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Mile Tree Elementary School Principal Allison Petit to resign

Announcement comes after no-confidence vote

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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WILBRAHAM - Mile Tree Elementary School Principal Allison Petit will resign from her position following a no-confidence vote from the teachers at the school.

She will not be leaving the district, opting to move to a new role as a fifth-grade teacher at Soule Road Elementary School.

The resignation comes after a no-confidence vote was shared with the public by the Hampden-Wilbraham Education Association during public comment at the Jan. 23 School Committee meeting.

Petit has been principal at Mile Tree for three years.



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

The Wilbraham-Hampden Education Association announced at the Jan. 23 School Committee meeting a vote of no confidence was made for Mile Tree Elementary School Principal Allison Petit.

Petit Announces Resignation

After reflecting on the accomplishments, the school made under her leadership, Petit said she has worked closely with Superintendent Dr. John Provost "over these years to continue to reflect and grow as an instructional leader," and received "all fully proficient evaluations."

"Recently, the Unit A and C teachers and staff moved forward with a vote of no-confidence in my leadership. Concerns were raised regarding commu-

Please see **PETIT**, page 8



Turley photos by Amanda Munson

Joyce Bergeron proudly shows off her latest snowman quilt.

Quilting Group provides comfort and companionship

By Amanda Munson
Correspondent

HAMPDEN- "Our doors are always open, please come visit!" Whether the members are beginners to quilting to masters at their craft, the Quilting Group at the senior center offers a helpful hand at any stage.

Meeting on Jan. 24, the group were finishing their products from February birthday gifts to holiday projects that needed another stitch.

Talking with Diane Santaniello, a member of the Quilting Group and senior center for six years, she originally came because of her sister-in-law Joyce.

"I was going through a hard time

at that time and she convinced me to come. I've been here ever since. We come together every Friday and look forward to it. The company is the best thing about coming here, the camaraderie because we're all doing the same types of things, learning different techniques and styles. It's a very relaxed group with an open-door policy, just come and bring your own project, we'll help you with your projects or maybe you could teach us a few things!" Santaniello said.

Showing her phone with pictures of her favorite quilts, Santaniello added, "My favorite quilt was a stack and lack, a technique that creates a pretty floral design."

The senior center offers other craft activities from Knitting/Crocheting, Card Making with Ellie and Acrylic painting with Nan Hurlburt to Watercolors with Chris Sterritt.

Administrative Assistant and Volunteer Coordinator Tina Doran talks further about the variety of activities that are offered daily and what new members can expect when they join, starting with the Quilting Group.

"The ladies in the Quilting Group are very welcoming, it's a social thing and they do a number of donations throughout the year. They do these absolutely gorgeous quilts and they've done stockings for veterans, the amount of stuff they do that accu-

Please see **QUILTING**, page 12

HISTORICAL WILBRAHAM

Random Thoughts

From Wigwam Hill to Maple Street

By Charles F. Bennett
Times Editor Emeritus

We went through a cold spell early this month and it prompted me to hunker down in front of my laptop in our cozy den to come up with this next column. So here's some random thoughts.

Trek to Court Square

Back a few years ago I wrote a column about our early Wilbraham settlers who wanted to have

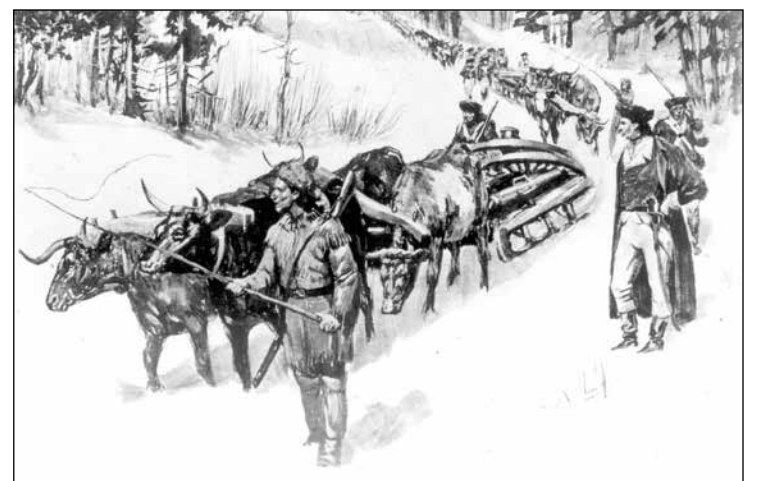
their own church to worship in, in their own hometown of Wilbraham, rather than to go all the way to what is now Court Square in Springfield to attend services on Sundays.

So, they felt the need to build their own church and hired a minister (Rev. Noah Merrick) to attend to the flock. They built a modest religious structure at the top of Tinkham Road, on Wigwam Hill and lived happily ever after.

It was called The First Congregational Church, which eventually became the current United Church, now on Main Street.

The new church was organized June 24, 1741, beneath a large tree on the corner of Federal Lane and Main Street. There is a time-worn, small monument there, honoring the founding of the church at that site which will be replaced later this year by the Wilbraham Historical Commission.

As a member of the Commission, I always thought that - as important that the building of a new church was to the religious growth of the town - the fact that the worshippers had to trek the nine miles to downtown Springfield to go to church, in all



A depiction of the ox-drawn cannons brought through North Wilbraham in winter 1775 by 25-year-old Col. Henry Knox on what was known as The Knox Trail. (Times file photo)

kinds of weather, was more of a massive feat of endurance than struggling to construct their own

building to worship in, at the top Please see **HISTORICAL**, page 7

Selectboard to pursue district local technical assistance project application

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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HAMPDEN - The Selectboard agreed to pursue a District Local Technical Assistant Project Application during their Jan. 21 meeting.

The board met on Tuesday due to the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday on Jan. 20.

Town Administrator Brian Domina explained this was a grant opportunity through the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

"They receive a certain amount of money each year in the state budget to provide local technical assistance to communities for community-type projects that are focused on regionalization, housing, planning head for housing, planning head for growth. So, we get an email solicitation every year," Domina said.

Domina explained the town learned from the Parks & Rec Department that the Open Space & Recreation Plan will be expiring in a little over a week.

"The reason that's important to them is that there are numerous grants available--park grants, PRC grants--that they could apply for. There's also a lot of trails grants that are available," Domina said. "But, having an updated Open Space & Recreation Plans are a prerequisite to being able to submit an application. So, if we're trying to get our ducks in a row to be able to apply for these grants, then it seems like a good way to leverage these funds, get the plan updated."

Domina added he wasn't sure how "that melds with the Master Plan."

"I assume it would be a good time to jump off that and then they can apply for these grants," Domina said.

Selectboard Member John Flynn said it sounds difficult "that they would complete it in time by the expiration date but would they have the start of redoing it count?"

"Just saying like, for instance, their current plan expires Feb. 4. But, we're going to go ahead and give Pioneer Valley a contract to update the plan--which they'll complete by Feb. 25 and they said, 'Well, okay, even though it's expired you're still redoing it.' They would count that," Flynn said.

Domina replied that would be a question he'd have to ask the granting agency. "What Dan (Blanchard) and I were

talking--we've been talking about for the past couple of months--is the Park Grant which pays for upgrades to recreation areas," Domina said. "So, I think it was focusing on Memorial Park, but then we noticed that the plan expires. Hopefully, if we have a contract in place and, I think, the grant application sometime in June or July for that, so at least we can get the majority of it updated--or at least a draft submitted--hopefully that will be enough."

After reiterating the intent to apply for the grant, Domina added he's never done this with PVPC before.

"Typically, my experience has been that the Planning Commissions usually use their staff to provide the assistance. They don't necessarily give us a--I don't know--\$15,000 so that we can go out and get somebody. Sometimes, they keep these in-house and they pay for their own staff time to update the plan," Domina said.

Flynn then said this. "So, we would ask them for part of their grant and then give the grant money back to them to do--potentially give the money back to them--to do the update?" Flynn said.

Domina said, "Essentially, they've given this amount of money from the state" and "they have certain requirements as to how they can spend it."

"And they have to spend it by providing technical assistance to communities," Domina said.

"I see," Flynn said.

"So, they need to solicit projects in order to spend the money," Domina said.

"So, we would get the OSRP updated at no cost?" Flynn said.

"That would be the goal, yeah," Domina said.

Domina also noted a smaller grant that's available to update OSRPs.

"If this isn't enough, that's another place we can go if we need to," Domina said. "I'm not sure how much an update to the OSRP is. I can't imagine it would be a tremendous amount. But that's a barrier to us applying."

Chair Don Davenport thought "It shouldn't take a lot to upgrade it" because "I think it's only like five years old."

"And also, we've got some information from the Master Plan Committee regarding that too that we could just feed into it," Davenport said.

After receiving approval from the board, Domina will now reach out to the PVPC about the grant.

Selectboard discusses town meeting preparations

By Kristin Rivers
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HAMPDEN - The Selectboard discussed preparations for this year's Annual Town Meeting during their Jan. 21 meeting.

Chair Don Davenport suggested this idea to start things off.

"I guess we could start putting together some of the warrant things I think. We get the usual stuff. We got to meet with the moderator to see what he wants to do about a consent agenda if he wants to do that," Davenport said. "We're going to try to do electronic voting. We don't have any money for it, how do we do that? Child care, the AV, make sure we're prepared."

Davenport anticipates a big turnout again.

"Is the senior center going to bring something forward again?" Davenport said.

Selectboard Member John Flynn said, "At this point, there are needs for at least the upgrades."

"I know there was a question about the toilets or whatever. There is a capital cost involved in keeping the senior center up to date. There's a need now--it was just shared to me at the meeting this morning--maybe a little graphic--the toilets are too low for some seniors," Flynn said. "And there's one particular that goes there and has to rap on the wall (with her) cane to let them know she needs help to get out, which is a job description I'm not sure is actually out there. So, there are some upgrades in the facility that need to be done. Those are capital costs that are probably not in anyone's budget at this point."

Flynn thinks "one way or the other" there will be a town warrant article about the senior center for capital costs, noting the possibilities include bathroom repairs and window replacements.

"There will be an article of some sort as a placeholder, so a placeholder would be appreciated at this point," Flynn said.

Davenport then brought up the original renovation plans.

"In the original renovation, they talked about moving them. This isn't about moving the bathrooms, it's just repairing them," Davenport said.

Flynn clarified yes.

"The latest one was never moving. It was just an expansion potential to make them ADA-compliant, which, of course, if the whole senior center was never expanded, it would mean the actual program area diminished," Flynn said. "Because if this part went higher, you lose space somewhere."

Davenport then asked about the window replacements.

"Are they going to do all the windows? (Are) they thinking about all the windows?" Davenport said.

Flynn replied a majority of them would be replaced.

"The worst ones (are on the) north side," Flynn said.

When Davenport next asked about the possibility of the fire department coming forward with something, Selectboard Member Craig Rivest said, "That's what I'm hearing."

"I haven't heard any reports yet," Rivest said.

"For the building or for a truck?" Flynn said.

"For the building," Rivest said.

Citizen petitions are also possible, with topics including a potential change in uses in a golf recreational district.

"The golf recreational district now allows for water slides, batting cages, etc. So, I think people will be saying, 'I don't want that. If it's a golf recreation, it's golf, not Sonny's Place,'" Davenport said. "I don't know if that'll happen or not but that's what some people are talking about."

Flynn added he hoped money could be found for the AV equipment.

"We should do it again, a home run that was," Flynn said.

"We should be prepared for that again," Davenport said.

"We should factor that into the budget," Rivest said.

Town Administrator Brian Domina agreed.

"When I talked to them after it was done, he said that if we're pretty sure we're going to have two town meetings, they may be able to give us a discount if we're willing to contract for two of them," Domina said. "Or, if we get something scheduled, we might get it. Each one a little bit cheaper."

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Finance Committee holds WPL budget discussion

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Finance Committee held a budget discussion with the library during their Jan. 15 meeting.

This was one of the first budget discussions from town departments held with the committee, with a budget discussion also held with the Parks & Recreation Department that same evening.

