on diabetes.

Free lunch on Jan. 13

MIDDLEFIELD – The Town of Middlefield will be having a free lunch for Middlefield residents on Saturday, Jan. 13 2024 at noon in the Town Hall Auditorium.

The menu includes roasted chicken, potatoes and vegetables. State Senator Paul Mark will be in attendance to discuss upcoming events.



Third Fridays Crafts master, Sue Schneller (facing, center), shows young and old how to make pinecone gnomes, at December’s craft night at Blossom Center. Submitted photo

Blossom Community Center announces upcoming events

MIDDLEFIELD – Blossom Center, located at 16 Bell Road, will have a New Year’s Day brunch at 11:30am on Monday Jan 1 at 11:30 a.m.

The monthly Bingo on First Fridays will be Friday, Jan. 5 from 5:30-7 p.m. Second Sundays are collaborative cooking at 3 p.m. with eating at 5 p.m.

Third Mondays have Potluck Dinner at 5:30 p.m. Third Fridays have fun and easy craft projects at 5:30 p.m. Deliveries of excess groceries to pass on appear unexpectedly. For updates, check Facebook: Blossom-Center Middlefield. The regular calendar of activities can be found by visiting www.BlossomCenterMA.org.

RUSSELL

Russell Public Library list 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.

Adults are invited to a presentation by Dave Pierce on Saturday, Jan. 6 from 2-4 p.m. on “The Coming of the Railroad to the Moon.” Dave will share his extensive knowledge about the construction of the rail line through Russell, Huntington, Chester and Middlefield, the Keystone Arch Bridges and the Western and Boston Albany Railroads. 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 Friday, Jan. 5.

Teens are invited to drop in with their friends on Wednesday afternoons in January for a choice of games and/or crafts. They may also check out the ever expanding young adult book section. They should let staff know if there are favorites they’d like the library to buy.

Preschoolers may join Miss Dawne for a guided story walk of “Winter Sleep” on Tuesday, Jan. 9 from 1-2 p.m.. It will be followed by an interactive

activity in the library. If the weather is yucky, they will read inside.

Children are invited to “Pajama Day” on Saturday, Jan. 20 from 10:30 a.m.-noon. They should wear their PJs, bring a stuffy and get cozy with books a craft, cocoa and cookies at the library. This is open to everyone and no registration is required

Adults and families may attend Wild Life Tracking with Jim Pelletier at Noble View Outdoor Center, 635 South Quarter Road, on Saturday, Feb. 3 from 10 a.m.-noon for families. The Russell Library in collaboration with Appalachian Mountain Club will sponsor this program.

Pelletier is an experienced tracker and naturalist, who makes hiking and seeking tracks fun. Family tracking will be followed by a story, games and cocoa. If it is a nice day, participants may bring a lunch and enjoy the view. The adult program will run from 1-4 p.m. People should register by email to rpldirector@townofrussell.us, call 413-862-6221 and leave a message or come in and sign up at the library by Wednesday, Jan. 31.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



Are spousal benefits always a factor?

Dear Rusty

Both my wife and I have worked our entire lives.

When we retire, will we both be entitled to full benefit amount each or will there always be a spousal factor in there? Also, how are those benefits calculated – based on your highest salaries throughout your career, or your ending salaries when you retire?

Signed: Looking Ahead

Dear Looking

Prior to retiring from work is a smart time to investigate how Social Security will fit into your golden years. To answer your second question first, each person's personal SS retirement benefit is based on the highest earning 35 years over their entire lifetime, with earlier years adjusted for inflation.

The person's Average Indexed Monthly Earnings, essentially the person's lifetime average inflation-adjusted monthly earnings amount, is first determined.

Using AIME, the person's Primary Insurance Amount is calculated using a special benefit formula which will yield a PIA of about 40% or less of the person's AIME. The PIA is the amount received if benefits start in the month full retirement age or "FRA" is attained, as you can see, Social Security likes acronyms.

Since you and your wife were both born after 1959, FRA for both of you is 67. The age when you claim benefits, relative to your FRA, determines how much you'll get. Claim before FRA and your benefit is reduced; claim after your FRA and your SS retirement benefit will be more (up to age 70 when maximum is reached); claim at your FRA and your benefit will equal your PIA – the full (100%) amount you've earned from a lifetime of working.

Spouse benefits only come into play if the PIA for one of you is less than 50% of the other's PIA. In that case, the spouse with the lower PIA gets a "spousal boost" to their own SS retirement benefit when claimed.

The amount of the "spousal boost" will be the difference between the lower PIA and half of the higher PIA, but the amount of the "spousal boost" (as well as the person's own SS retirement amount) will be reduced if benefits are claimed before full retirement age. Any time SS benefits are claimed before full retirement age, those benefits are permanently reduced.

If one spouse is entitled to a "spousal boost" from the other, the spousal amount will reach maximum at the recipient's full retirement age. Thus, if the lower earning partner's highest benefit will be as a spouse, then that spouse should not wait beyond their FRA to claim. If, instead, the lower earning partner's own SS benefit at age 70 is more than their spousal amount, waiting longer than FRA to claim could be prudent, depending on life expectancy.

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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.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rep. Neal sells out patients for PBM donors

On Dec. 11, the U.S. House passed the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act, legislation to require Pharmacy Benefit Managers to disclose drug rebates and discounts, revealing what they pay drug makers for prescription drugs.

The bill would also require hospitals, insurance companies, labs, imaging providers and ambulatory surgical centers to publicly list the prices they charge patients.

The bill passed by a bipartisan vote of 320-71. However, Rep. Richard Neal was the only member of the Massachusetts delegation to vote against it. Why? The answer lies in the fact that Neal is the recipient of huge doses of campaign contributions from PBMs which act as middlemen between drug makers and insurers. PBMs negotiate prices in exchange for including drugs in insurers' formularies. They are supposed to pass the savings to patients. However, PBMs, often working hand-in-hand with insurance companies that own them pocket the discounts, leaving patients to foot the bill.

