

**COMMUNITY**  
Winter Storm 2026  
Page 7

**SPORTS**  
Hockey gets win to make playoffs  
Page 9

# TIMES

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Jaime Hageman, children's librarian at the Wilbraham Public Library, and the members of Graphic Novel Book Club pose for a group photo.

## A look at the GRAPHIC NOVEL BOOK CLUB

By Angelina Acevedo  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - Reading is an important skill for children to have, but having friends to share it with makes it even more fun and exciting for them.

To lean into this idea, the library held its monthly Graphic Novel Book Club for kids on Jan. 22. The club reads one graphic comic book per meet, with this meeting focusing on "Comics Squad: Recess!"

Children's Librarian Jaime Hageman explained what the club is.

"Graphic Novel Book Club is a monthly hangout centered around a great story. While we do discuss our monthly book selection, the hour is packed with games, creative crafts, and snacks too," Hageman said.

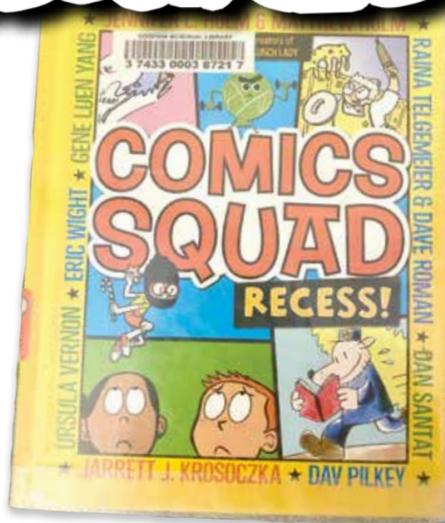
This January, kids could enjoy Cheez-Its, juice boxes and cookies for snacks, along with paper crafts.

Some of the games played were "House, Rock, Tree," where kids get into a group of three and act as a house, a rock or a tree. A more artsy game was drawing Simon Says, where a large paper was placed across a table, and kids could only draw when Hageman said, "Simon Says."

After playing some games, the kids talked about this month's book, "Comics Squad: Recess!", which is a novella consisting of multiple short graphic-novel stories, including the popular Dog Man series. Another popular story within the book was "The Rainy Day Monitor", which club member Jack explained the plot of.

"In that story, there's a group of clouds who couldn't go outside to play kickball and are

Please see **BOOK CLUB**, page 11



Turley photos by Angelina Acevedo

Graphic Novel Book Club's book for the month of January, "Comics Squad: Recess."

## SB appoints Town House Repurposing Committee members

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Selectboard has appointed the members to join the newly formed Town House Repurposing Committee.

The members appointed on Jan. 28 were Tad Brown, Joe Sibilia, Thad Clavette, Paul Marcelina, Steve Webster, Heather Beattie, Amy Bilodeau and Brian DeNegro.

This committee will help provide guidance and review options on the Town House, which until this past year served as the town hall in Hampden.

Chair John Flynn explained how a callout was shared with the community to find members, with 20 people expressing interest.

"We developed a questionnaire for them along with Don developing a kind of a charter or mandate, if you will. Sent that off to

them, and we got a total of seven responses written as well as Mr. DeNegro here as well," Flynn said.

Flynn explained the board talked about the committee consisting of seven to 9 people.

"We have eight people interested. Eight's kind of an awkward number because you always worry about that tie-vote type thing," Flynn said. "I would say that we would kind of keep it open at this point. That if a 9th person came along with a strong resume..."

"We would add them up," Selectboard Member Don Davenport said.

"Right," Flynn said. Flynn then thanked those who expressed interest in joining the committee.

"All of us read your statements. I like the fact that everybody said, 'Look,

Please see **COMMITTEE**, page 3

## Firefighter O'Donnell publishes book

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Local Firefighter Nichole O'Donnell has published a book titled "Diary of a Probie: Turning Setbacks into Strengths."

The book is currently available at Fire Engineering Books, Barnes & Noble and Amazon—in several countries—with more to come.

O'Donnell is also doing several podcast interviews to promote the book and will be holding a book signing at Rice Fruit Farm on Saturday, Feb. 14 from 9 a.m. to Noon.

Please see **O'DONNELL**, page 8

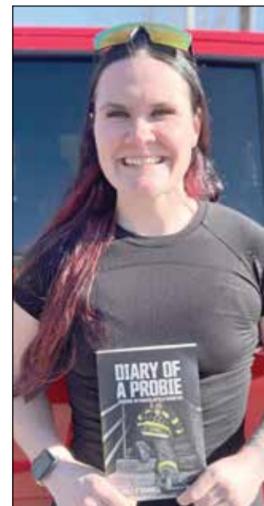


Photo courtesy of Nichole O'Donnell

Firefighter Nichole O'Donnell with her book, "Diary of a Probie: Turning Setbacks into Strengths."



Photo courtesy of Ellen Moriarty

The Hampden Free Public Library has many events going on this winter.

## HPL is hosting annual Winter Season events

By Natalie Proulx  
Correspondent

HAMPDEN - This winter season, the Hampden Free Public Library is hosting many annual events for all age groups over the next two months to help you grow into the new library space and location!

Over at 85 Wilbraham Rd.—the former Thornton W. Burgess Middle School—the public library is adjusting to

its new location. If you go to the right side of the main entrance, you will find a blue flag indicating the new official entrance to the Hampden Public Library.

"We are in the auditorium of the new town hall," Ellen Moriarty, director of the Hampden Free Public Library, said. "We just moved the library literally a month ago from the old town house

Please see **EVENTS**, page 4

## Night at the Y brings teens together

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Students at Minnechaug Regional High School had an opportunity to enjoy some fun during the Night at the Y event at the Scantic Valley YMCA on Jan. 23.

The event was hosted by the Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth Coalition and featured dodgeball, basketball, board games and swimming — with a certified

lifeguard present — crafts with Rick's Place, Mothers Against Drunk Driving providing information on impaired driving — with attendees having the opportunity to try alcohol impairment goggles — and visits with the fire and police departments, the Hampden DA Safety and Outreach Team and more.

Also, Gio's Pizzeria donated 200 slices of pizza, Mandarin Wilbraham donated a tray of chicken fingers, a tray of crab rangoons and a tray of white rice and The Sugar Chalet donated sugar

cookies and decorating supplies for the cookies.