The Finance Committee will next meet with the chiefs from the fire and police departments on Jan. 29 for their budget discussions.

After sharing her upcoming retirement and highlights from the library this past year, Karen Ball, director of the library and Library of Trustees, noted increases in the personnel line items due to signed contracts with the two unions and reclassifications done through the town's compensation study for non-union and management positions.

"So, almost all positions in the library did receive a bump. When we created our library pages to borrow service assistance last year or a year and a half ago, we had two library pages that were doing 12 1/2 hours, so it was a total of 25 hours. One of them ended up retiring and instead of replacing the whole 12 1/2 hours, we gave the existing other 12 1/2 hours, we gave five more hours, so he's up to 17 1/2 hours," Ball said. "So, we had a little bit of a savings, but I think it's definitely more effective use of the staffing having that position when it comes to the library pages."

Another major budget item is expenses, with Ball explaining about everything needing to be level-funded, making some adjustments to some of the line items.

"But we did have two big things that happened this year that made some lines go up. Our copier--our public copier--died. I worked with Nate in IT and we determined that it was best to go with a lease..." Ball said. "So, in the past, we have been paying for the machine plus the paper and all the toner. With the new lease, the toner will be included in that cost. But, we will be getting a quarterly bill for printing and it's 9 cents for color copies and a little below seven cents for black and white. We didn't get a bill yet, so that will be coming quarterly."

The other big item was subscribing to a program to help manage event calendars and Brooks Room bookings.

"In October, the company that was doing that went to go for a different server and they ended up having problems and--long story short--they've gone bankrupt and we had two weeks to decide to go to a different vendor," Ball said. "So, we were able to pick a new vendor, Communico."

But, instead of just doing the event calendar and the Brooks Room bookings, it also has a website content management system component to it and Communico broadcast that we'll send images to different display boards. So, all of our public workstations will be able to project things.

So, instead of having three or four different vendors, we have one vendor that's doing all of those products

for us."

On the expenses lines, Ball said the materials budget was reduced "which will bring us under the level" for the line item.

"We do have to do 16% for full compliance. I'm anticipating that it's about \$14,000 under that, but I intend to make it up with state-aid funds this year as well as other funds," Ball said. "So, expenses comes in at the level-funded amount."

Another highlight was the Library of Trustees not approving Sunday hours at the library in 2024.

"I think with next year being a transition year with another director, I think it's unlikely that the trustees will vote for another round of Sunday hours, at least not in the beginning of the year because the new director would have just started," Ball said. "But, if we were to use Local 98 people as backups, the new contract requires that they'd be paid double time. So, I think it's a rare occurrence but I was suggesting to put \$500 in an overtime line just to cover that occasion."

The bottom line—or full overall budget total—would come out to \$828,100. For FY26, it would be \$792,546.

After questions were presented by the committee members and Vice-Chair Kevin Hanks thanked her for her many years of service to the town, Ball then reflected on her tenure at the library.

Chairman Todd Schneider ended the budget discussion with this.

"If I can, just thank you for all your years of service. It's been a pleasure here, obviously. Enjoy retirement," Schneider said.

Fathers Grief Support Group Starting Jan. 30

WILBRAHAM - Rick's Place is pleased to announce the launch of a free, peer-based Fathers Grief Support Group designed specifically for fathers grieving the loss of a partner or child. This unique group recognizes the distinct challenges fathers face in their grief journey and aims to create a safe, understanding community to help navigate a difficult time.

The group will meet weekly for six consecutive weeks at our Wilbraham location, beginning January 30, 2025. Facilitated by Rob Zucker, a highly skilled grief counselor and author of "The Journey Through Grief and Loss: Helping Yourself and Your Child When Grief Is Shared," the evening sessions will provide fathers with tools and strategies to cope with their loss while connecting them with others who share similar experiences.

"We know that grief can feel isolating, and fathers often face unique pressures in coping after a death," says Rick's Place Executive Director, Therese Ross. "This group offers a space where they can connect and

find support with peers who truly understand."

Rick's Place is committed to fostering grief-informed communities and providing accessible resources for those navigating loss. This new support group is an important step in expanding these efforts to ensure that no one grieves alone.

For more information or to register for the Fathers Grief Support Group, please contact Rick's Place at info@ricksplacema.org or call Program Director Betsy Flores, at 413-279-2010.



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MRHS hosts Annual Senior Festival Concert



Nathan Gowen represents the UMASS Amherst Department of Music and Dance at the festival.



The Senior Jazz Band, directed by Claire Arenius, performs one of their six music pieces.



The Senior Chorus, directed by Matthew Cunningham, performs one of their five songs.



Richard Cuoco introduces the next guest conductor.



The Senior Orchestra, directed by David Beck, performs one of their three musical pieces.



The Senior Concert Band, directed by Dr. Travis Higa, performs one of their four musical pieces.

Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On Jan. 18, the 66th Annual Senior Festival Concert was held at Minnechaug Regional High School.

Students rehearsed from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the concert started at 3 p.m.. Many music teachers from various towns were in attendance helping their students perform.

There were four groups that performed that afternoon: The Senior Jazz Band (16 student performers), Senior Chorus (153 student performers), Senior Orchestra (97 student performers), and Senior Concert Band (75 student performers). All of which consisted of students all across Western Massachusetts.

16 students from Minnechaug represented the school in the band and choral sections of the festival, who have dedicated their time to putting on a phenomenal

performance.

Tra Ableby, Ivy Christensen, Angelina Cross, Ella Gagliarducci, Isadora Maurice, Selena Nguyen, Alexa Sherman, Audrianna Stasio, and Layla Williams represented the school in the Senior Chorus.

Meanwhile, Elijah Mathias, Aezlin Rost and Hussien Saleh represented Minnechaug in the Senior Orchestra. The Senior Concert Band also consisted of Minnechaug students Bryanna Brown, Anne Hicklen, Abigail Lee and Julianna Washington.

There were also four students from Wilbraham & Monson Academy who were part of the festival. Jinyi Huang and Avah Macdonald were part of the Senior Chorus. Along with Ji Min Hong and Zheng "Neil" Lian who were part of the Senior Orchestra.

Adults who were involved with the festival include Richard Cuoco: the chairperson and treasurer, Dave Morris: the chairperson elect and festival host and Margaret Wall: the choral coordinator.

Richard Cuoco, who is

also the band director at Wilbraham Middle School, took a moment to reflect on his experience with chairing the concert as well as the importance of music education.

"To be honest, it's been very stressful, but very rewarding," Cuoco said. "There's a lot of work that goes into putting on this festival and making these opportunities happen for students across Western Mass... Music education reaches a lot of students: Students who are very academically successful, students who play sports, students who struggle in certain areas and its a way to bring together a lot of different students from different backgrounds."

Matthew Cunningham, the guest Senior Chorus director, also spoke about his experience that day.

"Minnechaug High School was a fantastic venue for this event. My ensemble rehearsed in the cafeteria, which was super resonant, well-lit, and spacious. The auditorium is a beautiful performance space. I am very grateful to Mr. Cuoco and his entire team for their exceptional hospitality and dedication to ensure a successful event. They were a delightful and gracious host!" Cunningham said.

In attendance was also Nathan Gowen, the director of recruitment, admissions, and career planning for the Department of Music and Dance at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"I want to be here because part of my job is to know where the students are at, and to encourage them to go into music after they're done with high school. But more importantly, I think the idea of encouraging to do music after high school, whether they want a major in it or not is important. And I love to be here to preach that to whether they're seniors, freshmen, their families, and as an important part of the scene here and I love it," Gowen said.

It was a great afternoon to celebrate all the musically talented students from all across Western Mass. It showed that the future of music and music education as a whole will be in good hands with the next generation of musicians.

The concert was sponsored by the Massachusetts Music Educators Association Western District, a federated state unit of the National Association for Music Education.



The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District

We will be taking applications for our early childhood programs for district residents for the 2025-2026 year. Programs are for 3 and 4 year olds.

If your child will be three by September 1, 2025 you may obtain an application at hwsrd.org website under "Departments," "Student Services." "Early Childhood Program" or call Corinne Roberts, Student Services at 279-3863.

Applications will be available starting January 1, 2025. Priority screening and placement will be given to applications received prior to January 31, 2025, but we offer a rolling admission.

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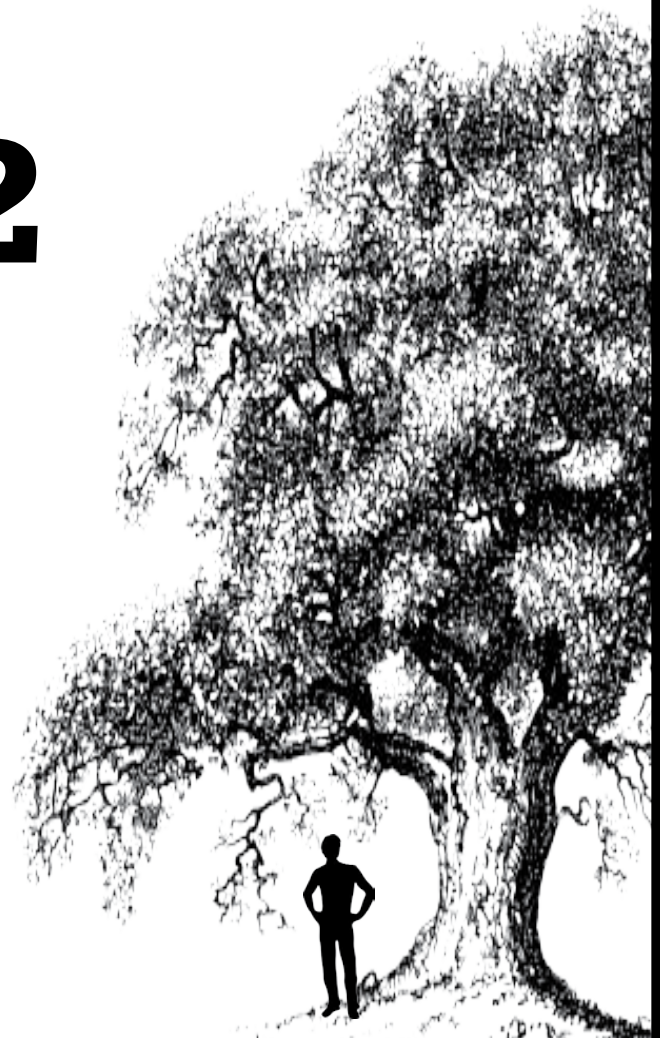
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VIEWPOINTS



Carolina wren

A Brimfield resident sent me a list of birds on Jan. 2 he saw in his yard.

On the list was a Carolina wren. He said in the email, “[The Carolina wren was] foraging in the leaves under shrubs and has been seen at the feeders more frequently recently.”

The Carolina wren is six inches long and has brown feathers above with buff below. It has a distinct white eyebrow and white barring in the tail area. It often holds its tail in an upward position.

The female lays four to eight creamy or pink white eggs with brown marks in a nest of mosses, twigs, rootlets, bark and sometimes

snakeskins lined with finer materials. They nest in tree holes and many other locations; they will use birdhouses.

The Carolina wren expanded its range into the northeast especially with the milder winters. There song is a loud, repeated “tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle.” They inhabit forest understorey, vines and woodlands in rural or suburban areas.

Other Brimfield birds

Other birds seen by the Brimfield resident beside the Carolina wren were four mourning doves, 20 American robins, 12 dark eyed juncos, one white-throated sparrow and two Northern cardinals. He said of the robins, “I first noticed one bird on the ground in the yard and 3 in a crab apple tree eating fruit. More flew into the tree then four on the ground foraging. More perched in a nearby tree.” He also said, “We have ten crab apple trees in the yard and several of them have small fruit that is held on the tree into the winter.”