The bill Neal opposed would require PBMs to disclose drug rebates and discounts, revealing what they pay drug makers for prescription drugs. The bill would also require hospitals, insurance companies, labs, imaging providers, and ambulatory surgical centers to publicly list the prices they charge patients.

Also, you won't find Neal's name on the Protecting Patients Against PBM Abuses Act, H.R. 2880, which his colleague Rep. Jake Auchincloss of Newton has co-sponsored.

According to OpenSecrets, between 2014-2022, Rep. Neal has taken a total of \$88,000 in campaign donations from the top

three PBMs, including \$28,500 from CVS Health (Caremark) which has 32% of the market, \$31,000 from Cigna Corp (Express Scripts) with 24% market share and \$28,500 from UnitedHealth (OptumRx) with 21% market share.

A report issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office on Sept. 5, 2023 recommended that the administrator of Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services should monitor the effect of rebates on plan sponsor formulary design and on Medicare and beneficiary spending to assess whether rebate practices are likely to substantially discourage enrollment by certain beneficiaries.

A national poll from March 2023 found that 84% of likely voters say it's important or very important to have rules that require PBMs to provide value and lower drug costs for consumers. What's more, respondents want elected officials to take on the issue of regulating PBMs with 73% saying it should be a high or top priority for Congress and their state legislatures, and 72% saying they are more or much more likely to vote for a candidate who supports regulating PBMs.

Sadly, there has been no coverage locally of Rep. Neal's actions on behalf of PBMs by the Springfield local television news stations which are too busy showing the congressman posing with holiday revelers. For more information about how Neal is beholden to corporate interests, please visit

<https://richienealsecrets.com/>.

Matt L. Barron
Chesterfield
Jon Weissman
Granby

GUEST COLUMN

Pre-planning this year's vegetable garden



It's so exciting to think about planning my vegetable garden; all kinds of possibilities await.

Right after Christmas is usually when I get started. There are less paper catalogs arriving in the mail lately, but it is still my preferred method of shopping.

I like to peruse the pages, "starring" items and bending the corners of the pages so that I know to come back and consider whatever vegetable variety I think I must have. It's here in the early stages that I dream big.

I save the tailoring to later, once I've inventoried my seed stash and know exactly what I need.

But before I even get out the blue container that contains all of my seeds, I have some thinking to do. What did I have too

much of last year? Too little? What consistently performs well in my garden? What doesn't do well? Am I ready to simplify by paring back or do I like the challenge of a big garden?

So many things to consider.

What did I have too much of? Roasting peppers come to mind.

I roasted and roasted and roasted some more. In between roasting I was giving them away.

"Carmen" is grown specifically for that purpose, and last year I grew eight plants more than normal. Maybe I'll cut back this year.

My "Picnic" peppers did well, too. They were great to eat right from your hand, and in yellow, orange and red, they certainly made my husband's salads colorful.

I was pretty well spot on with 12 total plants.

Sadly, I struggled with tomatoes last year. I didn't have anywhere near enough!

This was the year that the girls grew to love my roasted tomato sauce, too. I couldn't make very much of it because the tomatoes petered out early.

GARDEN, page 5

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

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Country Journal TEAM



EDITOR
Ellenor Downer
countryjournal@turley.com



ADVERTISING SALES
Wendy Delcamp
wdelcamp@turley.com

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PATRICK H. TURLEY
CEO

KEITH TURLEY
President

DEANNA SLOAT
Graphics Manager



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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN



Rick Hendra of Oakham took this photo of sandhill cranes foraging in a field on Stone's Road in Oakham.

In his email, he wrote, "I took this picture this morning (Sunday, Dec. 17) about halfway up Stone Road. Their call was so loud it startled me from 50 yards away. And they were large, but oddly colored."

The sandhill crane is a tall bird about 45 inches, gray colored with a dark red patch on the forehead and a black bill. They have staining of feathers on their back and tail caused by the iron rich soil on its beak when it preens feathers. The immature crane lacks the red patch and has an orange bill. It also may have more rust colored feathers on the back and tail.

The sandhill crane summers on prairies and tundra and during winter feed on agricultural fields and roost in shallow water. For several years now, Hardwick had a pair of nesting sandhill cranes, who successfully raised chicks.

The female lays one to three olive eggs with dark marks in a mound like

nest of marsh plants, grasses and weeds either placed on the ground or shallow water. Courtship displays are seen during migration and involve graceful jumps off the ground in a dancing manner.

Many years ago, Richard Jankauskas, saw some in a field on South Street in Barre. He commented about a pair jumping up and down and dancing.

Their voice is a low pitched "karoo, karoo, karoo." Rick Hendra mentioned their call in his email printed above.

Bird count

A Brimfield resident, who visits ponds in Warren, Brimfield, Holland and Sturbridge with his wife listed birds seen on Dec. 8. They included 210 Canada geese, 93 mallards, 70 hooded mergansers, three black ducks, two pied-billed grebes, one great blue heron, one bald eagle, two crows, one white-breasted nuthatch, two black-capped chickadees, three bluebirds, four house finches, one goldfinch, six white-throated sparrows, six dark-eyed juncos and three cardinals.

He also emailed in late November, "I checked the ponds in Warren and there were 14 hooded

mergansers very actively feeding and a very cold looking great blue heron that looked like it was not enjoying the 36 degree temperature.

Christmas bird count

For over 120 years the Audubon Society has been doing a Christmas bird



Sandhill cranes

count and this year is no different. People can participate in an organized count or just do one on their own in their backyard.

Decline in bird numbers

I received an email on Wednesday, Nov. 29 from a long time birder. He said, "[I] regularly feed them but have noticed a steep drop off of the number and type of birds since around September. Right now we have a loyal troop of blue jays and that's about it. Usually we have copious amounts of starlings, chickadees, grackles, crows, titmice, cardinals, jun-

cos, etc."