There were also volunteers who helped bring everything together for the event.

Jackie Hafner, the coalition coordinator for HWP4Y, shared the event was a success.

"HWP4Y loves doing this event as it provides a safe place for the youth of Minnechaug to go and have fun with their peers. It gives them a different place to go 'just for them' as there is no teen center in Wilbraham

or Hampden," Hafner said. "This was the second event at the YMCA. Last year, we had 33 students attend. This year, we had 70 students of Minnechaug attend."

Hafner expressed gratitude for the community support, which helped the coalition get this event together for all to enjoy.

"It's amazing to have the support of the community. There is a saying, 'It takes a Village.' When the 'Village,' comes together to

Please see **YMCA**, page 8



Photo courtesy of Jackie Hafner

A group photo of the many Minnechaug Regional High School students who got to enjoy the Night at the Y event at the Scantic Valley YMCA on Jan. 23.

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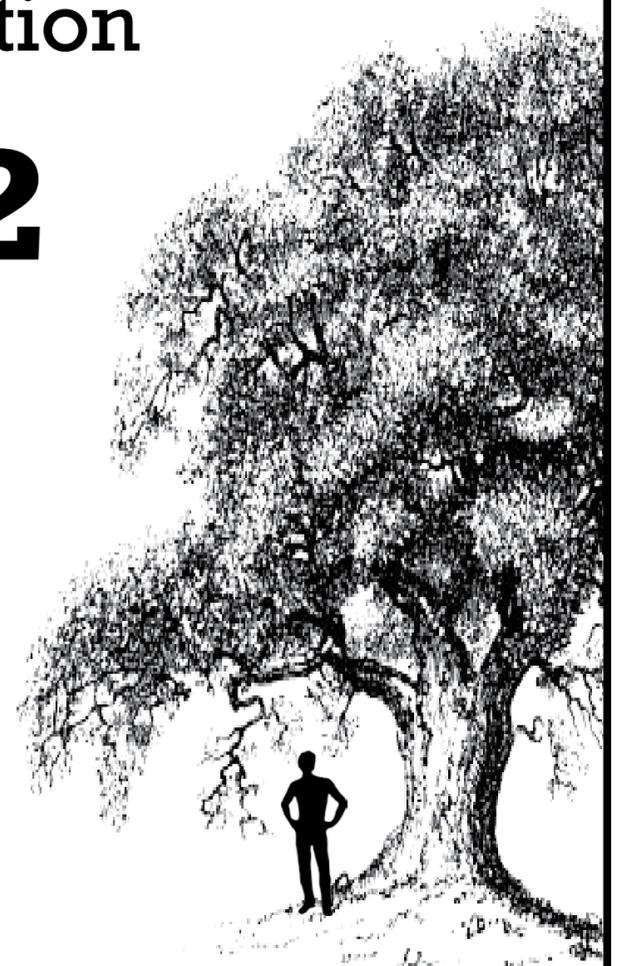
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# DL&G TREE



**INSURED AND CERTIFIED**

**COMMUNITY**

**Background info shared on FinCom CPA item**

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Select Board discussed the Finance Committee's Jan. 21 recap on a request to review whether to amend or eliminate the Community Preservation Act during their Jan. 27 meeting.

For the Select Board's thoughts, check out this week's edition.

Finance Committee Chair Todd Schneider explained how Patrick Kiernan, one of the members, was looking at the "reduction the states have matched with regards to CPA" and "the guardrails that they put around what we can spend it on."

"The thought process was if we reduced our CPA, then we can use funding for what we need knowing that there's a lot of capital projects going forward," Schneider said. "We went through the numbers of Western Massachusetts versus Eastern Massachusetts, towns that participate. It's not something that actually gets passed a lot. It's never been passed on to eliminate the CPA. No town has been able to do that. But, the thought process is we may be going into a core program in a year at the middle school. It frees up some of the money."

Barbara Hancock, the collector and assistant town administrator for Budget & Finance, noted there is, currently \$2.9 million in the investment account, but there's also money in projects "that are not done or haven't been withdrawn from that."

"So, it's \$2.9 that I have right now, but it has outstanding of about \$800,000 in projects that have been approved and not deleted," Hancock said.

So right now, \$2.1 million is available. Schneider emphasized spending the money in the way to best support the town's needs going forward.

"It was passed, I believe it was passed 6-2. I know it's a very touchy subject. I actually played devil's advocate against myself on the vote because I don't know which way to go with this. I can see the reduction is maybe necessary to fund for capital projects, but when we fund for the capital projects, we'd be getting into that capacity level, which makes it even more difficult and nears to two and a half overrides and I am 100% for around the idea of CPA and many of the projects they have done in the five years that I have been part of the program," Schneider said.

"It was just asked to kick it up to the Select Board to have them discuss it and see what they want to do." He later added the vote was to present this to the Select Board for a discussion—not to make a decision, as FinCom has a lot of respect for the CPA program—and made a request with Town Administrator Nick Breault to see if Nick Manolakis could invite CPA folks to the capital planning meetings, especially where the school capital projects are concerned, to see if they could fit under CPA.

After Hancock explained how the financials work, Community Preservation Committee Chair Tracey Plantier shared that she knows this is tough. "Budgets are very, very difficult across the entire state. It's very hard for people to see this collection of money and not want it. The reality is, though, this is a different program. You can't just move this money to the General Fund. This is CPA money," Plantier said. "So, what Todd's talking about is reducing the CPA or removing the CPA, but raising taxes. You're going to have to raise taxes to get that money."

Plantier added, from her understanding, "the budgets were supposed to be flat this year," but "they're never flat, and that's never going away."

"I particularly—you gave the average of what a home pays—I pay 31 cents a day for CPA. I think it's a reasonable amount to put into projects that probably won't get prioritized by the Finance Committee because of all the demands of all the other departments. So, you're talking investments made in historical, made into housing, made into recreation—which is probably a big user, honestly, recreation's probably one of the biggest users of CPA money—and then open space," Plantier said. "I think it's hard because we've been saving money. I think we're conservative as a town of not spending every penny for the future. We know that there's big projects coming down the road and we'll have the money to do a lot of those big projects."