Flocks of robins

In my travels last week, I saw flocks of robins on three occasions, twice in Barre and once in Oakham. The Oakham flock flew across the road and landed on the ground and in trees on the opposite side. The Brimfield resident reported his wife saw a flock of robins in the center of Brimfield eating crab apples near the post office twice in recent days. Christmas Bird Count

The Brimfield couple participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count in Ludlow. He said, “We had 31 species in Ludlow, lots fewer birds at the reservoir because there was about 90% ice coverage [Saturday] compared to 10% Friday.”

Suet cakes

I put out my suet feeder last month. I waited long enough because I did not have a bear either break or run off with the feeder. The birds are busy eating suet especially during this cold weather.

New Hampshire Loon Preservation Committee

The New Hampshire Loon Preservation Committee reported in 2024 they surveyed 498 occupied or potential loon territories on 327 lakes to assess presence/absence and breeding success of loons and the success of LPC’s management to help them. They documented the presence of 359 loon pairs and 126 unpaired adult loons. They also floated a record 156 nest rafts to help loon pairs displaced from their traditional nest sites by shoreline development, recreational lake use and water level fluctuations. They also installed signs and rope lines at 135 nesting loon pair locations.

They banded 57 loons and rescued 38 loons in distress and a result of illness or injury. The Loon Preservation Committee continued to expand their lead tackle buyback program. Ingestion of lost lead tackle by fisherman remained the cause of lead poisoning in the loon population. There were six documented deaths due to lead poisoning, two loon deaths from trauma due to boat strikes and two loon deaths due to entanglement in fishing gear in 2024.

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.



Dear Rusty

For most folks collecting Social Security, you get back what you put in within 3-5 years, so for those that scream - “SS is not an entitlement, it is my money”- that is not entirely accurate beyond 3-5 years. For me personally 4.4 years is the number. But had I been able to invest that money over the 43 years I worked at a modest 6% interest, I expect the amount would have been a lot more. And of course, the stock market averaged 9.5% over that time. Perhaps Social Security should invest in the stock market instead of U.S. Government treasury bonds.

Interested Observer

Dear Observer

You bring up a point we frequently hear that if, instead of paying into Social Security, I had invested the same money in the stock market I would have gotten more.

Should Social Security money be invested in the Stock Market

That, of course, might be the case if you had the unwavering discipline to religiously invest the equivalent amount in the market, avoiding the temptation to use that investment for any other reason. And life is full of good reasons, financial emergencies, for example or the simple temptation to buy something desperately needed, or just occasionally skipping a month to pay bills. Also, the stock market is notoriously volatile, which can create substantial angst for investors, who are faint of heart.

The fact is that Social Security provides guaranteed financial growth from the age of eligibility normally 62, up to age 70 when the maximum benefit is attained. Benefits claimed at one’s full retirement age are about 24% - 32% more than if taken at age 62 depending on Full Retirement Age and benefits taken at age 70 are about 75% more than benefits taken at age 62. And that is guaranteed growth for those with the patience to wait longer to claim.

You may recall that the idea of investing Social Security reserves in the stock market

has been floated a few times in previous years, but accompanying risks made Congress essentially unwilling to even entertain the idea. It has always been a political “hot potato” and those who suggest it are usually castigated for wanting to “give SS money to Wall Street,” so I expect it is unlikely to happen.

Guess we’ll need to be satisfied with the interest on those Special Issue Government Bonds, which, by the way, returned about \$67 billion to the Social Security Trust Fund in 2023. FYI, average interest rate for new deposits to the Trust Fund in 2023 was 4.1%, and the overall effective rate of return on all Trust Fund assets was 2.4%.

Social Security has some issues and will face some financial difficulty in less than a decade unless Congress enacts program reform soon. But it is a program, which most seniors rely on for a major part of their retirement income and one which keeps over 22 million Americans out of poverty. Here at the AMAC

Please see **SOCIAL SECURITY**, page 9

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Wilbraham-Hampden Times 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 Wilbraham-Hampden Times, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to krivers@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that 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 the editor at 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 Wilbraham-Hampden Times.



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com

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Correction Policy

The TIMES will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper and can be substantiated. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on the editorial pages. To request a correction, send information in an e-mail or mailed communication to the editor at the above address listed above.

The Wilbraham-Hampden TIMES is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc. One year out of town subscriptions are available at \$45, out of state \$50 by calling 800-824-6458 Ext. 201. The deadline for submission of news material, letters to the editor and photos is Monday at 12 p.m. The TIMES is not responsible for submitted photos.



ALL ABOUT TOWN

Get to know your town employee: Karen Ball

By Kristin Rivers

Editor

krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM – As part of a new addition to the papers, we are looking to add in features of our town employees to recognize and thank them for their hard work and dedication.

These town employees are what help keep our communities running each and every day.

This week, we talk with Karen Ball, director of Wilbraham Public Library.

What is your favorite thing about the town?

The people. The public library serves all ages, so I get to encounter many people every day - from families with young children to seniors. Over the years you get to know so many people.

What do you do in your position?

As the library director, I oversee the daily operations of the library - including staffing, financial and building management, collection development and programming. I also spend almost a third of my time directly working with the public at our central service desk.

Describe an average day at the office.

It can be different every day - from paying invoices, preparing budgets, purchasing non-fiction materials, corresponding with vendors, and assisting the public with finding materials.

Tell me a bit about you. Are you a resident? What's your education?

I grew up in West Springfield, where I

currently live. I studied communications and mathematics at Western New England College and then went on for my master's degree in library science from the State University of New York at Albany.

My library concentration was actually in health resources management - specifically to work in a hospital library, but after interning at the library at Baystate, I found that I preferred the varied interactions of the public library. I do actually use my background in health resources - just now from the perspective of consumer health as opposed to clinical resources.

What other departments or committees/boards do you work closely with?

The library has close ties with several departments. Over the years we have partnered with the Senior Center and the Recreation Department.

Our StoryWalk would not have been possible without the hard work from the DPW and Highway department. The Parks department does a great job of clearing our walkways in the wintertime.

We have almost daily contact with the town's facilities director, Sam Boyd. And every year we connect with the Finance Committee to navigate the budget.

The library has an elected board of trustees who meet monthly and develop policies for the library and the non-profit Friends of the Library organization raises funds to support library programming for all ages.

What is the most fulfilling part of your job?

The library is a tax-supported institu-



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

Karen Ball, director at Wilbraham Public Library, poses with this month's Staff Picks.

tion. I strive to make sure that we use the funds wisely to have the greatest impact on the community.

What inspired you to take on the position?

I fall into the category of the "accidental manager". I had not applied for the position when the former library director, Christine Bergquist, retired because I loved my work as the adult services librarian - primarily handling adult programs, outreach, and reference work.

However, after serving as the interim

director for a period of time, I saw that it was an opportunity to direct the growth of library services.

In my tenure we expanded weekend hours to include Sundays on a seasonal basis, we created the StoryWalk to make better use of the beautiful grounds that we are fortunate to have, and we have realigned staffing to optimize the personnel budget.

Where is your office located? What are your office hours?

My office is right next to the elevator. The door is always open. My hours can vary during the week during library operating hours, but my usual evening to work is Tuesdays until 8 p.m.

What is the history of your department? What makes it unique from others?

This would be a very long answer - there is a chapter in the latest History of Wilbraham book that offers a detailed history of the library.

What do you want the community to know about your position.

The library provides materials and services for all members of the community. People always assume that if you work in a library you must "really love books".

While that is usually true, it is more important to really love people.

If I can make somebody's day a bit better by helping them find a solution, save some money, or find something entertaining to pass the time, then it is a good day for me.

HISTORICAL from page 1

of the steep Tinkham Road.

Within 10 years of the settling of the town, they had been trekking to worship at First Church of Christ in Springfield. According to the 1963 Charles Merrick "History of Wilbraham" book they were a hardy lot, a religious folk who traveled by horseback or by foot the tedious miles all the way to Court Square and back on Sundays enduring New England weather on roads that were little more than footpaths. No wonder they wanted to build their own church and spend their Sundays on Wigwam Hill.

The Old Bay Path

Recently Wilbraham Selectman Mark Ducey was the guest speaker at a Wilbraham-Hampden Rotary Club meeting at the Country Club Wilbraham. He gave an informative talk on the state of the town but one of his most popular topics was receiving advice from the Rotarians on how to fix that infamous intersection at the end of Main Street, connecting with Boston Road and Maple Street. The intersection is an important historic site.

But, I'll bet that many folks don't know that that confusing intersection is part of the old Bay Path that runs through North Wilbraham through where old timers call "The Triangle". The Triangle, at Main and Maple Streets, that we all hate to drive through, lies on the route of the Bay Path essentially as it was from its beginning 387 years ago and originally blazed by Native Americans. From here, it runs east to Palmer, Brimfield and Sturbridge.

Legend says that General Henry Knox, when he was 25 years old, traveled east on parts of the Bay Path when the American Revolutionary War broke out in 1775. A favorite of George Washington, Knox engineered the transport of captured artillery from New York's Fort Ticonderoga, which proved decisive in driving the British out of Boston in early 1776. There is a monument to Knox and of the Knox Trail on the east side of The Triangle near Maple Street.



General Henry Knox was one of George Washington's favorites, shown here later in life. (Mt. Vernon photo)

The Singing Bridge

I'm sure newcomers to Wilbraham who may cross the bridge over the Chicopee River at Cottage Avenue, may be wondering what the name of that bridge is besides, The Cottage Avenue Bridge.

The real name is the "Green-Towne Bridge" and is named after the selectmen of Wilbraham, Fred Green, when it was dedicated Aug. 12, 1939. The other half of the bridge name, "Towne" is named after the selectman from Ludlow in 1939, Frank Towne. At one time, for folks who grew up in town, it was also called "This Singing Bridge" because when you drove over it, it gave off a singing sound from the car's tires.

The bridge replaced an 1852 covered bridge that had been wiped out in the infamous 1938 hurricane. The green replacement 320-foot steel bridge was built by Coleman Brothers Contractors of Boston.

Nineteen years ago, former Town Engineer Ed Miga was responsible for the rehabilitation of the rusting bridge that had fallen into disrepair. When it came time to re-dedicate the bridge, Miga called on former state senator at the time, Sen. Gale Candaras, to re-dedicate it at ceremonies on Nov. 15, 2006.

The other bridge over the Chicopee River from Indian Orchard to Ludlow has the unlikely name of "Putt's Bridge".

"Other Wars"

I was thinking about men from Wilbraham who fought in all our country's wars from the French and Indian War



Selectman Mark Duey gets a lot of advice about the dangerous intersection at Main St., Maple St. and Boston Road. (Charles F. Bennett photo)

to Afghanistan but I started to wonder about Amasa Blanchard from town whose name is engraved on the granite marker in Glendale Cemetery under "The Seminole War". I got to wondering what that was all about? So I looked him up in the "Military Rolls of the Outward Commons - Soldiers of Wilbraham, Massachusetts 1730 - 1840", a book by J. Bruce Tingle.

There wasn't much listed about him except that he was the only person from town who fought in the Seminole War and lived near Monson and Hollow Roads, one of my favorite places to hike. (The Open Space Committee has recently improved Hollow Road and installed a small parking lot by the trail head).

Anyhow, I Googled the Seminole War and found out that The Seminole Wars (also known as the Florida Wars) were a series of three military conflicts between the United States and the Native American Seminoles that took place in Florida between about 1816 and 1858.

Tensions grew between the Seminoles and American settlers in the newly independent United States in the early 1800s, mainly because enslaved people regularly fled from Georgia into Spanish Florida, prompting slaveowners to conduct slave

raids across the border.

A series of cross-border skirmishes escalated into the First Seminole War, when American General Andrew Jackson led an incursion into the territory over Spanish objections. Jackson's forces destroyed several Seminole towns, captured Fort San Marcos and briefly occupied Pensacola before withdrawing in 1818. Somehow (we will never know) Amasa Blanchard from Wilbraham got involved.

There were two more Seminole Wars but Blanchard was listed as being in an early one.