He said he asked many people about this phenomena and "they have noticed the same thing but can't explain it either. We are all aware of some birds heading South but the sheer volume has dropped dramatically."

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

SECURITY

from page 4

So, as you can see, deciding when to claim Social Security benefits should consider many things, including financial need, work status if claiming before FRA, marital status and life expectancy. But it is your lifetime earnings which determines your SS retirement benefit amount, and it is how your FRA entitlements compare to each other that determines whether spousal benefits will be paid.

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 information 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.

GARDEN

from page 4

Oddly enough, I enjoyed tomatoes that self-sowed in different spots of my yard much later into the season. It gave me an idea that I ought to make a couple of indoor sowings. One the third week of March as always, and maybe another two weeks later.

Regardless, now that the sauce is a hit, I'm going to increase the number of transplants I grow, and definitely improve the soil where the tomatoes are planted. Something that probably went unthought of is that the buckets of rain we had last summer likely leached nitrogen from the soil.

I had best remember to fertilize at planting then supplement after the first month or so.

Another area where low nitrogen may have been a factor is with my winter squash. My harvest wasn't just disappointing, it was embarrassing!

The Garden Lady better figure this one out, especially with the squash habit she has. Soups, breads, lasagna, and more all require that amazing orange flesh; and if you don't grow your own it can certainly get expensive.

I definitely want to grow butternuts in abundance again.

On the flip side, I didn't need as many cabbage or broccoli plants. The sauerkraut is taking up lots of space in the fridge, but hasn't made its way into our bellies for some reason, and as far as broccoli goes, I just can't seem to freeze it in a way that is palatable.

Someone told me to give up blanching it. Just cut it up and throw it in bags in the freezer. After all, it worked well for kale, and they are cousins, right?

I tried a stalk that way, then thawed it out and ate it the next day. I thought it worked great, so I froze the rest of my harvest that way.

A month or so later I steamed some up and it was the most inedible thing that ever popped out of my freezer. Silly me, if this was the preferred preservation method it would have been touted as such long before I hit the gardening scene.

Maybe I should grow three or four different varieties of broccoli with different days to harvest, so that the majority of the harvest can be enjoyed fresh

over a longer period.

I always analyze if my vegetable garden is too big for my lifestyle these days. I really don't want to pare back because it is important that I grow a good amount of our family's food.

What I have to accept is that it may become a jungle. I will keep up until I can't anymore. Someday there will be time for more order, but these are not the days, at least for me, and that's okay.

As you begin planning this year's garden there are a lot of things to consider. But maybe for now, make a lot of "stars" and bend those corners.

Enjoy dreaming! Reality doesn't really have to play a part until the order is placed.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

WILLIAMSTOWN

Clark Art Institute to show 'Hunchback of Notre Dame'

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Thursday, Jan. 18, the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., kicks off its free five-part film series highlighting a rich group of classic films that have been recently restored to provide an exceptional viewing experience.

The Clark shows "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" on Thursday, Jan. 18 at 6 p.m. in its auditorium, located in the Manton Research Center. Directed by Wallace Worsley, Universal's largest-scale silent film played a large part in making Lon Chaney a legend. It paved the way for the rest of their enduring legacy of gothic horror from the golden age of film. In "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" (1923; 2 hours, 13 minutes),

Quasimodo, an inarticulate, deformed human being, who is the bellringer of the Cathedral of Notre Dame sacrifices his life to save Esmeralda, a Gypsy girl who once befriended him from Jehan, the hunchback's evil master and brother to Dom Claude, chief priest of the cathedral.

Admission to the Clark is free through March 2024. For more information, people may visit clarkart.edu/events.

The next screening in the New Restorations Film Series is "All That Money Can Buy" and also known as "The Devil and Daniel Webster" on Thursday, Jan. 25 at 6 p.m. in the Clark's auditorium.

News, photo publication policy

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

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

Deadline is Monday at NOON, on holidays it is Friday at 2 p.m.



WESTFIELD



Mike Mirski, Matt Valliere, Stephanie Morales, Marc D. Massey and Laurie Mathews are shown at Westfield Bank's main office with toys collected.

Westfield Bank donates toys to local communities

WESTFIELD – Westfield Bank invited its customers and community members across Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut to help provide new toys and books to children in local communities as part of the 2023 toy drive.

From Thursday, Nov. 23, through Wednesday, Dec. 13, all Westfield Bank branches collected new, unwrapped toys, books and monetary donations. Each branch donated to an organization or charity local to their service area.

“Giving back to our local communities is an important part of our mission. That is why we are happy to partner with local organizations by running a toy drive

at our branches during the holiday season,” said James C. Hagan, President and CEO of Westfield Bank.

Westfield Bank is a full-service community-oriented financial institution offering a complete range of commercial and retail products and services. Currently, the bank has twenty-five branch offices, fifty-four ATMs, and an additional thirty-one seasonal ATMs and serves Hampden and Hampshire counties in Western Massachusetts and Hartford and Tolland counties in Northern Connecticut. To learn more, visit the bank’s website at www.westfieldbank.com.

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BLANDFORD

CAT

her cat is stuck in an air duct and she is not able to get him out. He is able to breathe but she does not know for how much longer.”

Fire Chief Adam Dolby and a cohort of volunteer firefighters, John Carrington, Dave Chaffee, Derek Daudelin, Ray Hultay and Matt Perry were on site for the rescue.

Chief Dolby said, “We ‘extriCATed’

the victim, who immediately expressed appreciation in the normal feline way by scratching and hissing at us. We were hopeful to land on the ‘nice’ list anyway.”

The Brennans had created a bunk room in their attic “for the cousins to share special times.” When the house was built, duct work was roughed in to create another room, but “We never did hook it up,” said Judy.