Looking at projects at the local level, Plantier said the committee looks at the overall fit to the community "as well as the value depending on the ask."

"Projects that are championed, have a lot of people behind them—pickleball courts is a great example—those definitely come with voices of people," Plantier said. "So, the committee is taking all of that into account, is what is the value to the town, what's the group of residents that really want to see this move forward, what's the value of the project. Is it a fair value for what's being asked, because there have been some projects where values seemed not quite worth the ask and we've turned them down. So, there is a subjective nature to the committee, but I would say...I feel like over 90% of the projects that are asked for move forward to Town Meeting. There are very few rejected, but there are projects that are rejected."

She added the qualifications are also the first line of defense if a project has to be rejected.

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**Hampden Senior Center announces February events**

HAMPDEN - Here are two upcoming events to keep an eye on in February.

**SOUP-er BOWL Lunch**  
Friday, Feb. 6 at Noon  
\$3 per person

Join us for a delicious lunch of Turkey Rice Soup and a sandwich made by Becky & Wendy with dessert generously donated by JGS Lifecare.

Stay to play Super Bowl Trivia with The Trivia Guy, Paul Federico, with a chance to win some great prizes.

Please call 566.5588 to RSVP for this event.

**Valentine's Day Luncheon**  
Friday, Feb. 13 at Noon,

\$3.00 per person suggested donation for lunch

Come and enjoy a delicious meal of Rosé Chicken, Pasta, Salad, and Garlic Bread, provided by GSSSI, and Tiramisu for dessert, provided by The Reserve at East Longmeadow.

Patrick Tobin will be here to sing and entertain you with the sounds of Frank Sinatra.

Please call 566-5588 to reserve your seat. Space is limited.

"This program is funded in part by a grant from the Hampden Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by Mass Cultural Council, a state agency."

**COMMITTEE** from page 1

we're open to anything. We're coming into this with an understanding of the history of the town, the history of the building but there are things we don't know. You'll want a copy of the report we got from Tighe & Bond showing the status, the condition of the building. You'll want to get together and bounce ideas off of each other," Flynn said.

He added how, as the board said, "we are on a bit of a time constraint."

"The building costs us money every day with no real purpose at this point. I think we've said we'd like the committee to come back to the Selectboard with maybe—I don't know Don—maybe three to five ideas, something like that and we start winnowing them down like we've seen in other committees. Your choice a through m, but our top five are a, l, g, whatever and really start moving on it," Flynn said. "We will put time on our agenda whenever

you have something. We also talked about the possibility of getting you a clerk as well, so that if there's information to be gathered and distributed, that can be done as well."

Davenport said he and Town Administrator Brian Domina will also be on the committee as ad hoc members, known as non-voting members, adding he would want Facilities Director Herb Foley, Building Commissioner Wendel Hulbert and a member of the Historical Commission to come in as needed.

"I mean, we're going to have to touch base with them," Davenport said. "I thought Wendel might even come to the first meeting to talk about the ADA."

"Well, that might be the first thing (the) committee would want is a tour, right?" Flynn said.

"Something like that," Davenport said.

Afterward, Davenport made a motion to appoint the members.

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**COMMUNITY**

# SB's shares thoughts on FinCom CPA item

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Select Board shared their thoughts on the Finance Committee's Jan. 21 recap on a request to review whether to amend or eliminate the Community Preservation Act.

For the background information, check out this week's edition.

Vice Chair Marc Ducey said he "truly values the work the CPA has done over the years," and "we've got a lot of great projects over those years, which we probably wouldn't have had otherwise."

"We passed it, first off, for the Rice's Nature Preserve, but when we voted on it, it was a dollar-for-dollar match. It's no longer dollar-for-dollar, it's far less than that," Ducey said. "It's typically less than, what 20%?"

After Plantier said "the last three years, it's been, but before that it was more" and noted the town got \$632,000 in CPA money over the last

five years, Ducey added how "it's far less than what the voters discussed and voted on 20 years or where thereabouts."

Plantier agreed and then noted, at that time, less towns were involved, but now more towns have been added to the program since Wilbraham first joined too as they saw its impact.

"Towns can go up to 3% and those actually get a second and a third round distribution. We only get a first-round distribution," Plantier said.

"So, I think that's why the voters may want to have another say in it because it's a different program today than it was when we first voted on it," Ducey said. "But the other side of it is I struggle with the handcuffs. There are needs in this town, sometimes, we can't address because we don't want to raise taxes more."

One project Ducey wished the funds could be used on is sidewalks.

"You see people walking up and down Main Street in town, recreationally, as much as anything to get some ex-

ercise in, but that doesn't qualify for some unknown reason," Ducey said. "I think the best solution is to get the legislature to change the legislation so that we can use this—at least use our portion of the money—ideally, we could use our portion of the money with no handcuffs. That's not allowed right now and I understand that, but we need to work on that because I think that would be the best solution."

After Plantier noted concerns about CPA money being used to work around having to do a two-and-a-half override—which is why those restrictions were there—Ducey replied that was a fair point.

After he suggested if this could be presented to Town Meeting as a non-binding resolution, Clerk Sue Bunnell said her concern was "to ensure that there is a balanced presentation, that there's an educational campaign" to explain this to voters, which would be a burden on the CPA team.

"I've got real concerns about that because it's the sort of issue that I feel is go-

ing to draw kind of a knee-jerk response and how it's presented, who's in the room and how much depth of understanding there is is a real concern for me. That that's going to be very difficult to ensure is well done," Bunnell said. "A non-binding resolution is a non-binding resolution. I think something like FlashVote is more appealing to me but, again, you still got those same questions. What's the depth of understanding and how do you frame that? It would be interesting to see what, if anything, the FlashVote folks have done in this arena."

After Ducey emphasized voter input, Chair Michael Squindo agreed on that, but also agreed on Bunnell's concerns and noted Schneider's earlier points on why the board was presented the discussion.

"I think the reason that it got kicked to us that way was because as a non-binding, send to Select Board so they can make a visionary policy decision about whether they want to give this to the voters," Squindo said. "My takeaway is sending a

question to the voters without information about the pros, cons and impacts of that decision—non-binding or otherwise—gives you an emotional reaction with no value."