Sources: "History of Wilbraham Bicentennial Edition 1763-1963" edited by Charles Merrick; Chauncey Peck who wrote "The History of Wilbraham, 1731, 1763-1913. "Military Rolls of the Outward Commons - Soldiers of Wilbraham, Massachusetts 1730 - 1840" by J. Bruce Tingle. Available at the Old Meetinghouse Museum Gift Shop. Google and Wikipedia.

Editor Emeritus Charlie Bennett is a member of the Historic Commission and a trustee of the Wilbraham Atheneum Society. Readers can contact him with comments or ideas for the column at cbennett4765@charternet.net.

Death Notices

Longtime Hampden resident

Gary Lambert

died Jan. 22, 2025

Services will be held at Wilbraham Funeral Home

Beyond Plastics film viewing Feb. 2

WILBRAHAM - Beyond Plastics: What the continued production of plastic is costing our planet.

With the plastic industry expanding like never before and the crisis of ocean pollution growing, FRONTLINE and NPR investigate the fight over the future of plastics.

Please join us at Christ the King Epiphany Church for the viewing of Plastic Wars on Sunday, Feb. 2 at 11:30 a.m. 758 Main Street, Wilbraham, MA. Feel free to arrive at 11 a.m. for some pre-viewing refreshments.

Great Decisions Discussion Group Returns

WILBRAHAM - Registration has begun for the 2025 Great Decisions Discussion Group at the Wilbraham Public Library. Starting Feb. 5, the group will meet weekly on Wednesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m. through March 26.

Each year, Foreign Policy Association selects eight critical issues facing the country to be the subjects of conversation. The topics for 2025 include American Foreign Policy at a Crossroads, U.S. Changing Leadership of the World Economy, U.S.-China Relations, India: Between China, the West, and the Global South, International Cooperation on

Climate Change, The Future of NATO and European Security, AI and American National Security, and American Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead.

Participants are encouraged to order a briefing book to read in advance so they can be informed and ready to engage. Briefing books are available on the association's website, fpa.org. One copy of the briefing book will be available at the Service Desk for in-library reading. To register and learn more, visit wilbrahamlibrary.org, or call the library at 413-596-6141.

Nomination papers available

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Town Clerk's Office is announcing that nomination papers are now available for placement of your name as a candidate on the Saturday, May 17, 2025 Annual Town Election ballot.

The last day to obtain nomination papers is Wednesday, March 26, 2025. The positions being voted that day are one Select Board member for three years, one Assessor for three years, one Regional School Committee member for three years, one Cemetery Commissioner for three years, one Water Commissioner for three years, two Library Trustees for three years, one Library Trustee for one year, one Planning Board Member for five years, and one Wilbraham Housing Authority member for five years.

The deadline for submission to the Registrars for certification is Friday, March 28, 2025 at 5 p.m. and 50 signatures from registered Wilbraham voters are required to have a name listed on the ballot as a candidate.

We suggest calling our office to set up an appointment to pick up the papers.

Contact the Town Clerk's Office at 596-2800, ext. 200 if you have any questions. Office hours are Monday thru Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WPL hosting Stuffed Animal Sleepover

WILBRAHAM - Have you ever wondered what happens in the Wilbraham Public Library when it is closed? The WPL Teen Advisory Board announces their annual Stuffed Animal Sleepover on Thursday & Friday, Feb. 20 and 21 during school vacation week.

Your child's stuffed animal can spend the whole night in the library having fun. Children bring their stuffed animal to the library and our teens will help them fill out a "permission slip" for their stuffed animal, listen to a bedtime story and tuck their animal in for the night.

In the morning, join us to make a craft, pick up your "stuffedie" and see a slideshow of all the fun things the animals did overnight! Starting on Feb. 1, sign up at the Children's desk of the library or call 413-596-6141.

Teen Copper Bookmark Workshop

WILBRAHAM - The Teen Department at the Wilbraham Library announces a Teen Copper Bookmark Workshop on Tuesday, February 18 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. during school winter vacation.

Metalsmith Heather Beck will teach teens in grades 6-12 to design and create their own copper bookmark. Teens will learn about the structure of copper, how to create drawings in metal with textures, and how to use letter stamps to add words on a copper bookmark.

No experience is necessary, all supplies will be provided and each participant will take home their completed bookmark. Registration is required and space is limited. To sign up, please contact the library at 413-596-6141, or visit the Event Calendar at www.wilbrahamlibrary.org. This program is sponsored by the Wilbraham Friends of the Library.

PETIT from page 1

nication, decision-making, staffing, relationships with staff and families and lack of self-reflection," Petit said.

Petit had met with HWEA President Damian Konkoly to discuss this and wondered "if membership would have interest in working with me to address the concerns that were brought forward through the vote and continue our work together given that I had never received any complaints or grievances from any of the teachers or staff."

"It was made clear to me that the membership was not interested in pursuing this option," Petit said. "I wondered how we could continue this great work without the willingness to work together."

After reflecting on where her professional journey "needed to go to allow me to be fulfilled in my work," Petit decided to step away from her role as principal and considered applying for the fifth-grade teacher position that had opened up at Soule Road School.

"I considered how this position would allow me to teach the curriculum that I have been learning so much about over the past three years," Petit said. "How teaching at a new grade level would continue to challenge me to learn and grow and how this position would allow for me to remain in our school district where I live, where my children go to school and where I have made so many wonderful connections with students and families."

Petit met with a committee led by Soule Road School Principal Mistie Parsons to interview and was offered the position.

"I am honored to accept and be given the opportunity to learn and grow with students again. This is truly what I am most passionate about and I am so fortunate to be able to join the amazing team at Soule Road," Petit said.

HWEA explains decision

Christine Goonan, vice president of HWEA K-8, explained to the School Committee that on December 17,

2024, educators and service providers at Mile Tree School took the vote of no-confidence in Petit. Goonan said 90% voted no-confidence in Petit. She added approximately 73% of the union members participated in the vote.

The vote, Goonan said, "did not come out of nowhere."

"Union representatives and individual staff members made efforts over more than two years to address problems and frustrations with the leadership. Staff are not adequately supported, especially about an increase in volatile and, at times, violent student behavior. Staff experienced a lack of trust, respect and responsiveness from their principal," Goonan said.

Goonan noted concerns from staff were brought to Provost's attention and they also approached HWEA in the fall "saying that their frustrations were higher than ever" and "attempts at communication were being met with defensiveness and evasion, rather than substantive responses." "The HWEA gathered information confidentially for over a month to make sure the claims had merit and were widespread. Once we felt sure of that, we organized a meeting for the whole staff. At that meeting, a motion was made to have a vote of no-confidence," Goonan said. "There was thorough discussion of what that vote means, the motion to hold the vote passed and the vote was conducted. Again, 90% voted no confidence."

Goonan added the HWEA was speaking up about this because "the handling and response to the vote has made the situation worse."

"The plan the superintendent implemented is allowing an unhealthy work environment to persist and even worsen, in some ways, at Mile Tree School," Goonan said. "The solution, now, also entangles Soule Road School and creates a tense situation where one did not previously exist."

Concerns not being addressed

Konkoly shared how a prior no-confidence vote was addressed when, in June 2022, HWEA sent a letter to the School Committee about a no-confidence vote for a then director of Student Services and it was referred to Provost, who implemented a plan over the course of a year and a half.

"Improvements were marginal and staff continued to leave. Shortly after three of the intensive resource

room teachers resigned mid-year, we also learned the director of Students Services will be leaving," Konkoly said. "Subsequently, you know the district received the results of the DESE audit into our student services that identified many areas that the HWEA brought to the attention of the previous and current superintendent."

In short, Konkoly said they previously "went through a long process of trying to professionally address problems and eventually conducted a vote of no-confidence," with that audit confirming what teachers, service providers and paras "were saying for years" about that then director.

"In the current case, the superintendent has had the opportunity to investigate and be more involved. I know I brought this to his attention several times over the previous two years," Konkoly said. "I reported to him that Mile Tree staff filled (out) a survey completed last year that was unproductive. He also had information about transfer requests and resignations he could have pursued. Incidentally, the process around exit interviews probably should be reviewed."

Referring back to December 2024, Konkoly explained the HWEA shared with Provost a "confidential, detailed document of more specific experiences" and how he has heard "from some who disagree."

"However, faced with all that information, he has not looked into it adequately to the detriment of everyone who works there," Konkoly said.

Konkoly shared the HWEA is speaking now "because keeping quiet and trying to be more discreet in the past did not work well."

"The plan for moving forward avoids, minimizes or dismisses what educators are saying. It would be naive to think that the experiences of Mile Tree staff could be ignored by their colleagues at Soule Road," Konkoly said. "He (Provost) now faces a second elementary school being disrupted and this includes a plan that delays a permanent replacement for a class of fifth graders."

Konkoly concluded his comments with this.

"I'm speaking tonight to assure you the HWEA has not acted lightly or hastily. This is the first time we are speaking publicly," Konkoly said. "But we are speaking out because our members do not feel like they are being heard."

Wilbraham-Hampden Times

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

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Blush in Comfort is open for business in Wilbraham



Laykin Henriquez, owner of Blush in Comfort, poses for a photo inside the treatment room at Blush in Comfort on Boston Road in Wilbraham. The business is located in the Wilbraham Shops.



A close-up shot of the hydrojelly masks clients can try at Blush in Comfort along with hydration and environmental shield products.



Laykin Henriquez, owner of Blush in Comfort, shows off the Oxfoliation.



A shelf on display in the waiting area inside Blush in Comfort.

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Blush in Comfort, a multi-service self-care company assisting customers in becoming better versions of themselves, is open for business in Wilbraham.

Blush in Comfort is located in the Wilbraham Shops at 2341 Boston Rd., Suite 306, providing many services including facials, eyebrows and lashes, teeth whitening, body contouring or sculpting, spray tanning, body waxing, piercings and more.

Also, lash courses, teeth whitening courses and body sculpting courses.

Blush in Comfort, which comprises a large waiting area and a treatment room, is open by appointment only, with available slots from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week. Consultations to review the service menu and learn more about the options are also available.

Laykin Henriquez, owner of Blush in Comfort, shared her business started in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and she began with teeth whitening, her specialty, due to her dental background and having worked in that field for 14 years.

Henriquez had opened up a location in Lawrence first and then wanted to expand her business to her clients, going back to school and graduating from Elizabeth Grady School to become an esthetician.

"We've been in business for almost five years and we're up and growing. I moved to Springfield and I just opened up this location here in Wilbraham and we're just looking to meet the town, meet new people to come and meet us so that we can open up our services to them," Henriquez said.

Henriquez found the location on a Sunday morning through Facebook, saying "It was so perfect," which led her to reach out to check it out.

"I came in the same day I saw the space and I was like, 'That's it!' The location is perfect. People are so friendly, I met other businesses here and everyone's just so welcoming. I felt like I fit right in," Henriquez said.

From the introductions over text and entering the space to get to know her clients face to face and their needs, Henriquez stressed providing a welcoming environment for everyone.

"A lot of the times the clients are just ecstatic with the results, whether it's a facial or teeth whitening and they become repetitive clients, so that's what's important," Henriquez said.

Henriquez also credits her

mother, a business-woman herself, for inspiring her to open her own business along with her passion.

"I love this so much," Henriquez said. "The business part of it comes easy because of the way that I'm so passionate about it. It just comes. I don't have to work, work, work. I just do what I love and the rest comes. That's how I would describe it to my children or future generations: just do what you love and do it as a hobby and everything else will fall into place."

Henriquez said what she loves most about meeting new clients is that they become new friends.

"I love making them feel good and confident and then, they feel comfortable enough to come around and we can chat about other things. They start to open up. Just making this feel like they want to be here," Henriquez said.

On supporting local, small businesses, Henriquez recognizes how the community loves supporting them along with

small business owners reaching out to one another.

"They need to see that contact with real people and just walking through the small businesses around here, meeting other faces, it's what is special. Networking is what got me here, so networking with other businesses," Henriquez said. "The other end where is the people in the town try to support small businesses, it's important because you get that special touch. It's not just you're coming in for a service, it's not just that. It's meeting the people from your town and seeing what they have to offer. It's so special, it's so special to me."