But the resourceful Raven discovered a hole in the wall that led to the duct work and crept in.

Judy Brennan said that Raven is safe and Sunday night was “on his way back to South Hadley thanks to the wonderful firemen of Blandford, who came out on Christmas Eve and heroically saved Julia’s pet. They were exceptional and saved our Christmas.”

from page 1

TAX

from page 1

rate for all properties. The proposed tax rate for the next fiscal year, FY 2024 is \$11.57 per thousand dollars of value. This is a \$2.09 reduction from last year’s rate of \$13.66. In order to achieve a possible 1% reduction in the residential tax rate, RRG reported that it would take “approximately four per cent increase on commercial, industrial and personal property,” all “relatively small” segments of taxed property.

The average single family home property tax should see about a \$33 reduction or 0.8%.

The Department of Revenue will review the calculations and recommendation before confirming the proposed \$11.57 tax rate. Assessors are Chair Dr. David Hopson, Stephen Jemiolo and Paul Martin.

Send Us Your Photos!

countryjournal@turley.com

HAPPY New Year!

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We will be closed New Year's Day

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USDA INSP. FRESH PORK SIRLOIN CUTLETS \$2.19 lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN BONELESS & SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST 10 LB BAG \$1.44 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS & SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST 10 LB BAG \$1.44 lb
USDA INSP. FROZEN PORK SPARE RIBS \$1.79 lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN PARTY CUT CHICKEN WINGS 4 LB BAG \$7.99 lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN PARTY CUT CHICKEN WINGS 4 LB BAG \$7.99 lb
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USDA INSP. STORE MADE ITALIAN MARINATED BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST \$2.99 lb	USDA INSP. GROUND FRESH DAILY 90% DIET LEAN GROUND BEEF 5 LB BAG \$3.99 lb	90 Avocado St. Springfield 413-737-1288 www.90meat.com
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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.

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BLANDFORD

2023

from page 1

library, from tots and toddlers, teens and tweens and all adults.

The Book Club has enjoyed "great success," according to Director Nicole Daviau.

January saw Adam Dolby appointed as interim Fire Chief, a position he has agreed to hold until a permanent chief is on board or the town comes to a "shared services" arrangement with another town.

In February, the town's new State Senator Paul Mark and Representative Nicholas Boldyga filed three pieces of legislation for the town. They include Cobble Mountain Road/Reservoir reopening for recreational use, Blandford volunteer firefighter tax break bills and validation of actions taken at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting, which is continuing with frequent communications with the Attorney General's Office regarding bylaw changes. The bylaw changes, once approved, will take effect as of the 2022 meeting.

A new Treasurer/Collector was hired but left before the end of the year. Sara Hunter's firm, Mass MuniFin was reinstated late fall through 2024.

March saw the first major snowstorm of the year, and it was on the anniversary of the Blizzard of 1888 and the town was shut down for three days.

A Community Development Block Grant through the state's Department of Housing and ADT Community Development facilitated a complete Americans with Disabilities Act evaluation of all town owned properties and offered a plan process. The less expensive items suggested for replacement are things like lever style door knobs instead of conventional round knobs.

In April residents had the chance to provide input/concerns on the town's dirt roads thanks to a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant administered by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. The grant gives the town, along with Middlefield, the opportunity to assess conditions and plan for resiliency. The second year of the grant investigates beaver issues. The state awards communities with funding to complete vulnerability assessments and develop action-oriented resiliency plans.

May saw town officials, Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Administrator gearing up for the Annual Town Meeting with budget preparations finalized and elections coming.

Cara Letendre ran uncontested and was re-elected to the Select Board. Voters at the ATM approved a total budget of \$4.5 million. There were 150 registered voters attending and what brought the turnout was the question of a fire/highway complex, or two separate buildings. Location and type of facility are still being discussed.

In July, the Select Board made a long-awaited appointment of a Conservation Agent for the town Nicholas Pietroniro is serving in this



Cara Letendre was re-elected as chair of Select Board



The Select Board appointed Adam Dolby Interim Fire Chief.



Matthew Ripley, became the new Fair President.

part-time capacity and working with the Conservation Commission.

August saw new leadership, upgrades and changes for the Blandford Fair. President Matthew Ripley and Executive Vice President Greg Girard re-instated after many years a Beer Garden on the Fairgrounds. Changes in premiums were also increased helping increase participants.

The Historical Society presented the 28th Annual Bel Canto opera performance, perhaps the longest-running benefit concert. Director Maestro Eve Queler has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the restoration and preservation of the Society's White Church of Blandford; the only town building on the National Register of Historic Places.

A decision to demolish Shepard Farm was finalized. The Fair will take one of the outbuildings and tear down a second. Any remains of historical value are minimal and samples will be retained of a floorboard, wallpaper and cupboard.

Town Administrator Christopher D u n n e resigned his position after 22 months with the town, effective December 1. The Select Board recognized his efforts for the multiple grants awarded the town and for his follow-through efforts on projects. A



The 40-foot leviathan aka - lflated Whale visited Blandford.

search for a new town administrator is on-going; the Select Board appointed Ira Brezinsky as the Interim Town Administrator and he is an ex-officio member of the search committee.

Some of the more unusual happenings in town included a bow and arrow hunting accident; a hunter shot his partner accidentally in the buttocks. Tony Adams peddled through town aiming his sights on a Guinness World Record for cycling the 50 states and being on the road 50 years; the Whale Mobile visited and captivated over 250 visitors, sponsored by Gateway Regional School District libraries and the Hilltown Family Center. And then there was the moose who took up residency with steer on North Blandford Road. Molly the Moose, as she was christened by the neighborhood, stayed in the pasture from May to November and then went on her way.

Ongoing

Road drainage was and remains a constant problem, whether from beavers, blocked or collapsed culverts or clogged gutters/ditches.