Squindo added even if this was put on FlashVote and people are also independently informed, "they're not getting necessarily the same information that everybody else is getting."

"So, it's informed to the degree that they choose to be informed or can be. I think that leaves me to suggest that while I'm not opposed to having a conversation, I think it's a big lift to ask for it to go before Town Meeting this year as a priority," Squindo said.

He said once the information is "objectively compiled," he thinks the board should take a recommendation of a vote then, along with FinCom and other bodies that would be involved.

After further discussion, Squindo said the board would think on this for a week before sending a response back to the Finance Committee.

## Scholarship to Space Academy for Middle schooler

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - A committee from the Minnechaug classes of 1973 and 1975 would like to announce the opening for applications for a scholarship to the Space Academy in Huntsville, Alabama this summer for a middle school youngster from Wilbraham or Hampden.

In honor of Minnechaug graduate Astronaut Dr. Janice Voss, the committee will sponsor a youngster ages 12-14 for the weeklong Space Academy summer camp. Students will be immersed in astronaut training techniques using equipment adapted from NASA's astronaut training program, including the one-sixth gravity chair and the multi-axis trainer. Team building and communication are promoted, as well as technology instruction.

The application, along with a teacher recommendation, must be received by Monday, March 2, 2026 by mail or email to Linda Voss at [inklings@compuserve.com](mailto:inklings@compuserve.com) or 1303 N. Ode St., Apt 224, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Please see **SPACE**, page 13

**EVENTS** from page 1

to the Thornton Burgess Middle School, so we kind of put everything on hold like ordering books and programming...although annual programming still stands."

Today, on Feb. 5, Adult Yoga Nidra classes will be hosted with Sue Kendrick at the library at 6 p.m. There's no need to worry about signing up, you can just walk in

and attend!

"We've been doing it for a little while and it's very popular," Moriarty said. "Some weeks we might have 12, some weeks we might have 20."

If you're not able to make tonight's session, don't worry, you can also attend Feb. 12 and 19, as well as on March 5, 12 and 19.

Did you know that every second Saturday of the month,

the Hampden Public Library hosts different book clubs for all different types of individuals? At 11 a.m. on Feb. 14, the Hampden Library Saturday Adult Book Club will be discussing the book, "After Annie" by Anna Quindlen, that navigates themes of loss and hope. At Noon the same day, the Social Justice Adult Book Club that discusses all sorts of themes from environmental justice to Native American

cultures, will also be meeting to discuss their book, "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Ijeoma Oluo, that explores complex issues regarding racial inequality in modern America.

If you're interested in joining next month, on March 14 at 11 a.m., the Hampden Library Saturday Adult Book Club will be discussing the book, "The Man Who Died Twice" by Richard Osman, a

cozy mystery and thriller. And again, that same day at Noon, the Social Justice Book Club will be meeting to discuss the book, "An Indigenous Peoples' History of the U.S." by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz that navigates early colonialism through an Indigenous perspective.

To become an official book club member, you can sign up at the front desk, but there are always extra copies for those who are interested in what the clubs are reading.

If you're a teen and would like to partake in a book club of your own, on Feb. 14 and March 14, you can attend the Teen Silent Reading Book Club. This is an engaging take on a casual book club that encourages teens to read with their friends for the first 45 minutes quietly and then discuss the content of their books while enjoying snacks for the last 15. You do not need to sign up to become a part of it, just simply drop by!

At Noon on Saturday, Feb. 7, the Hampden Public Library will be hosting a Teen Crow Party. Teens will be wearing the color black to emulate crows and bring little trinkets or treasures with them to trade with the other "crows" there. Attendees are encouraged to bring a friend or two for more trading variety!

Another monthly event happening at Noon on Feb. 21 and March 21 is the Teen Stitch and Sip. Attendees are encouraged to bring any crocheting, knitting, or embroidery projects with them to work on while enjoying a mocktail with friends.

Any skill levels are encouraged to attend.

Teens keep an eye out in

March! In March, the Hampden Free Public Library will be hosting a Gold Coin Hunt.

"This program was very well-attended last year and it gives our teens an opportunity to explore the new library as they look for gold coins hidden around the library," Young Adult Librarian Maxine Girard said.

Every Monday at 11 a.m. for little ones ages 0 to 4 and their parents, is the Grow, Play, Learn Program. Trained staff members work to guide parents and caregivers in strengthening connections and interactions with their children through curriculum, resources to fit their child's needs, and help with stage development.

Registration is required for these events, and you can register by calling at the front desk or emailing [krumplik@cwmar.org](mailto:krumplik@cwmar.org).

The Hampden Friends of the Library sponsors the majority of these events as well as assisting in the recent move. The Friends of the Library's Annual Membership Drive is coming up and if you'd like to become a member, you can pick up a form on the front desk at the library to help raise money for the Library.

Moriarty described the help that the Friends of the Library has provided to the library, especially in the time of the move.

"Whenever we need help with something, they're there for us. They are our friends," Moriarty said.

If you'd like to learn more about any upcoming Hampden Free Public Library Events, you can browse the event calendar at: [hampden.library.org/events/](http://hampden.library.org/events/).



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# Budget Roundtable: Part 3

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Times continues to showcase the Jan. 12 Budget Roundtable hosted by the Selectboard and Advisory Committee, giving readers a full breakdown of the reports from town committees and departments.

So far, we've highlighted the police, fire and highway departments, the senior center, the library, Health and Building Departments and the Conservation Commission.

## Planning Board and Cemetery Commission

Planning Board Member Patrick Coyne shared notes on behalf of Chair Madison Pixley, who had said, "I don't anticipate any additional budget needs beyond the standard salary and what we've carried for expenses in recent years."

On Chair John Flynn's question on anything for town meeting, Coyne replied no.

"Nothing anticipated. We talked about possibly, as you remember, maybe reforming bylaws," Coyne said.

However, he added, that's not in the works right now.

Flynn's next thought was this.

"My pet peeve would be are we any closer to accepting the oldest, private subdivision road in town? As we come up to 22 years since I signed the plan," Flynn said.

Coyne replied that "I haven't heard that we are any closer."

For the Cemetery Commission, Commissioner Duane Mosier hasn't noted many changes.