Henriquez wants the community to know she looks forward to meeting them and plans to get involved in networking and community events soon.

"I just want to say thank you to the town of Wilbraham for giving me such a warm welcoming. Everyone has been so nice with an open heart, willing to help and I just want to give that back and, hopefully, I'll get to meet all these beautiful faces and they'll get to come in here to feel confident," Henriquez said.

To learn more, contact Henriquez at 978-332-6555, visit blushincomfort.com or head to their Instagram page at @blush_in_comfort.

To book an appointment, visit blushincomfort.booksy.com.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

I wanted to let you know that it has been a pleasure working with you. I couldn't be happier with the experience of you guiding me while I purchased my dream home.

From start to finish, you were professional, knowledgeable, and incredibly attentive to my needs. What stood out the most was your dedication in doing everything you could to get the perfect home for me. You were always available to answer any questions, no matter how big or small. You guided me through every step of the process, from viewing the home to making an offer, and finally, closing the deal.

One of the things I appreciated the most was your ability to make the entire process feel smooth and stress-free. You went above and beyond to ensure everything was handled efficiently and effectively. I always felt like I was top priority, and that level of care made all the difference.

Thanks to you Maureen, I am now in my dream home and I couldn't be more grateful. If anyone is looking for a realtor who is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and truly cares about their needs, I would highly recommend you. You will make their home-buying experience a positive and memorable one, just like you did for me!

- Cheryl S.

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GALLAGHER
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A COMMUNITY GALLERY

Highlighting the Hampden third and fourth grade basketball teams!



Chris Marion Photography, submitted by Dan Blanchard

Head Coach John Sullivan
Head Coach John Sullivan extends his hand out to high five one of his players.



The town of Hampden has two girls basketball teams this year, which hasn't happened in many years.



Happy One of the Hampden basketball players expresses happiness while out on the court.



Drive to the hoop Go team!

Life in &

Readers are encouraged to send in medium to high resolution photos for this page by e-mail to dzbierski@turley.com or mail to TIMES, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069. Please note that if you send us a photo of the Times in different parts of the world, please include a recognizable landmark in the background. Examples: Eiffel Tower; castle in Spain.

WIL HAM

WFD s alarm



Photos and caption courtesy of Wilbraham Fire Department

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- 2/7 Atoa
- 2/8 Bair
- 2/14 Atoa
- 2/15 Liv
- 2/21 Fra
- 2/22 Lu
- 2/28 Flo

WILBRAHAM HAMPDEN

HFD assists VFW Post 9397

Photo and caption courtesy of
Hampden Fire Department

On Jan. 9, the fire department received a request from the VFW Post 9397 Hampden, MA to assist them with their flagpole that was broken and they couldn't find anyone else to help. The department reached out to their mutual aid partners from Wilbraham Fire Department for assistance with their ladder truck. Together, they were able to successfully fix the flagpole.



Shares smoke reminder

Last week, Wilbraham firefighters responded to an address on Old Boston Rd for a medical emergency. While on scene, firefighters noticed that the residence did not have working smoke alarms or carbon monoxide detectors. Members of C Group installed four smoke alarms and two carbon monoxide detectors. On Jan. 7 in the early morning, the fire department was dispatched to the same address for a basement filled with smoke. Upon arrival, heavy smoke was present throughout the structure due to a furnace malfunction. Thankfully, the occupant was woken by the sound of the smoke alarms, allowing her to safely escape the dangerous smoke environment. A crucial reminder that working smoke alarms save lives. These smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors were purchased a few weeks ago through our SAFE grant, funded and supported by the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services.



Hampden takes part in CPR course



Photos courtesy of Hampden Dept. of Parks & Rec
The Wilbraham Fire Department and Hampden Fire Department held a community American Heart Association CPR course in Hampden the weekend of Jan. 11 and 12. There will be future trainings to come.

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Ask About Having Your Special Event With Us!

Wilbraham Hiking Club announces February Hikes

WILBRAHAM – The Wilbraham Hiking Club has announced six February hikes from the Wilbraham Hiking Club and two hikes, a snowshoeing group, and a special group hiking trip from the Wilbraham Senior Center Hiking Club.

- All events are “weather permitting”.
- Two hikes on Tuesday Feb 4! - Moderate hike at Peaked Mountain in Monson
 - Easy - Scouting hike at the Leadmine trails in Sturbridge
 - Tuesday, Feb. 11 - Moderate - Facing Rock in Ludlow
 - Thursday, Feb. 13 - Easy - MCRT in New Braintree
 - Monday, Feb .17 - Mitteneague Park in West Springfield
 - Sunday, Feb. 23 - Easy -MacDonald Nature Preserve in Wilbraham
- For more info on these hikes (and possibly additional hikes), use the

club’s TeamReach App or write to wilbrahamhiking@gmail.com.

As for the Wilbraham Senior Center Hiking Club, they have two February Hikes

- Friday, Feb. 14 - Low Moderate - Rock House Reservation in West Brimfield
- Tuesday, Feb. 25 - McLean Game Refuge in Granby, CT ...and...

Give Jen at the Senior Center a call to join a snow showing group! When there is snow, folks can meet up and take a walk!...and...

Call Jen at the Senior Center if you are interested in a group hiking trip from Feb 25 to Feb 27 to the Poconos/Delaware Water Gap.

For more information about snowshoeing or the group trip and to register for Senior Center hikes, contact Jen at 596-8379.

Be cautious this open burning season

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - Open burning in our communities started on January 15 and ends on May 1. Permits are required daily.

To request a permit, visit official town websites or hcburnpermits.com. Please review the open burning regulations when submitting your permit.

Weather conditions can change rapidly, which may cause your fire to get out of control. Have fire control tools handy, and call 911 immediately if needed.

Use the utmost caution to prevent injury to yourself and others, as well as to avoid any fire damage to your home.

A message from Wilbraham and Hampden Fire & Life Safety Educators.

Theatre Guild to present ‘Dial M for Murder’

HAMPDEN - The Theatre Guild of Hampden is proud to announce their upcoming production of “Dial M for Murder.”

Based on Frederick Knott’s (author of Wait Until Dark) thriller and adapted into the Alfred Hitchcock classic film starring Grace Kelly, this suspenseful tale of deception and intrigue has more twists and turns than a Grand Prix race.

Show dates are Feb. 28, March 1 and 2, and March 7, 8 and 9. Performances will be held at Thornton W. Burgess School in Hampden.

For more information, and to buy tickets, please visit www.theatreguildofhampden.org.

Reading with Tucker at HPL

HAMPDEN – Children can visit the Hampden Free Public Library to read to Tucker, a dog from Bright Spot Therapy Dogs.

People can sign up by emailing me at krumplik@cwmares.org.

The upcoming dates are Feb. 11, Feb. 25, March 11, March 25, April 8 and April 29.

There are four slots every day, 15 minutes each starting at 3:30 p.m.

To learn more, contact Kate Rumpalik at krumplik@cwmares.org or call 413-566-2151 ext. 112.



Turley photos by Amanda Munson

Diane Santaniello works on a unique border stitch for her next project.



A group photo of the lovely Quilting Group at the Hampden Senior Center. The group meets every Friday at 9 a.m.



Martha Clark does cross stitching, creating a scenic landscape of flowers and butterflies.

QUILTING from page 1

“...mulate is just phenomenal. They are very very talented, come up with different ideas and share with each other,” Doran said. “Some of them will bring in a new pattern and they all work together to tweak this a little bit and then make it their own. Even if people don’t sew and they want to come in and learn, somebody will be willing to teach them. If someone just wants to be social, maybe help out with ironing stuff or sorting fabric, there’s always a place for somebody here.”

When asked about potential new senior center members and how she would approach them, Doran said this.

“That’s what I love about our senior center, it’s a very welcoming place for everyone. It’s just not our seniors, we have people who are younger than our seniors who come in and join us. Over the summer, we had a woman that had her daughter that wanted to do some quilting. She was around 12 years old, a little quiet but was really a great addition to the group,” Doran said. “It’s a warm place. It’s like a family here, you have your regulars and then people who come in once in a while and say gee, ‘What can we do here?’ I take them around and ask what they like and show our activities page, highlighting areas they may be interested in. If they want to get a group together to play a card game we don’t have, I find space to make it work.”

Here are some other things residents should know. Cotton fabric donations are needed for the Quilting Group.

Common Threads led by Dr. Joan Tompkins meets on Mondays at 11 a.m. that offers a new group touching on topics such as: adapting to life changes, socializing, finding purpose and bereavement as well as joyous moments.

To learn more, check out the senior center newsletter or call 413-566-5588.

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Events & announcements schedule

Open Burning Season has started

HAMPDEN - The Open Burning Season started on January 15, 2025 and runs through May 1, 2025. Homeowners may burn brush, branches and forest debris between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily through the season.

Other restrictions apply and burning may not be allowed on certain days due to recent lack of precipitation and strong winds. A permit from our department is required which you can obtain online from the following link.

To obtain burn permit visit <http://www.hcburnpermits.com>.

Wilbraham Public Library's Winter Reading Kicked Off Jan. 1

WILBRAHAM - Get a head start on your 2025 reading resolutions with our annual

Winter Reading Challenge!

Starting Jan. 1, record your reading for a chance to win gift cards, books, and other cool prizes. If you've participated in our seasonal Reading Challenges in the past, get started by logging into your Beanstack account and selecting the challenge for your age group.

First-time participants can create an account by visiting wilbrahamlibrary.beanstack.com, or by downloading the Beanstack Tracker app. Paper logs and review forms will also be available in the library.

Teens and adults will receive one raffle ticket for each book read. Participants must log and review each book to earn a ticket.

Children through Grade Five will earn raffle tickets by tracking the minutes they read each day. All reading and reviews must be submitted by Feb. 28.

Kids and teens can pick up participation rewards starting March 3. Raffle winners will be notified starting March 4.

Questions? Give the library a call at 413-596-6141 for more info

WPD seeking owner of found cell phone

WILBRAHAM - The police department is asking for the public's help in finding the owner of a found cell phone, sharing this bulletin to their Facebook page on Dec. 31:

"An Android cell phone was recently found at Fountain Park. If it's yours, it will be at the Wilbraham Police Department, 2780 Boston Road.

You will need to provide proof of ownership. It appears to be functional and is currently charging."

Cookbook Club at the Wilbraham Library

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Public Library Cookbook Club is meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

This month's selection is "Barefoot Contessa at Home" by Ina Garten.

Please let the library know what you're bringing when registering so we do not duplicate recipes. Cooking is encouraged but not required for attendance.

Copies of the book are available now at the Service Desk.

The Cookbook Club meets on the first Wednesday of every other month at 6:30 p.m.

This program is free and open to the public, and registration is required. For more information or to register, please call the library at 413-596-6141.

Scantic River Artisans hosting Big Art Show of Small Works

HAMPDEN - The Scantic River Artisans will be hosting the Big Art of Small Works on Feb. 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Feb. 9 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A reception will be held on Feb. 9 from Noon to 2 p.m.

Folks can also clip out a coupon from the Wilbraham-Hampden Times and enter

a drawing for an original piece of artwork.

This event will take place at 104 Allen Street, Hampden, MA (The Community Room at the Hampden Senior Center).

For more information, please visit: www.scanticriverartisans.com or email: info@scanticriverartisans.com

Wilbraham Men's Glee Club to Begin Rehearsals

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Men's Glee Club, accompanied by Marcia Jackson and conducted by Ray Drury, will begin rehearsals for the 2025 concert season on Monday evening, Jan. 6, at Christ the King Lutheran/Episcopal Church at 7 p.m. Rehearsals will continue each Monday thereafter until 2 concerts in late April/early May.

While no audition is required, all interested should be able to "carry a tune" attend the majority of rehearsals, and be able to pay a nominal fee at the first rehearsal to cover the cost of sheet music.

Storytime at the Wilbraham Public Library

WILBRAHAM - Registration is now open for the winter session of Storytime at the Wilbraham Public Library. Join Mrs. B for a fun collection of stories, songs, and fingerplays geared for children ages three to six.