The year saw the completion of Broadband installation in town providing high-speed internet access for everyone. The Municipal Light Plant proceeded with providing high-speed internet access in town. Nearly 90 per cent of the households have signed on, and an additional 105 households have subscribed to the telephone service as well.

Awarded this past summer, a shared services grant funded a project for a Water Operator for Blandford and Chester is still under discussion and organization.

The Blandford Cultural Council continues to make an impact with its awards to local events and those which will benefit the town's youth all year long.

Throughout the year citizen concerns included the poor sound quality of the recorded Select Board meetings, the apparent inconsistency of lowering the American flag and restoring it to full staff, park maintenance, and beaver-created flooding on Blair, Huntington, Beulah Land and Gibbs Roads.

Roadside tree-trimming was an ongoing effort, and still a work in progress.

It's always something, never a dull moment and progress is made.



Molly the Moose visited Blandford.



The Midway at Blandford Fair this Labor Day Weekend was a popular part of the fair.



A decision to demolish Shepard Farm was made.

File photos

LENOX

Nine writers selected for 2024 residency

LENOX – The Mount and Western Massachusetts' Straw Dog Writers Guild are thrilled to announce the nine writers selected for the 2024 Residency for Emerging Writers.

Among the selected writers are a disability advocate, a Stanford lecturer and a Signet Society poet.

The 2024 residents will be working on developing their respective works at The Mount for one week each, between March 4 and March 22.

Submissions were reviewed anonymously and ranked based on quality of writing, originality of voice and the potential for growth as a writer.

"The selection committee was invigorated by the depth and originality of the

applications," says Patricia Pin, residency lead and Public Programs Director at The Mount. "We can't wait to welcome the nine talented writers to Edith Wharton's home in the spring."

This is the tenth year The Mount has offered writers an opportunity to create at The Mount and its third year partnering with Straw Dog Writers Guild. The revamped residency now focuses on writers who are developing their craft. There is no prerequisite for being published. Applications open in September each year on edithwharton.org.

The Mount/Straw Dog Writers Guild nine 2024 Writers-in-Residence are: Camila Sanmiguel Anaya, Eleanor Fuller, Jason Prokowiew, Jenn Alandy

Trahan, Julia Thacker, Mariah Rigg, Mistinguette Smith, Stevie Billow and Whitney Scharer.

The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home is a National Historic Landmark and cultural center dedicated to the intellectual, artistic, and humanitarian legacy of Edith Wharton (1862-1937).

The Mount presents Wharton's life and achievements through tours of her house and gardens, and programming. The Mount is the literary hub of the Berkshires and hosts lectures and panels by national authors and scholars both on-site and online. Seasonal cultural offerings on property include an annual outdoor sculpture show, music and children's programming.

OTIS

Transfer Station closed New Years Day

OTIS – The Transfer Station will be closed on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024 for New Year's Day.

The Transfer Station will be open on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024 from 7 a.m.-3p.m.



PITTSFIELD

Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. announces extension of Pittsfield Glow Up grants

PITTSFIELD – Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. and the Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation are co-facilitating a second round of The Pittsfield Glow Up! Business Improvement Grant Program made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act.

The program's purpose is to provide grants of up to \$10,000 to eligible businesses affected by COVID-19 within ARPA's disproportionately impacted district of Pittsfield. The grant funds are to be used for physical improvements that will enhance the experience of foot traffic and create a visual vibrancy in the district.

To apply, applicants must be a for-profit business in operation since

January 2021, be in good standing with the state and city and be within ARPA's disproportionately impacted district. A map of the district is located at <https://downtownpittsfield.com/2023/11/pittsfield-glow-up-business-improvement-grants>.

Businesses that received funds in the first round are not eligible to reapply, but property owners can apply for different locations. Applications not selected in the first round, businesses may reapply for this second round.

Eligible uses of grant funding include Painting (interior and exterior), Signage (building or blade), Lighting Improvements (exterior or window), Flooring Replacement, Entryway

Upgrades, Windows (replacement, washing), Awnings (new or replacements), Accessibility Improvements, and Select Interior Improvements or Repairs (note that furniture, fixtures, and equipment are not eligible).

The first-round application of intent for this second round of The Pittsfield Glow Up! Business Improvement Grant is due by Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.

To view the full criteria and access the online application, visit <https://downtownpittsfield.com/2023/11/pittsfield-glow-up-business-improvement-grants>. Paper copies of the application are available at the Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. office at 33 Dunham Mall.

Any grant-related questions may be directed to Rebecca Brien, Managing Director of Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., by either calling 413-443-6501 or emailing businessdevelopment@downtownpittsfield.com

Since 1983, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. (DPI) has been the recognized leader, facilitator, and principal advocate for downtown. DPI is a membership organization consisting of property owners, businesses, residents, cultural & entertainment venues, restaurants, and non-profit organizations who have joined forces to increase economic activity by promoting downtown as a great place to live, work, and play.

EASTHAMPTON

Jess West promoted to Assistant Vice President, Branch Officer

EASTHAMPTON – bankESB recently promoted Jessica West to assistant vice president, branch officer of their 36 Main St., Easthampton office.

West, of Hadley, has 31 years of banking experience. She was previously assistant vice president, branch manager in Amherst. Before that, she was branch manager at the Northampton Street, Easthampton office, and before that, assistant branch manager at the Belchertown office. She started at bankESB in 2002 as senior teller in Belchertown.

West has an associate degree in mechanical technologies from Springfield Technical Community College. She has been actively involved with the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst and Craigs Doors, helping to prepare free



Jess West

community breakfasts every week. West also volunteers at the Amherst Survival Center. She is currently a board member of the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce.

Founded in 1869 as Easthampton Savings Bank, bankESB is headquartered in Easthampton and operates 11 branches throughout Western Massachusetts. Through its sponsorship and charitable

giving program, The Giving Tree, bankESB and the Easthampton Savings Bank Charitable Foundation support non-profit organizations and causes throughout Hampden and Hampshire counties. In 2022, The Giving Tree donated nearly \$500,000 and over the past decade has donated more than \$3.2 million. For more information, people may visit bankESB.com.