"As we're moving forward this year, we hope to go out a bit for a mower contract. It's due to be replaced, and we're also working on getting the loop in so that

when you go up to Old Cemetery, you might be able to turn around without having to back into the drive," Mosier said. "Vegetation, we've done a lot of removal of the trees and bushes and things of that nature...So, we're going to continue working on that."

Mosier said he didn't anticipate "any significant financial requirements."

"Just continue to work, making everybody happy," Mosier said.

On the turnaround for Old Cemetery, Mosier said that's anticipated to be done in the spring and needs to go out to bid due to the project size.

"So, we're putting together a bid document and advertise, and at the same time, we'll be looking to put out a bid document. It needs to get done," Mosier said. "We, also, have that paving which you've been working on. Trying to figure out how that's going to happen."

## Parks & Rec

Parks & Rec Director Dan Blanchard explained the Spray Park Expense Account had spent "approximately \$4,000 less at this time than we had last year," with a repair done to the filtration system "that increased our spending."

"So, we feel good about that. When we open the spray park in May-ish or end of April, I'm sure there'll be some maintenance needs that the opener suggests, so we'll take a look at those, but feel very good for the spray park right now," Blanchard said. "Expenses, we are on par within \$200 of what we spent last year, so that's a good thing. We do have concerns moving forward with the move to TWB and custodialing our own hallway and the paper products and all those things that we didn't, necessarily, fully plan for last year. So, we're keeping an eye on

that and trying to be frugal where we can so we can stay within the budget, but that's something we're going to have to adapt to going forward."

On hourly employee salaries, Blanchard said, "This is where we've spent \$11,000 more than we had at this time last year."

"We were appropriated \$13,000 more from last year to this year, so we've already spent \$11,000 of that \$13K extra that we were appropriated, and that's due to the move over here to TWB. We loaned a couple workers for two or three, four weeks, and so that came out of our budget," Blanchard said. "So, we had more hours than we typically have at that time of year. So, right now, we got to monitor our hours and see. We're also custodialing our wing of the building, so we need to figure out. That's not necessarily something we had planned to do when we moved over here to be the custodian of the hallway. So, that's an added expense that we hadn't necessarily planned on."

On capital items, the only item on the list is the truck.

"There's other projects that I'd like to do, but given the financial environment that we're in right now, we'll probably just hold on those for now," Blanchard said.

On the paper products items, Treasurer Richard Patullo suggested Blanchard, the board and Facilities Manager Herb Foley sit down to review the policy a little more, which will be looked into.

Selectboard Member Don Davenport then asked about the golf simulator, which Blanchard said he hopes to have functioning very soon.

"I have a couple remaining things. That's what I'll be working on for the rest of the week is getting that fi-

Please see **PART 3**, page 13

# Wilbraham/Hampden kids invited to join the Snowman Contest 2026

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - Calling all kids: the 2026 Snowman Building Contest is back.

Winter fun is officially on the horizon, and the Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is inviting kids across Wilbraham and Hampden to grab their mittens, roll up some snow, and let their imaginations run wild! The 2026 Snowman Building Contest is here, and it promises frosty fun, friendly competition, and fantastic prizes.

Young snow artists are encouraged to build their best, silliest, most creative snowman and snap a photo featuring the 2026 Snowman Building Contest flyer, which can be found on the club's website at [www.WilbrahamJuniorWomens.org](http://www.WilbrahamJuniorWomens.org). Once the masterpiece is complete, parents or guardians should post the photo to the Wilbraham-Hampden Snowman Contest Facebook page. Entries will be accepted throughout the winter season.

Winners will be chosen by the Junior Women's club and announced on the Facebook Page at the end of the season.

Prizes will be awarded to



three top snow creations:

- First Prize: \$30, a trophy, and ultimate bragging rights
- Second Prize: \$25
- Third Prize: \$20

The Snowman Building Contest is proudly sponsored by the Wilbraham Junior Women's Club, an organization dedicated to supporting local programs, charities, and community events in Wilbraham and surrounding towns.

Have questions about the contest, the club, or interested in joining the Wilbraham Junior Women's Club? Visit [www.WilbrahamJuniorWomens.org](http://www.WilbrahamJuniorWomens.org) to learn more. You can also contact Barbara Croteau at [barbarcroteau@gmail.com](mailto:barbarcroteau@gmail.com).

So when the snow starts falling, don't stay inside—get building, get creative, and get clicking. Your snowman could be a winner!

# Stuffed Animal Sleepover at WPL

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 and Friday, Feb. 19 and 20 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 "stuffie" and see a slideshow of all the fun things the animals did overnight! Starting on Feb. 2, sign up at the Children's desk of the library or call 413-596-6141.

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**Valentine's Day Dinner**

**Appetizers & Salads**

- Crab Cakes** ♥  
Sweet corn salsa & smoky chipotle aioli
- Bacon-Wrapped Sea Scallops** ♥  
Finished with a silky champagne Dijon cream
- Blackened Shrimp Crostini** ♥  
With gorgonzola chive butter
- Spinach & Strawberry Salad** ♥  
Fresh spinach, strawberries, candied walnuts, red onion & goat cheese with strawberry balsamic vinaigrette

**Entrées**

- Herb-Crusted Rack of Lamb** ♥  
Creamy mashed potatoes, tender asparagus  
Mint demi-glace
- Zuppa di Pesce (for two)** ♥  
A romantic seafood stew featuring jumbo shrimp, sea scallops, mussels, haddock & Lobster tail  
Served with garlic points
- His & Hers Steaks** ♥  
6oz filet & 12oz New York strip  
Served with fingerling potatoes & asparagus
- Lobster Ravioli** ♥  
In a rich cream sauce with Peruvian drop peppers, topped with Parmesan crisps
- Chicken Saltimbocca** ♥  
Pan-seared chicken breast topped with prosciutto, sage & fontina  
Kalamata olives, capers, White wine tomato broth
- Grilled Swordfish** ♥  
Topped with mango salsa  
Served with coconut rice & cilantro oil drizzle

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## VIEWPOINTS

## SOCIAL SECURITY

## Matters

By Russell Gloor

## Am I entitled to more Social Security as a Veteran?

## Dear Rusty:

I served in the U.S. Army from July 1964 to July 1967. Am I eligible for a higher Social Security payment?