Kids must come in independently and parents/ caretaker must wait in the library.

Sessions run for six weeks.

Winter session dates: Thursday January 9, 2025 to February 13, 2025 at 10 a.m.

Call the library at (413) 596-6141 or visit www.wilbrahamlibrary.org to register.

Hampden Winter Parking Ban Information

HAMPDEN - The Town of Hampden Winter Parking Ban will run from November 15, 2024, through April 15, 2025.

Any vehicles left on town roads may be towed at the owner's expense. All vehicles that impede snow removal shall be towed at the request of the Highway Department.

Drop-In Tech Help at the Wilbraham Library

WILBRAHAM - Need help setting up an email account, updating your phone, or figuring out a new device? Volunteer students from Wilbraham & Monson Academy (WMA) will be available for technology assistance at the Wilbraham Public Library on select Fridays from 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Assistance is available on a first come, first served basis. Please bring any relevant devices and/or log-in and password information. Contact the library at 413-596-6141, or visit www.wilbrahamlibrary.org, for more information about upcoming dates.

Wilbraham Fire Department battles early-morning fire in bus garage

Fire does not appear suspicious; four school buses badly damaged

WILBRAHAM—The Wilbraham Fire Department battled a multi-vehicle fire that involved four

unoccupied school buses, Chief Michael Andrews said on Jan. 21.

"At this stage, this morning's fire does not appear suspicious, but the exact cause remains under investigation," Chief Andrews said. No injuries were reported and no workers or community residents were in danger."

A passerby reported the fire at 2045 Boston Road at about 1:40 that morning. On arrival, firefighters observed four buses burning at the bus yard that serves the

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District as well as schools in Ludlow. Working in bitterly cold temperatures, firefighters attacked the blaze and were able to bring it under control in about 45 minutes. They continued to extinguish hotspots for more than two hours.

The origin and cause of the fire are under investigation by the Wilbraham Fire Department and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office.

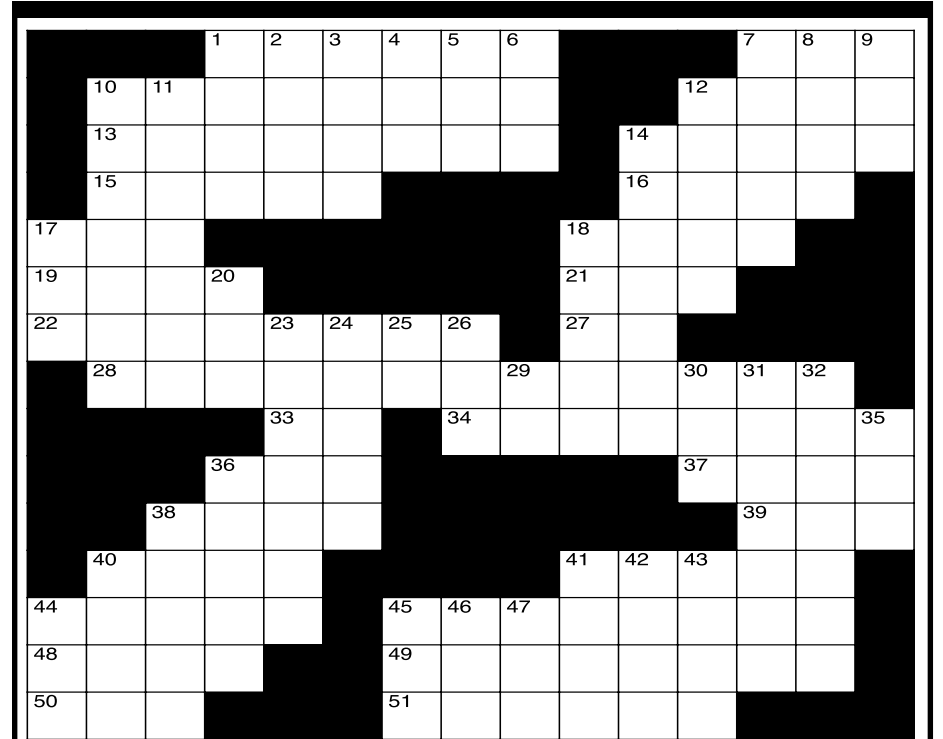
The fire departments of Ludlow, Palmer, and East Longmeadow provided mutual aid at the scene. The Department of Fire Services deployed a Rehab unit to support firefighter health and safety in temperatures around zero degrees.

SOCIAL SECURITY from page 1

Foundation, we strongly advocate for sensible Social Security reform and we're very optimistic about the program's future. But Congress needs to act soon to avoid a cut to everyone's Social Security amount in about 2033.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other government-

tal 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.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Where entertainers perform
- 7. Miller beer variety
- 10. Ageless
- 12. River in SE Europe
- 13. Able to be repaired
- 14. Type of wrap
- 15. Atomic #54
- 16. Type of tent
- 17. U.S. Treasury position
- 18. Opposed to
- 19. Protective covering
- 21. Bridge building degree
- 22. Clouding of the lens
- 27. Priestess of Hera loved by Zeus
- 28. Unacceptable
- 33. Mr. T's "The A-Team" character
- 34. American national

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Supreme god of ancient Egyptians
- 2. Nevada city
- 3. Energy, style and enthusiasm
- 4. Bird's beak
- 5. Language
- 6. Midway between south and southeast
- 7. Punjab village
- 8. Small biting flies
- 9. Sportscaster Patrick
- 10. A way to get around
- 11. Repeat
- 12. A way to cook with fat
- 14. Temporary loss of consciousness
- 17. Reciprocal of a sine
- 18. Fir tree genus
- 20. "Transformers"

CLUES DOWN

- 23. Criminals who steal
- 24. Genus of leaf-footed bug
- 25. Music product
- 26. "Talk to you"
- 29. Santa says it three times
- 30. Doctors' group
- 31. African nation
- 32. Ageless
- 35. When you hope to get somewhere
- 36. Worn
- 38. Deprives of vigor
- 40. Used to have (Scottish)
- 41. Where you live
- 42. Muslim ruler title
- 43. Basics
- 44. Type of drug (abbr.)
- 45. Spanish soldier
- 46. It precedes two
- 47. Illuminated

SCHOOLS

**CAMPUS
NOTES**

HCC announces Fall 2024 Dean's List

HOLYOKE - Holyoke Community College is proud to recognize the students who earned Dean's List honors for the Fall 2024 semester. Each term, HCC recognizes superior scholarship through the Dean's List. A student is placed on the Dean's List if their G.P.A. is 3.2 or higher. The students listed below from Hampden and Wilbraham have earned Dean's List honors for the Fall 2024 term.

Hampden:

Ava Pauline Humphrey, Adison Oliveras and Adam Edward Poulin.

Wilbraham:

Jose Aguila, Liam George Colclough, Martin Edward Cunningham, Michelle Kristine Czuber, Malyna Jade Dansereau, Deborah Ann Farnham, Mia Yareisha Figueroa, Nicholas A. Gentile, Miranda Lee Krauza, Olivia Catherine Picard, Alison Smythe, Sophia Strand and Alexa Taylor Sullivan.

Derek Semanie named to Dean's List at UNE

BIDDEFORD AND PORTLAND, MAINE, TANGIER, MOROCCO - Derek Semanie of Wilbraham, MA, has been named to the Dean's List for the 2024 fall semester at the University of New England. Dean's List students have attained a grade point average of 3.3 or better out of a possible 4.0 at the end of the semester.

Local student earns place on Furnam Univ. Dean's List

GREENVILLE, S.C. - Allison Kandel of Wilbraham, Massachusetts, earned a place on Furman University's dean's list for the 2024 fall semester.

Furman's dean's list is composed of full-time undergraduate students who earn a grade point average of 3.4 or higher on a four-point system. Kandel's parents and/or guardians are Anthony Kandel and Anne Kandel.

STCC announces fall 2024 dean's list

SPRINGFIELD - Springfield Technical Community College celebrates the accomplishment of the 922 students who were named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

The dean's list is published each semester to recognize excellence in academic performance. To be considered, degree-seeking students must earn 12 or more college level credits in the current semester, or a total of 12 or more combined college-level credits earned during the fall and spring semesters, and achieve a 3.3 or above grade point average.

The following students from Wilbraham and Hampden made the dean's list.

Hampden

Madelyn Grace Bartolucci, Christina Shannon Clark, Abigail Dean, Justine Marie Guyer, Dylan Douglas Hess, Abigail Pronovost, Karley Sarene Taylor, Emma R. Tougas

Wilbraham

Nicholas L. Aubrey, Anthony James Crochiere, Kayleigh Cheryl Delamarter, Mikhail Dizhur, Rose Elizabeth Eldridge, Ryan Ferris Eldridge, Sadat Golestaneh, Cameron Ross Hanks, Maurice Kearney, Olivia Anna Ladouceur, Melissa Lee Laroche, Savannah S. Leir-Arterburn, Julia Rose Lewis, Noah Burke Mayock, Elizabeth C. Mendoza, Kristina Robertovna Meyko, Ayaniz Darlene Miranda, Matthew Murphy, Donovan Edward Neiford, Peter T. Nguyen, Vyan Kamlesh Patel, Joseph William Picard, Isabella G. Pietras, Jake Michael Pietras, Daniel Gerard Ryzewicz, Heather Michelle Sasen, Luis Isai Soto Toivar, Lia R. Stefaniak, Andrew Theodore Strand

HCC scholarship season opens Tuesday, Jan. 21

HOLYOKE - The Holyoke Community College Foundation will begin accepting scholarship applications for the 2025-2026 academic year on Tuesday, Jan. 21.

The application deadline is Friday, March 14, 2025.

Last year, the HCC Foundation awarded 388 scholarships worth about \$350,000 to 323 incoming, current, and transferring HCC students. Some students received multiple scholarship awards. The average scholarship award is typically around \$900.

"Awarding scholarships to deserving students has been a cornerstone of the work of the HCC Foundation since its founding," said Amanda Sbriscia, vice president of Institutional Advancement and executive director of the HCC Foundation. "Scholarships established by donors celebrate academic achievement, community service, and civic engagement, and, most importantly, these funds ensure hundreds of students have the resources they need to complete their college degrees."

Students must be currently enrolled at HCC or have been accepted for the upcoming academic year to be eligible for scholarships.

"While the recent launch of MassEducate, the state's free-community-college-for-all program, has made HCC accessible to more individuals, that only means we have a greater responsibility to ensure students make it to the finish line," Sbriscia said. "Tuition and fees represent only a portion of the cost of being a college student today, and, oftentimes, a donor scholarship can truly change a student's life."

Applicants need only to fill out a single online form to be automatically matched with the scholarships they are most qualified to receive. There are scholarships for new students, current students and students transferring to other institutions, scholarships based on financial need, scholarships for students in specific majors, scholarships for residents of certain communities, and scholarships that recognize academic achievement.

To view scholarship opportunities and begin the application process, please go to: www.hcc.edu/scholarships.

Last January, HCC opened a dedicated Scholarship Resource Center to help current and incoming students navigate the process of applying for scholarships and filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The office, located on the first floor of the Donahue Building (Room 158) is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The HCC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that works to advance the college's mission, vision, and values. Founded in 1968 as the Friends of Holyoke Community College, in response to a devastating fire that forced the college to rebuild on a new campus, the Foundation now manages assets of more than \$20 million, the largest community college foundation endowment in Massachusetts.

Questions should be directed to the HCC Foundation office at 413-552-2182, or by email to scholarships@hcc.edu.

Rotary Scholarship applications now available

WILBRAHAM - The Scholarship Committee of the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden has announced that applications for the 2025 Rotary Club scholarships are now available in the Guidance Departments of Minnechaug Regional High School, Wilbraham & Monson Academy and Pope Francis Preparatory School.

Applications are due no later than April 1, 2025. The scholarships are available to qualified high school seniors who are residents of Wilbraham or Hampden.