McCarthy promoted to Float Retail Manager

EASTHAMPTON – bankESB recently promoted Trevor McCarthy to float retail manager.

McCarthy of Chicopee has three years of banking experience and joined bankESB in 2020 as a teller. In his new role, he will manage the float staff at bankESB. He will be based in Easthampton, but will float to all bankESB branches to support with supervisory needs. McCarthy has a bachelor's degree in economics from Westfield State University.

Founded in 1869 as Easthampton



Trevor McCarthy

Savings Bank, bankESB is headquartered in Easthampton, Massachusetts and operates 11 branches throughout Western Massachusetts. Through its sponsorship and charitable giving program, The Giving Tree, bankESB and the Easthampton Savings Bank Charitable Foundation support non-profit organizations and causes throughout Hampden and Hampshire counties. In 2022,

The Giving Tree donated nearly \$500,000 and over the past decade has donated more than \$3.2 million. For more information, visit bankESB.com.

CHESTER

Hikers to hold group hike Jan. 1

CHESTER – The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers will hold a First Day hike at Sanderson Brook Falls on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024 at 10 a.m.

This is an easy to moderate hike with some uneven footing and two miles in and back. Parking at the Sanderson Brook Falls lot on Route 20, 631 US Route 20 across from Bannish Lumber in Chester.

Participants will celebrate the New Year 2024 outdoors with the Hilltown Hikers and the Department of Conservation and Recreation to 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 gravel and wide, which gently climbs upward. Participants will cross three girder bridges and follow along Sanderson Brook then take the more narrow trail to the right, which takes them to the bottom of the waterfall.

They will hike rain or shine. People should be prepared for winter conditions, snow and ice gear recommended. Well behaved dogs on leash are welcome. Maps and bottled water will be provided.

People should register per car load by visiting <https://westernmasshilltownhikers.ticketleap.com>. Suggestion donation is \$10, hike is volunteer lead. 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.

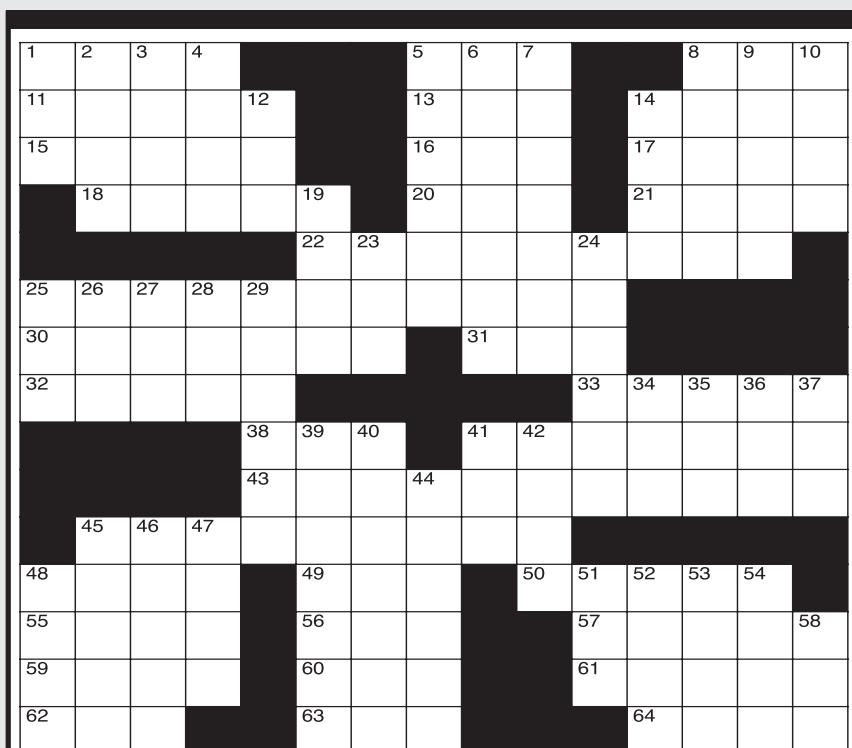
Submissions are always welcome.

Send us your engagement, wedding, baby, anniversary and graduation news and photos.

Country Journal

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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. A way to injure
- 5. Mutual savings bank
- 8. Rock TV channel
- 11. Large number of fish swimming together
- 13. Military mailbox
- 14. Female of a horse
- 15. Category
- 16. City
- 17. Breezed through
- 18. Officer who bears a mace
- 20. Tax collector
- 21. "Cheers" actress Perlman
- 22. Pauses before acting
- 25. Extracted information from a wave
- 30. Tendency to revert to something ancestral
- 31. No seats available
- 32. Nocturnal rodents
- 33. Moves gently to and fro
- 38. Not good
- 41. A way to ready
- 43. One who makes something better
- 45. Things associated with American history
- 48. Ancient Phoenician fertility god
- 49. A continuous portion of a circle
- 50. Volcanic craters
- 55. Units of electrical resistance
- 56. Gamble on
- 57. Ethiopian town
- 59. One point east of northeast
- 60. Polynesian garland of flowers
- 61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- 62. State of fuss
- 63. Keyboard key
- 64. Partner to relaxation