## Thank you. Signed: Vietnam Era Army Vet

## Dear Army Vet:

Please accept my sincere thanks for your military service. I believe you are referring to the "Special Extra Credit for Military Service," which has been the subject of many published articles. That refers to a special Social Security accommodation available only to those who served in the military during specific periods of time, but it does not add to your monthly Social Security payment. Rather, it adds to your military earnings record for the years you served, which may or may not result in a higher Social Security benefit when you later claim Social Security.

Here's how it works in your case:

Serving between 1964 and 1967, if you told Social Security of your military service when you applied for Social Security benefits or gave them a copy of your DD-214, they would have added up to \$1,200 per year to your military pay record. FYI, those who served after 1966 were automatically given earnings credit for their military service years. However, whether those special extra credits would affect your monthly Social Security benefit depends on your lifetime earnings record when you later claimed Social Security.

When you applied for benefits, Social Security reviewed your lifetime earnings and used the highest earning 35 years of earnings over your lifetime (adjusted for inflation) to calculate your "Primary Insurance Amount" or "PIA," which is what you get if you claim benefits to start at your Social Security full retirement age. If, after your military service, you had 35 or more years of earnings which were higher than your earnings while serving in the military, Social Security would have used your later higher earning years to calculate your benefit, and your military earnings would

not have had an effect on your Social Security benefit. However, if any of your military earnings including the "special extra credits" were among the highest over your lifetime, then those higher military earnings would be included when calculating your Social Security benefit.

So, whether you would benefit from these "special extra credits for military service" depends largely on your earnings history after you were discharged from active duty. If your military earnings were among the highest earning years over your lifetime, and you provided SSA with a copy of your DD-214 when you applied for Social Security, then your current SS benefit already includes consideration of your military service. FYI, Social Security should have asked about your military service when you applied. If you didn't tell SS about your military service when you applied for Social Security, or if you aren't sure, you should contact the SSA at 1.800-772-1213 and ask if you were given those "special extra credits for military service" for your 1960s military service years when you applied for Social Security. But if you had at least 35 years of higher earnings after you left military service, your current SS benefit is already based on those later higher earning years, and you will not get any additional Social Security benefit because of the "special extra credits" for your military service years.

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

## Winter sowing is a fun experiment

"Winter sowing" always comes up as a hot topic on social media this time of year.

The basic premise of winter sowing is to plant your seeds in mini greenhouses (gallon jugs), place the jugs outside and simply let nature take over. The advantage being that no heat mats or lights are needed. No window sills full of seedlings, either.

While I don't think it is as simple as it sounds, I do think trying it would be a fun experiment.

Read on this week and next to consider some of the pros and possible cons of this seed starting technique.

Years ago I read a blog where a master gardener was encouraging folks to start native perennials in milk jugs outside. The seeds of many of these plants require a period of cold and moist stratification to break seed dormancy.

In simple terms, they need to go through winter in order to sprout. Think of it as nature's safety mechanism; seeds germinate at the right time to survive and thrive!

You may ask, then, why not just sow the seeds outdoors in the garden? In theory it sounds good, but in reality "the wild" is not the best seed bed.

From hungry birds and rodents, to wind and drenching rains, success is hit or miss. Safely inside the milk jug, but at the same time outside in the elements to freeze and thaw, freeze and thaw, tricky seeds are coaxed into germinating. Success at your fingertips!

Here are the nuts and bolts! Start with clean gallon containers, the see-through kind that water or milk come in. About four inches up, just below the handle, safely cut around the jug, leaving an inch or so on either side of the handle as a "hinge."

You should be able to bend the top back and forth. Make a number of drainage holes in the bottom; three or four per quadrant.

germination is great, you can always transplant some out.

Close the container and seal it with duct tape. Be sure to label the jug with the plant name via a paint pen, really the only writing utensil that won't smear, fade or wash away when exposed to the elements.

Place the jugs in full exposure outdoors and with the cap off, so that heat can escape and small amounts of moisture can penetrate. When the temperature outdoors heats up past 60 degrees, be sure to take the duct tape off and vent your seedlings. Check often and water as needed.

The pros recommend to cover with a blanket if frost threatens or even move heat lovers inside on cold nights so that the seedlings won't freeze. To prevent tip-over by four-legged friends or playful kids, pros also suggest putting the jugs in trays or bins.

As you can see, this method is not maintenance-free, but certainly worthy of a try especially for gardeners who are short on indoor space or in the mood to get their hands dirty earlier in the season than normal! January and February is the perfect time to start seeds that need a cold treatment.

Look for key terms on the seed packet, such as "stratification needed," "sow in the fall," etc. You can also use this technique to sow cold hardy annuals in March- think chard, spinach, kale, snapdragons, bachelor button and the like.

*Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to [pouimette@turley.com](mailto:pouimette@turley.com) with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.*



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By Ellenor Downer



Snowy owl

In late December of last year and early January of this year, a snowy owl has been seen at Northampton Airport and in a cornfield.

The snowy owl is an irruptive species from the tundra. Usually, it is the young snowy owls that head this way. There have been reports of snowy owls at Plum Island this month. Logan Airport is another common location for them.

The snowy owl is large and white. The mature males have a lot of white. Females and juveniles have dark brown and black barring. Living in the Arctic, it is well adapted to cold with dense feathers in-

cluding feathers on their feet. They hunt rodents like lemmings in open tundra. They have exceptional sight and hearing.

Their flight is silent allowing them to catch unsuspecting prey. They hunt during the day, a rarity for most owls. They expand south during winter food scarcity in the tundra. It is one of North America's heaviest owls with a wing span of 4.5 to 5.5 feet.

They are generally solitary, but form pairs. They build nests in the ground in shallow scrapes. The female lays three

to 11 eggs, the number of eggs depending on food availability. Males bring food and the females incubate and feed the chicks.

## Helping owls

Here are some tips if you see a snowy owl. Keep a safe distance to observe quietly. Do not play bird calls from your phone or other device. Don't feed the owls. Avoid flashes when taking photos. Keep noises to a minimum. If you find an injured owl: contact your state wildlife agency or local rehabilitator. If you find

a dead owl: contact your state wildlife agency.