The club will award nine scholarships, each in the amount of \$2,000. Applications may also be obtained from Brad Sperry by calling (413) 537-4171.

Wilbraham Women's Club to Award Scholarships

WILBRAHAM- The Wilbraham Women's Club will be awarding \$1,500. scholarships to graduating seniors who are residents of Wilbraham or Hampden, and who will be attending a four-year college or university.

The criteria considered are academic achievement, character, and leadership. Application guidelines are available in the Guidance Office at Minnechaug Regional High School.

For those attending other high schools, please email Mrs. Rae Teed, Scholarship Committee Chair, at rae.teed@gmail.com. Applications must be postmarked by March 21, 2015 to be considered.

Wilbraham Junior Women's Club Scholarship

WILBRAHAM - The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. In keeping with who we are, The Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to a Minnechaug High School graduating senior who will be attending a 2-year, 4- year or other accredited institution of higher learning.

Applications are available in the Minnechaug Regional High School Guidance Office.

Completed applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2025 and mailed to:

Wilbraham Junior Women's Club, Attention Scholarship Committee, PO Box 14, Wilbraham, MA 01095.

Polish Junior League of Massachusetts awarding scholarships

REGION - The Polish Junior League of Massachusetts has announced that it will be awarding scholarships again this year for college students of Polish Heritage.

Scholarships will be awarded to undergraduate students, and one scholarship will be granted to a graduate or returning student. Application information and forms may be obtained at www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications.

Deadline for receipt of application materials is May 1, 2025.

Selection is based upon financial need and academic achievement.

Applications are available online at www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications.

Women's Club February General Meeting/Pasta Party

WILBRAHAM - Wilbraham Women's Club will be holding their next meeting and a Pasta Party on Thursday, Feb. 13.

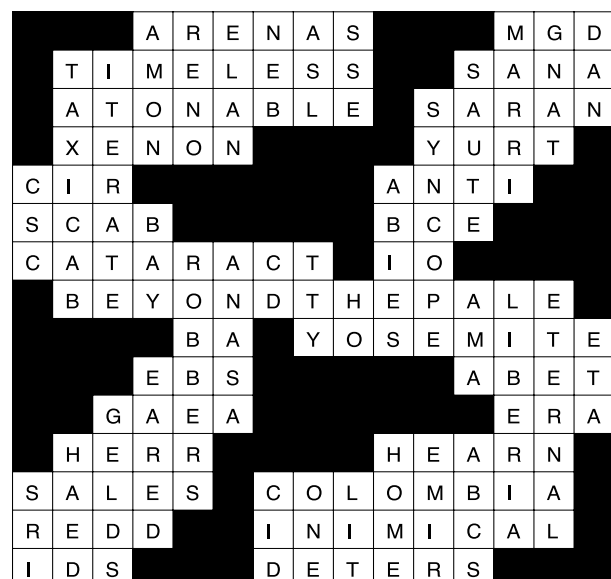
11:30 a.m. is for social time with a Noon lunch at the St. Cecilia Parish Center.

The guest will be with Erin from the Wilbraham Senior Center who oversees Fit After 60.

Erin will provide lots of tips for keeping fit and healthy after 60. She will be incorporating some cognitive and balance exercises in her demonstration.

Join us for pasta, salad and dessert. All welcome.

Please give Linda Raffa a call if you will be joining us as a guest at 413 596-8245 before Feb. 6.



SPORTS

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Lincoln Stiles locks up at 150 pounds.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Falcons prevail in dual meet

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—After starting the regular season with several tournaments and dual meets on the road, the Minnechaug wrestling team faced Valley League rival Chicopee High School without having to board a bus for the first time this winter.

The dual meet was tied a couple of times before the Falcons managed to pull away for a 55-24 victory over the Pacers in front of a large crowd

inside the Minnechaug Gymnasium, last Wednesday night.

“It was very nice to celebrate a win in front of our fans for the first time this season,” said Minnechaug head coach Taylor Pfaff. “The kids felt the energy that was in the gym tonight. They really needed the extra boost, especially after we’ve been competing on the road during the past couple of months.”

A year ago, the Falcons captured the Division 2 state championship title for the first time in school histo-

ry. They’re looking to repeat as state champions this year.

“We’ve wrestled against some of the top programs in the state so far this season,” Pfaff added. “We also went to a tournament outside of Albany, New York at the beginning of the season. We competed against some of the top New York wrestlers at that tournament. I want my guys to enjoy the regular season, but we’re preparing for the postseason tourna-

Please see **FALCONS**, page 9

Falcons take care of Pittsfield in matinee



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Cailin O'Brien shoots on target for the Falcons.



Elizabeth Woytowicz makes her way down the court. More photos on page 16.

Chaug hockey gets split with Green Wave



Enzo Hrycay tries to get past an opponent.



JJ Abeid looks to pass ahead of defensive pressure.



Liam Faneuff backhands the puck and takes possession.

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Last week, Minnechaug Regional hockey had a rare home-and-home with Greenfield, playing the Green Wave twice in three days. The first matchup took place last Thursday evening at Olympia Ice Center. The Falcons scored the 4-3 win on their home ice in that matchup. The Falcons then traveled to Greenfield for the second matchup and suffered a 4-2 loss on the road. The Falcons are 4-8 now on the season and are also on the outside of the playoff hunt as they are not in the top 32 in Division 2. A couple of wins, however, could change that for Minnechaug, allowing them to enter the state tournament without a .500 record. The Falcons next face West Springfield on Thursday, Feb. 6 at 6:30 p.m.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Ben Daniels wins the faceoff.

T-Birds fall in shootout against Bruins

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (18-17-2-2) got a combined eight points from their top line but ultimately fell in a shootout by a 4-3 score to the Providence Bruins (23-13-3-1) last Saturday night before a seventh sellout crowd this season at the MassMutual Center.

T-Birds captain Matthew Peca got the capacity crowd energized just 3:48 into the first period, taking a slip pass from Matt Luff in the high slot and wiring a shot over Brandon Bussi's blocker to give Springfield the 1-0 advantage.

Springfield carried over their strong special teams night on Friday by dispatching the Bruins' lone power play of the first period, but the Providence attack kept pressing the issue. Georgii Merkulov evened the slate at 13:35 with a one-touch finish from just outside the blue paint, beating Vadim Zherenko upstairs to tie the score 1-1.

Neither team generated much offense in the closing minutes of the period, and the tie game carried into period two, with Providence outshooting Springfield 10-6 in the opening 20 minutes.

The Bruins vaulted to their first lead just 1:59 into the second period when Frederic Brunet found a home with a point shot off a faceoff play, making it 2-1. The T-Birds had a golden chance to get back in the game as they went to a 4-on-3 power play shortly after the Brunet tally, but Bussi and the Providence penalty killers held the fort.

Later in the frame, with Providence on a power play, Ian Mitchell rocketed a one-timer past Zherenko, and the visitors' lead grew to 3-1 at 11:04 of the frame.

In desperate need of a spark, Peca and the top line provided one at 15:32 when the captain entered the zone and lifted a shot over the net. Fortunately enough, the puck careened right to the side of the goal, where MacKenzie MacEachern jabbed it through Bussi to bring Springfield back to within a goal, 3-2. With the good fortune, the veteran winger picked up his fifth goal in his last nine games.

On the very next shift, MacEachern and Peca were at it again, with the captain spotting MacEachern behind the net, and the winger blindly throwing a perfect pass in front of the goal to Luff, who mashed it home before Bussi could position himself and, thanks to two goals in just 18 seconds, the game was tied, 3-3, heading into the third.

Springfield kept pressing in the final period, but Bussi and the top defensive squad in the AHL kept the home side from gaining the advantage. Zherenko was also up to the challenge, stopping five shots in the third, including a dangerous close-in chance for Fabian Lysell in the dying minutes.

3-on-3 overtime proved to be a showcase of the two netminders' skills, as Bussi and Zherenko traded spectacular saves during the frenetic five-minute frame. Each team had four chances to ice the game, but thanks to the goalies, a shootout would be needed.

Merkulov ultimately made the difference, beating Zherenko in the opening round of the skills competition, while Bussi turned away Tanner Dickinson, forced Luff to hit a post, and then stonewalled Dalibor Dvorsky to earn the extra point for Providence.

Worcester's point streak ends in loss

PORTLAND, Me. — Worcester's eight-game points streak, second-longest in team history, ended here Friday night via a 4-2 loss to the Maine Mariners. The Railers fell behind very early, eventually trailed by 3-0, and were never able to summon the energy to come all the way back.

"I thought they were flat," coach Nick Tuzolino said. "I thought they were emotionless in the first period. It was not my favorite game with that group."

The defeat was part of a bad standings night for Worcester. Two teams trailing them in the battle for the fourth playoff spot both won. Maine closed to within five points of Worcester and has three games in hand. Reading, suddenly very hot, also won.

The Royals are 5-0-1 in their last six games. They are just one point behind Worcester. Both teams have played 40 games.

Griffin Luce and Jordan Kaplan had the Worcester goals. Luce's was his fifth of the season, extending a career high.

Jacob Hudson, Tristan Thompson, Owen Pederson and Nick Jermain scored for Maine. Hudson made it 1-0 a mere 67 seconds into the game

as the Railers got off to a tentative start.

Once again a Railers game was stagnated by goal reviews. There were two. Both went against Worcester. One was an overturn of a floating shot by Kaplan that went over goalie Maine goalie Ryan Bischel's glove with Griffin Loughran in front in the first period.

Right after that, Thompson scored a power play goal that looked like Michael Bullion was interfered with. That goal held up.

It was a game of hard feelings. There were 23 penalties called good for a combined total of 84 minutes, a season high.

Luce's goal came at 6:07 of the third period. It cut the Maine lead to 3-1 and was scored only 21 seconds after Pederson's goal. Kaplan scored on a pretty wraparound at 14:40 for the game's final goal

Bischel got the win as he stopped 27. Bullion made 28 saves for Worcester.

Recent Railers games have been overrun with goal reviews and it really takes away from the flow and momentum. Worcester's last eight games have averaged 2 hours, 37 minutes. That is well above standards from past seasons.

Jack Baldwin to take part in modified tour this season

Tommy Baldwin Racing announced Wednesday that Jack Baldwin will pilot the historic 7NY in over 20 Tour-Type Modified events during the 2025 season.

The bulk of the races will come on the SMART Modified Tour - as Baldwin will compete in the full 14-race calendar driving the 7NY. Jack has two SMART Modified Tour starts to his credit, scoring 5th and 8th place finishes in 2024.

Jack will also compete in the Tour-Type Modified events at New Smyrna Speedway's World Series of Asphalt Stock Car Racing from February 10-14, along with end of the season events at Riverhead Raceway (Islip 300) and Wall Stadium Speedway (Turkey Derby). Additional events may be announced at a later date.

Jack is the reigning 602 Modified champion at New Smyrna and has multiple 602 Modified

wins. In 2025, he will chase his first career Tour-Type win.

"Jack has run select events the last few years but we're excited to have him a full season in the Tour-Type Modifieds to continue to gain experience and refine his skills behind the wheel," team owner Tommy Baldwin Jr. said. "He will be running against stout competition in every race he runs."

"I'm definitely excited to get the chance to race on the SMART Modified Tour full-time," Jack said. "Watching the series the last few years, you can tell the racing is tight and the competition is unlike anything else when it comes to Modified racing in the south. Driving the 7NY and working with our family team all year will be special. Excited to kick it off with Speedweeks at New Smyrna."

Falcons take care of Pittsfield in matinee



Ava Ofcarcik receives a pass.



Lyric Nelson reaches out for the long layup.



Brielle Foley attempts a backwards layup.



Alani Botas crosses the court for Minnechaug.

WILBRAHAM — Last Monday afternoon, Minnechaug Regional High School girls basketball scored another win, this one coming against Pittsfield High School 49-39. Ava Ofcarcik led the team with 14 points while Lyric Nelson contributed 12 points while two others had seven points

each. The Falcons also beat Westfield 45-32 last Thursday evening and are now 7-2 on the regular season. Minnechaug will next face Chicopee and Belchertown on back-to-back nights Jan. 30 and 31, both with 7 p.m. start times on the road.