CLUES DOWN

- 1. "The world's most famous arena"
- 2. Polite interruption sound
- 3. Private school in New York
- 4. Refuse of grapes
- 5. __ Tomei, actress
- 6. Adult beverages
- 7. Supporter
- 8. Papier-__, art material
- 9. Forests have them
- 10. Most ancient Hindu scriptures
- 12. Downwind
- 14. Marketplace
- 19. Flowering plant genus
- 23. Street where nightmares happen
- 24. Admirer
- 25. Dip lightly into water
- 26. When you hope to get there
- 27. Partner to cheese
- 28. Egg
- 29. A way to disqualify
- 34. South American plant
- 35. Fold-away bed
- 36. Debbie Harry album "___ Koo"
- 37. Swedish krona
- 39. Displaying warmth and friendliness
- 40. Official orders
- 41. Bowling alley necessity
- 42. Stray
- 44. About milk
- 45. Expressed pleasure
- 46. Caribbean dance
- 47. If not
- 48. __ fide (Latin)
- 51. Swiss river
- 52. Hebrew calendar month
- 53. One easily swindled
- 54. Point that is one point south of southwest
- 58. Small island (British)

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20
People may not be available this week to get together, and that is perfectly fine by you, Aries. Solitude is just what you can use right now after a busy stretch.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22
Give yourself some time to have fun and play around. The inner child in you needs the opportunity to explore and try new things. You'll have plenty of chances.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23
You have many chores on your list but things keep pulling you in different directions, Libra. If you can't focus on something difficult, try a creative pursuit.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20
Focus your energy on ideas this week, Capricorn. You might not be changing the world, but each innovation you think up will have a positive impact.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, expect a delay or two this week as those who you are expecting simply keep you waiting and it's very frustrating. This will be a lesson in patience for now.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23
This week may bring many different feelings to the surface, Leo. You may not be ready to explore all of your deep emotions just yet, but you can start by being honest with others.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you may find if you look ahead that there are really no pressing matters on your calendar. This gives you the perfect opportunity to have an outing and enjoy yourself.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, do not let moments of self-doubt derail you. Now more than ever, you need to believe in yourself. Think of this as a test that you can ace.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21
Gemini, you may envision a plan in your mind, but now it is up to you to move it from your thoughts and into the reality of coming to fruition. It will take a little time.

VIRGO

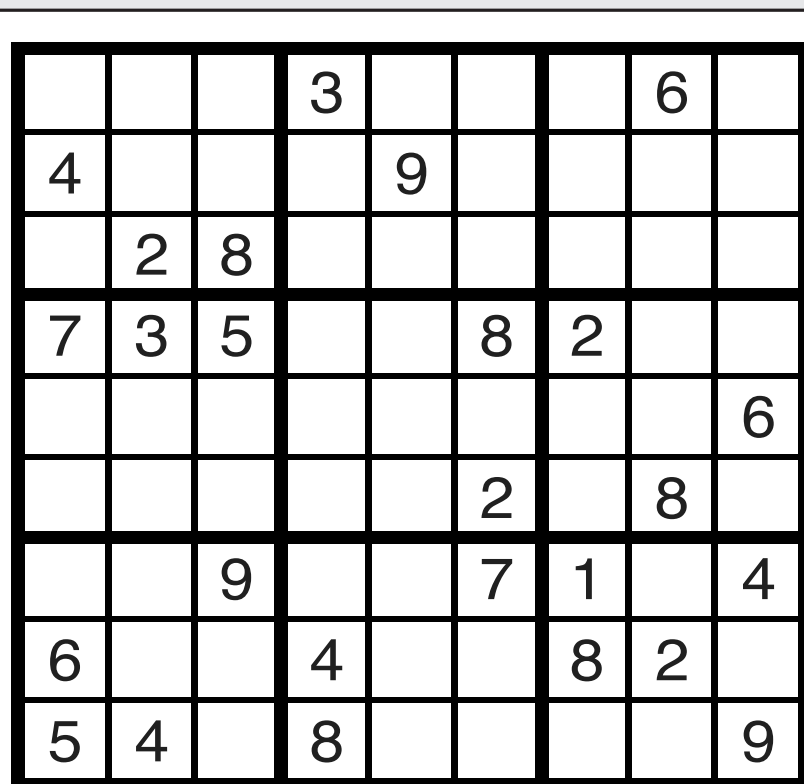
Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, empathy may inundate you this week, as you are in tune with the feelings of many different people. Others will appreciate your thoughtfulness in the days to come.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21
Past memories could put you in a funk, Sagittarius. Rather than dwell on what may have happened, think about the future in your control.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, if you do not like what you are or where you are going right now, you have an opportunity to make any changes you want. This may be the ultimate resolution.



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:

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answers

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WESTHAMPTON

Westhampton Public Library lists upcoming events

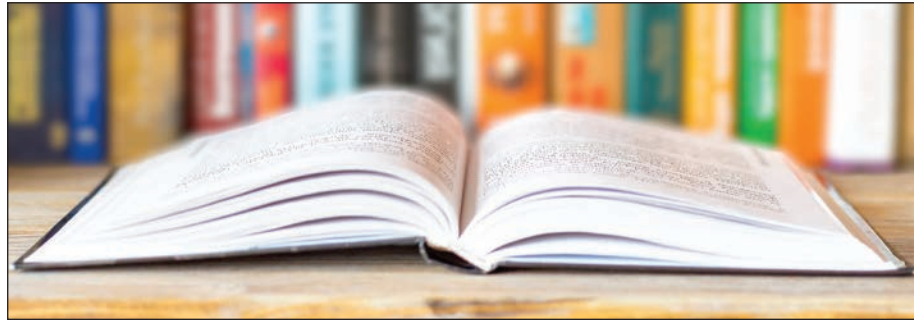
WESTHAMPTON – The Westhampton Public Library, 1 North Road, lists January library programs.

On Thursday, Jan. 4 at 6:30 p.m., David Rothstein of Florence, will share his experience and the inspiration behind his 40-mile journey along the Deerfield and then Connecticut River in a 700 pound pumpkin boat.

His presentation will include photographs and video of his arduous trek to draw attention to his beloved Connecticut River watershed, which he referred to as “the lifeblood of our community.”