Also people should avoid using rodenticides; they are poisonous to birds and other animals even a pet. If an owl or other birds of prey eat a rodent that ingested, it will kill them.

## Evening grosbeaks

A Worthington resident reported a friend saw two evening grosbeaks on Tuesday, Jan. 6. He said in his email he remembered when they used to be in giant flocks. He asked if they were rare out my way. I have not seen evening grosbeaks in sometime. Other people in Central Massachusetts have seen them recently. The Massachusetts Audubon Society reported six evening grosbeaks in North Brookfield.

## Mass. Audubon sightings

Recent Mass Audubon sightings include western grebes, eared grebes, tufted ducks and sandhill cranes as well as an unusual visitors, a

scissor-tailed flycatcher, a rare state record and a rosy-billed pochard. Other sightings include goldeneye, mergansers, horned larks, and wintering raptors like Northern harriers in Massachusetts in early January.

On Jan. 6 and again on Jan. 13 a male King Eider was seen among thousands of common Eiders in North Chatham. A Pacific loon and over 400 razorbills were at Race Point in Provincetown.

## Brimfield resident

A Brimfield resident sent an email on Jan. 6 that he received a preliminary total for the Springfield Christmas Bird Count, which was 66 species, a few below the average. He also said, "We occasionally see them in the yard and sometimes hear the barred owls calling."

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or [edowner@turley.com](mailto:edowner@turley.com) or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

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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 800-824-8458 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.

## 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](mailto: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.

A COMMUNITY GALLERY

*Life in*

Readers are encouraged to send in medium to high resolution photos for this page by e-mail to [krivers@turley.com](mailto:krivers@turley.com) or mail to TIMES, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

# WILBRAHAM HAMPDEN

## Winter Storm 2026

Wilbraham and Hampden were among many communities that received over a foot plus of snow during the Jan. 25 snowstorm. It was one of the bigger snowstorms the communities have had in a while, and people had some fun! From kids and dogs enjoying the snowfall to nature and everything in-between, this will be a snowstorm to remember. Enjoy these photos sent in by the community, with more to come in a future edition!

### COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Send us in your announcements! Happy Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.

We will pick one each week to run here free of charge, please keep it to less than 50 words. Please send to [krivers@turley.com](mailto:krivers@turley.com)



Submitted photo Erin O'Connor  
Myles, age 6, smiles for the camera as he enjoys a day out in the snow.



Submitted photo Annie O'Reilly  
Annie O'Reilly shared this beautiful sunset photo illuminating a winter wonderland.



Submitted photo Sam Cee  
Here, we have snow on top of cars in the midst of the snowstorm.



Submitted photo Trish Lee  
Trish Lee shared it was the first winter in Massachusetts for these three Georgia dogs, saying, "They are still not too sure about the snow, so they are waiting patiently at the door to get back to the heater."



Submitted photo Miranda Mues  
Marley and Ginette have some fun in the snow.



Submitted photo Gina Ricciardi  
The sun pokes through the trees after the snow has fallen.



Submitted photo Lauren Scott  
LEFT: Lauren Scott shared a photo of her dog, DJ, running in the front yard, explaining how she had snowblown a trail for him.

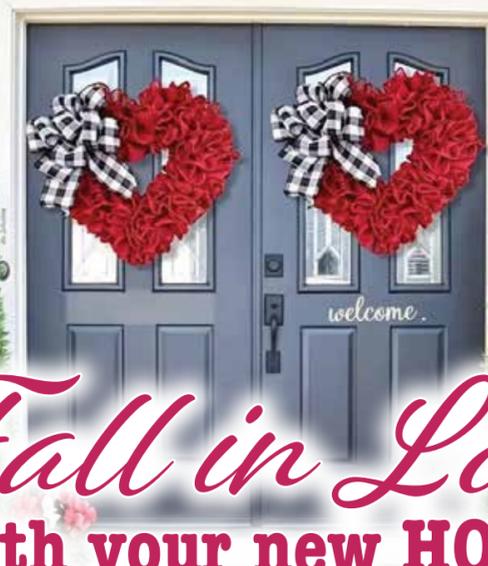


Submitted photo Isaura Flores  
This cute pup enjoys a snow pile.



Submitted photo Jen Johnson  
Jacob, adorning a Minnechaug Regional High School hoodie, poses for a photo.

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# Hampden Wilbraham Education Association announces Work-to-Rule

WILBRAHAM - Since January 5, educators in the Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District have been participating in work-to-rule, pausing the additional and unpaid work that they do. The contracts for teachers and paraprofessionals expired in June, and contract negotiations have moved to mediation. Teachers often dedicate countless unpaid hours beyond regular classroom duties and hours. The purpose of work-to-rule is to draw more focused attention to their workload and all the unpaid work they do.

Their commitment to fostering a rich learning environment includes giving time to various clubs and activities without pay. For instance, the Robotics Club at the middle school requires 3-4 hours at the year's start, with additional hours later for coordination and paperwork. Events like the 4th grade State Fair, the 5th Grade Science Showcase, and high school Poetry Out Loud competition also demand extra time for planning and organization. Teachers maintain class pets and hydroponic systems.

Committees focused on safety and climate in all buildings, PTO meetings, as well as the Institutional Review Board for AP Research

and the Faculty Council for the National Honor Society, demand monthly and annual commitments that further add to their workload. Large-scale events like the Holiday Craft Fair, which involves extensive preparations throughout the year, easily take 10 hours or more, while music festivals and showcases throughout the year can require upward of 20 hours combined for each music educator. These music events are great for students and provide excellent publicity for the HWRSD music program. At each school, PE teachers invest upward of 20 hours in the planning, coordination, and implementation of Field Day events. Other unpaid clubs and events include the Women in STEM club, American Cancer Society club, the Asian Culture Club, monthly Candlelight Concerts for students to showcase their talents, and preparing for field trips.

In addition to all of this, teachers regularly write letters of recommendation and engage in community-focused events like the high school Evening of Recognition and Graduation. The high school Awards Com-

Please see **WORK-TO-RULE**, page 10

## YMCA from page 1

show commitment and support of the youth of our community, I feel that is powerful. It displays that there are many individuals/groups that want the best for the youth. Their support strengthens our community and helps create a safer, healthier future for our youth," Hafner said. "I would also like to acknowledge the gracious food donations from Gio's Pizzeria of Hampden, Mandarin of Wilbraham and Sugar Chalet of Wilbraham."