Vinh Nguyen goes for a headlock.



Hunter Gormally goes for the takedown at 165 pounds.



Sean Rooney tries to avoid a takedown.



Matthew MacPhil gets the takedown and holds an advantage at 190 pounds.

FALCONS from page 15

ments. That's when we want to be peaking."

Every wrestling team qualifies for the Western Mass. tournament. The top four teams in each division advance to the state tournament.

The Falcons didn't have very much trouble dispatching the Pacers during the past three seasons.

The only dual meet of this season between the two squads was very competitive.

"We do have a lot of new wrestlers this year, and they've come a long way so far this season," said Chicopee head coach Tiana Roy. "We just need to keep improving in every meet."

In the first varsity match of the evening, Mason Howard posted a pin with 1:10 remaining in the first round of the 106 weight class giving the home team a 6-0 lead.

The Pacers tied the score for the

first time when Aidan Costa won the 113 weight class by a forfeit.

Chicopee took a six point lead when Nevaeh Santiago, who competed at 120, won his match by disqualification in the final seconds of the first round.

In the 126 weight class, Minnechaug's Jordan Dietz recorded a pin with 11.4 seconds left in the first round tying the score of the overall match for the second time at 12-12.

The Falcons quickly retook the lead when Kai Ly won the 132 weight class by a technical fall with 1:30 remaining in the second round. Ly, who held a 15-3 advantage after the first round, built a 15 point lead in the second round, which ended the match giving his team five points.

The Falcons added six more points to their lead (23-12) when Ryan Ice posted a pin with 40 seconds left in the first round of the 138 weight class.

Chicopee first pin of the evening

was recorded by Michael Jenkins in the middle of the first round in the 144 weight class.

That win sliced the Pacers deficit to 23-18, but they wouldn't get any closer than that the rest of the match.

The Falcons built a 41-18 advantage following three straight pins by Lincoln Stiles (150), Vinh Nguyen (157), and Hunter Gormally (165).

One of the best matches of the evening took place in the 175 weight class.

The score was tied at 6-6 entering the third round before Chicopee's Nathyn Penn pinned his opponent with 59.7 seconds remaining on the scoreboard clock.

At that point, the Pacers still had an opportunity to make a comeback, but the Falcons wound up winning the final three matches.

Just like Ly did, Matt McPhail won the 190 weight class by technical fall in the second round.

Then Ryan Jacobson squeaked



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Ryan Jacobson goes for the leg takedown.

out a 12-7 decision over Raymond Alvarez in the 215 weight class.

In the 285 weight class, John Bermudez only needed a minute to record a pin which made the final score 55-24.

Celebrate Love with a Valentine's Day Card Making Extravaganza

WILBRAHAM - Wilbraham Public Library invites all budding artists to join us for a special Valentine's Day card-making event! Tuesday, Feb. 4 at 4 p.m.

Get ready to spread the love! Children of all ages are encouraged to unleash their creativity and craft heartfelt Valentine's Day cards. All necessary supplies will be provided. Parents are asked to stay with their child for this event.

Here's the sweetest part:

Create a card for someone special: Show your love to a family member, friend, or teacher with a unique and personalized card.

Spread the love to others: Make an extra card to donate to a home-bound library patron.

Registration is encouraged to ensure we have enough supplies for everyone. Please call (413) 596-6141 or visit wilbrahamlibrary.org to register.

Let's make this Valentine's Day extra special by sharing the love through the art of card making!

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Wilbraham Fire Dept. knocks down early-morning house fire

Fire does not appear suspicious; home damaged by fire

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Fire Department battled a two-alarm house fire located at 939 Monson Road, Chief Michael Andrews said on Jan. 25.

"The fire does not appear suspicious, but the exact cause remains under investigation," Chief Andrews said. "Fortunately, the home had working smoke alarms and everyone made it out safely."

The homeowner called 911 reporting the home was on fire at 3:05 that morning. On arrival, firefighters observed fire showing from the home. Firefighters made an aggressive interior attack and had the fire under control in about 30 minutes. They continued to extinguish hotspots for more than an hour. The home suffered severe fire and water damage.

The origin and cause of the fire are under investigation by the Wilbraham Fire Department and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office.



Photo courtesy of Wilbraham Fire Department

The fire departments of Ludlow, Palmer, Three Rivers, Monson, Hampden, Westover AFB and East Longmeadow provided mutual aid at the scene. The Department of Fire Services deployed a Rehab unit to support firefighter health and safety in temperatures around zero degrees.

Scantic Valley Water District Expansion Open House Informational Meeting

HAMPDEN - On February 12, 2025, the Scantic Valley Water District (SVWD) Commissioners will hold an informational meeting for residents to discuss the expansion of the SVWD to homes located within an area defined by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection as potentially impacted by PFAS contamination.

If you currently participate in the private well testing program you should receive an invitation letter in the mail with additional details about the upcoming meeting and the project. The meeting will be held at the Hampden Town House between 7 and 8:30 p.m.

This open-house style meeting means that you can arrive anytime between 7 and 8:30 p.m. and stay as long or as short of a time as you need.

The SVWD Commissioners and the SVWD's consulting engineer will be in attendance along with project details and plans for your review.

Please direct any questions to WaterComm@hampdenma.gov.

Police Departments make illegal narcotics arrest

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - On Friday, January 24, 2025, at approximately 7:15 a.m., members of the Wilbraham Police Department along with the assistance of the Hampden Police Department and a canine from the Hampden County Sheriff's office executed two search warrants for illegal narcotics.

One search warrant was executed at a location in Wilbraham and the other was at a location in Hampden. These warrants were the result of an investigation into the possession and sale of illegal narcotics.

During the execution of these search warrants officers recovered several illegal narcotics, packaging materials, cutting agents and paraphernalia. Also located were two high-capacity firearms, ammunition and body armor.

Nicholas Shea, 18, of Hampden was arrested and charged with the following:

1. Possession of a large capacity firearm (2 counts)
2. Possession of a large capacity feeding device (4 counts)
3. Illegal possession of a firearm (2 counts)
4. Violation of a drug free school zone
5. Conspiracy to violate the drug act
6. Sale or Possession of a class D substance within 300' of a school
7. Minor in possession of alcohol

8. Possession of a Class B substance (Oxycodone)
9. Possession of a Class B substance (Aderol)
10. Possession of a Class C substance (Psilocybin Mushrooms)
11. Possession of a Class E substance (Xanax)
12. Possession of a Class A substance with intent to distribute (Fentanyl)
13. Possession of a Class C substance with intent to distribute (Xanax)
14. Possession of a Class B substance with the intent to distribute (Oxycodone)
15. Possession of a Class B substance with the intent to distribute (Adderall)
16. Possession of a Class A substance with the intent to distribute (Fentanyl)
17. Possession of a Class B substance with the intent to distribute (Psilocybin Mushrooms)
18. Possession with the intent to distribute Class D substance (marijuana)
19. Possession of a Class B substance (Cocaine)
20. Possession of a Class B substance (Crack cocaine)
21. Possession with the intent to distribute Intoxicating Vapors
22. Possession of a firearm without a license.

PUBLIC NOTICES

WILBRAHAM PLANNING BOARD

The Wilbraham Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 6:00 PM** in the Town Office Building, 240 Springfield Street, on the application of Derrin & Lynn Grimard for a Special Permit (SP25-01) to exceed the size and garage door limitations in Sections 3.9.2.2 and 4.4.8 of the Wilbraham Zoning By-Law to allow construction of a 624 square foot (21' in height) detached accessory building (garage) with two garage doors on property owned by Derrin & Lynn Grimard located at 7 Kensington Drive as shown on plans on file in the Planning Office and posted for public viewing on the Planning Board page of the Town of Wilbraham website at www.wilbraham-ma.gov/123/Planning-Board. Both in person and virtual participation are available. To participate virtually go to <https://meet.goto.com/915564309> or call 866-899-4679 (Access Code: 915-564-309).

James Rooney, Chair
01/23, 01/30/2025

Dussault located at 15 Valley View Drive as shown on plans on file in the Planning Office and posted for public viewing on the Planning Board page of the Town of Wilbraham website at www.wilbraham-ma.gov/123/Planning-Board. Both in person and virtual participation are available. To participate virtually go to <https://meet.goto.com/915564309> or call 866-899-4679 (Access Code: 915-564-309).

James Rooney, Chair
01/23, 01/30/2025

WILBRAHAM PLANNING BOARD

The Wilbraham Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 5:45 PM** in the Town Office Building, 240 Springfield Street, on the application of All Energy Solar for a Special Permit (SP24-04) as required under Section 3.9.1.3 of the Wilbraham Zoning By-Law and Ridgeline-Hillside District approval under Section 9.3 of the Zoning By-Law to allow a ground-mounted solar energy system with a total footprint area exceeding 1,000 square feet to be installed and operated as an accessory use to the existing single-family residence owned by Andrew Marecki located at 655 Ridge Road as shown on plans on file in the Planning Office and posted for public viewing on the Planning Board page of the Town of Wilbraham website at www.wilbraham-ma.gov/123/Planning-Board. Both in person and virtual participation are available. To participate virtually go to <https://meet.goto.com/915564309> or call 866-899-4679 (Access Code: 915-564-309).

James Rooney, Chair
01/23, 01/30/2025

LEGAL NOTICE Sale of Motor Vehicle Under G.L. c. 255 Sec. 39A

Bach Towing Inc., 165 Benton Drive, East Longmeadow, MA is holding a private sale of the following vehicle on 02/06/2025 at 2:00 p.m. to satisfy our garage keepers lien thereon for storage and towing charges and expenses of Notices of Sale.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This ad is pursuant to MA Gen. Law Ch.255, Sec. 39A as of **February 7, 2025** the following motor vehicle will be for sale to satisfy a garage keepers lien:

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R & S Assoc. Inc
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01/23, 01/30, 02/06/2025

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Classifieds

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HELP WANTED

ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR
Council on Aging for the Town of Oakham is seeking an experienced Activities Coordinator. Miscellaneous duties to include supporting current programs and developing new programs to increase attendance and participation of the growing aging population in the Oakham Senior Center. Up to 12 hours per week (flexible) \$20.00/hr. depending upon experience. Resume should be sent to Admin@Oakham-Ma.gov, or mailed to **Board of Selectmen, Town of Oakham, 2 Coldbrook Road, Oakham, MA 01068.**

COA COORDINATOR for Town of Westhampton. Description available online at www.westhamptonma.gov. Applications accepted until position filled.

HAMPDEN POLICE DEPARTMENT is now accepting applications for a **FULL-TIME police officer**. Review of applications begins immediately. Visit www.hampdenpolice.com for more information. EOE

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR Middlefield, MA.
Part-time, ~960 hrs/yr, \$36-40,000 range.
Email resume+ cover letter highlighting strengths/ flexibility to Administrative Assistant: middlefield.assistant@gmail.com

HELP WANTED

TOWN OF BARRE Cemetery Clerk
The Town of Barre is seeking qualified applicants for the part-time position of Cemetery Clerk. This position is approximately 10 hours per week and the minimum hourly rate is \$15.00/hour and the maximum hourly rate is \$18.02/hour. A full job description is available upon request. Applicants must have HS Diploma or GED, with a minimum of two to three years' experience in office setting, or equivalent combination of education and experience. Interested applicants should submit a letter of interest to: **Tammy Martin, Town Administrator, 40 West Street, Suite 697, Barre MA 01005** or townadmin@townofbarre.com. For further information, please contact the Board of Selectmen's Office at (978) 355-2504 x135. A.A./E.O.E.

WILBRAHAM UNITED CHURCH is hiring a sexton three evenings, 7-10 hours per week, \$16 per hour. Additional compensation for hours needed for weddings and funerals.

Please send resume to admin@wilbrahamunitedchurch.org

More information found at www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/about-us/

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\$17 STEAK N' BREW EVERY SUNDAY NIGHT!

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