On Mondays, Jan. 8, 22 and 29 slow yoga will be held with Teri Anderson of Westhampton. Due to space limitations, registration is required by either emailing westhampton@cwmar.org or calling 413-527-5386 to register. The class includes stretches, strengthening and a focus on body-mind awareness and integration. No yoga experience is required. People should bring a yoga mat, a bath towel and a blanket. A few extra yoga mats will be available if people want to try out the class before purchasing their own yoga mat. This program is funded in part by the Friends of Westhampton Library and the Lyn Keating Program Fund.

Anderson is a certified interdisciplinary yoga instructor and Body-Mind



Centering® somatic movement educator. She has been teaching yoga and movement for 20 plus years. Her approach to yoga is slow, gentle and meditative with attention to body-mind awareness, comfort and ease of movement.

Teen Craft Night is held the third Thursdays and will be held Thursday, Jan. 18 at 6 p.m. This month’s craft is a worry pet. Materials are limited to eight participants and registration is required by emailing Emily at ewayne@cwmar.org.

The library will be closed Monday, Jan. 1 in observance of New Year’s day and Monday, Jan. 15 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The library 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.

People should visit the town

website or Facebook or Instagram @ WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates. The library is open for in-person browsing and materials pickup as well as curbside pickup. To place a request for curbside pickup, people should email westhampton@cwmar.org or call 413-527-5386.

During the month January, artist Angela Griefen of Westhampton will exhibit her oil and acrylic on canvas and wood panels at the library.

Watercolor paint night with Mary Cleary will be held on Thursday, Jan. 11 at 6 p.m. Supplies are limited and registration is required by emailing westhampton@cwmar.org or calling 413-527-5386 to register. People will learn the basics of watercolor painting with local artist Mary Cleary and go home with a seasonally inspired snowperson watercolor painting.

On Thursday, Jan. 25 at 6 p.m. needle felting for adults with Jo Martin will take place at the library.

Supplies are limited and registration is required by either emailing westhampton@cwmar.org or calling 413-527-5386 to register. Participants will learn the basics of needle felting and create an adorable hedgehog project to take home.

These programs are supported in part by the Friends of Westhampton Library and the Lyn Keating Program Fund.

Recurring programs, note holidays may impact schedule include: Council on Aging Computer Class with Bob Miller second and fourth Mondays from 10 a.m.-noon, knitting group Mondays at 6 p.m., Scrabble group on Tuesdays at 2 p.m., CFCE Playgroup Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m., book group fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m., walk-in wellness clinics with Westhampton’s Public Health Nurse first and third Wednesdays from 10-11:30 a.m., story time Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m., coffee and chat on Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-noon and after school fun Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. and after school fun Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. (LEGO Club first Thursday, open crafting second Thursday, Nintendo switch happy hour third Thursday and comics club fourth Thursday).

CUMMINGTON

Cummington Cultural District hires community engagement/media specialist

CUMMINGTON – The Cummington Cultural District announces the hiring of E. Maude Haak-Frendscho for the role of Community Engagement & Social Media Specialist.

Haak-Frendscho, who lives in Easthampton, comes with experience working with other municipalities both in Massachusetts and beyond in cultural organizing, public art and communi-

ty-building. Concurrently, she holds the role of Creative Economy Coordinator for the town of Belchertown, where she is in the process of initiating a Cultural District. She also serves on the Easthampton City Arts Coordinating Committee.

Haak-Frendscho can be reached by email at culturaldistrictcummington@gmail.com to provide information or

inquire about upcoming events, initiatives, or other questions about the creative activities taking place in the Cummington Cultural District. She shares: “I’m really looking forward to meeting more members of the cultural communities in Cummington and all those who shape the unique culture of this beautiful place. I hope to learn more about local interests and find ways of

connecting with Cultural District activities.”

The Cummington Cultural District seeks to use artists’ vision and creativity to revitalize its economy, improve underutilized space and bring residents together around a shared identity by activating and promoting a vibrant village along Main Street, celebrating all that makes Cummington unique.

PUBLIC NOTICES

TOWN OF BLANDFORD NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A, Section 5, the Blandford Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing at the Blandford Town Hall, 1 Russell Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008 at **6:00 PM on January 10, 2024**. The nature of this hearing is to amend Blandford Zoning Bylaws by adding Section XVI, Battery Energy Storage Systems.

Copies of the proposed amendment to the Zoning Bylaws may be found at townofblandford.com or in the Office of the Town Clerk. Anyone wishing information and/or to be heard on these matters should appear at the time and place designated.

Paul Martin, Chair
Blandford Planning Board
12/21, 12/28/2023

(SEAL)
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
LAND COURT

DEPARTMENT OF THE TRIAL COURT Docket Number: 23 SM 004707

ORDER OF NOTICE TO:

Maura A. Gamache
And to all persons entitled to the benefit of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act: 50 U.S.C. c. 50 § 3901 (et seq):

The Bank of New York Mellon f/k/a The Bank of New York as Trustee for CWHEQ Home Equity Loan Asset Backed Certificates, Series 2006-S7

claiming to have an interest in a Mortgage covering real property in Huntington, numbered 40 Littleville Road, given by Robert T Briand and Maura A Gamache to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for Countrywide Home Loans, Inc., dated November 10, 2006, and recorded at Hampshire County Registry of Deeds in Book 8950, Page 329, and now held by the plaintiff by assignment, has/have filed with

this court a complaint for determination of Defendant’s/Defendants’ Servicemembers status.

If you now are, or recently have been, in the active military service of the United States of America, then you may be entitled to the benefits of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. If you object to a foreclosure of the above-mentioned property on that basis, then you or your attorney must file a written appearance and answer in this court at **Three Pemberton**

Square, Boston, MA 02108 on or before **February 5, 2024** or you may lose the opportunity to challenge the foreclosure on the grounds of noncompliance with the Act.

Witness, GORDON H. PIPER, Chief Justice of said Court on December 19, 2023.

Attest:
Deborah J. Patterson
Recorder

12/28/2023

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