After Hafner shared that there are other events in the works through the coalition, she added there are ways the community can get involved and lend their support to HWP4Y.

"Reach out to Jackie at Jhafner@hwrdsd.org to register for the monthly newsletter. Follow HWP4Y on Facebook. Facebook is Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth. Also, the community can attend monthly Coalition meetings in person or virtually," Hafner said.

She also encouraged local teens to get involved in the coalition as well.

"Teens can follow reach out to Jackie if they would want to be a student ambassador at jhafner@hwrdsd.org. Monthly meetings are held at Minnechaug after school. Teens can follow HWP4Y on Instagram hwp4youth," Hafner said. "Resources and informative information are posted daily relating to substance use prevention and maintaining positive mental



Teens pose for a group photo out on the basketball court.



Photos courtesy of Jackie Hafner

Teens show off their decorated sugar cookies, donated by The Sugar Chalet.

health. HWP4Y aims to keep young people informed, engaged and empowered."

Her message to the com-

munity was this.

"The youth of Hampden-Wilbraham are amazing young people. They were able

to have a great time, but it was one night. The youth of Wilbraham and Hampden deserve to have this outlet on a consistent basis. They NEED a place to call their own. They are fortunate to have the MRHS School and Community, but also having a neutral location besides school to be themselves," Hafner said. "A Teen Center would provide a safe space where teens feel a sense of belonging. It would reduce isolation and loneliness. It would provide them with positive alternatives to risky behavior. It would provide them with access to support with trusted adults. It would keep teens informed and empowered. It would build confidence and leadership. It would support families as well as strengthen the community as a whole."

## O'DONNELL from page 1

O'Donnell shared the fire service shaped her into who she is today and even though the book focuses on her first year in the probationary fire service, it's much more than that under the surface.

"The fire service is what saved me and changed my life trajectory overall, so it goes into the depths of when I struggle, faced adversity. I persevered through it. I had hardships, setbacks, failures and every lesson was a blessing to me. Basically, the life I used to live, I should have been dead or in jail years ago. I turned my whole entire life around once I found the fire service," O'Donnell said. "Basically, every setback I had, I wrote about and I go into depths of the story and I get really, really vulnerable and I talk about the hardships I faced and you're not alone. You may have faced a situation, but there's other people around that have faced similar hardships—if not worse—so, therefore, this is a guidebook for anybody who's felt left out, has been an outcast, who's been a misfit, just never fit anywhere, been bullied. It

goes into the depths of all of that."

O'Donnell emphasized the book is for many niches and audiences, adding how it's also a tool guide for what firefighters, EMS and first responders go through on the job.

"It's anybody who's struggled, it's anybody who is looking for just a story with light at the end of the tunnel," O'Donnell said. "You have a friend in your hands."

What started the journey was the test to get into paramedic school, where the proctor told her, "Nichole, you maxed out the highest score you could get of a 250 in the English portion" for multiple choice.

From there, the writing portion that asked "In 500 words or less, is it better to be an optimistic or a realistic person," made her realize how much she loves to write as the words flowed out. This also received a high score.

"Your writing is absolutely beautiful." She's like, "I want to read more," so I found my niche with writing," O'Donnell said.

She added how she journaled too and a senior guy

on the job told her "to write everything down," which she did.

"So I started writing it down, then that happened. The lightbulb moment happened of I found my niche, I really enjoy writing with a pre-medical prerequisite exam and next thing you know, all of a sudden, I have a manuscript. This Google Docs file with 48,000 words and I just started writing and in six months, I wrote an entire book," O'Donnell said. After that, O'Donnell looked around on where to publish the book and found Fire Engineering Books.

"They're basically the NFL of the fire service," O'Donnell said.

Seeing that the publisher required 65,000 words for book proposals, O'Donnell did further work and then submitted the proposal, hearing back three days later that the publisher wanted to hear more.

"So, I submitted the three chapters they asked for and on October 31 of 2024—on Halloween—Congratulations, Nichole O'Donnell, Fire Engineering Books would like to publish your book," O'Don-

nell said. "So, officially, Friday the 16th (Jan. 16), it went completely published and on print, live, pre-order is until the 30th...It turned into something I never thought that it was going to and I took the chance on myself."

O'Donnell was humbled by the experience and added, in April, she will be heading to Indianapolis for the FDIC International: The Best Firefighter Conference to sign her books there.

"So, I took a chance on myself and now I am in the big leagues with a lot of eyes on me—and it's very uncomfortable—but when you're uncomfortable, it forces you to grow," O'Donnell said.

She hopes readers find that "no matter what you go through, you can always come out stronger on the other side."

"Just knowing if you keep pushing, eventually, something will happen and will work. If all of your intentions are true to yourself and you're pure with everything, it will come back 10 times more to you," O'Donnell said. "If you always are out to see others do well and plot for others rather than yourself, you're always



Photo courtesy of Nichole O'Donnell

Firefighter Nichole O'Donnell with Capt. Anthony Arventos, who also did a foreword for the book.

going to be successful. Doing the right thing when nobody's watching, just setting the standard for what everybody else should be, because at the end of the day we're all humans and it costs nothing to be nice to anybody."

For aspiring authors, her advice was this.

"Just start writing. If you don't know where to start, just start writing. Get it on the paper and just go for it. You never know until you try. So, every time you question 'Why is this happening?' Instead of that, change that mindset to 'What is this teaching me?' It's all about perspective," O'Donnell said. "Just put

yourself out there, write the stuff down and just start."

Also, more books are coming soon, she added, so stay tuned.

O'Donnell thanked everyone who has lent their support during this journey, encouraging the community to check out the book.

"Take the chance. Never give up on your dreams and just keep pushing no matter how hard it gets. Like I said, you never know until you try. You just got to keep pushing. Rock bottom happens before you're truly elevated into what you're meant to be," O'Donnell said.

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# SPORTS

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## Falcons clinch playoff berth with win

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD— It has been ten years since the Minnechaug hockey team has won a postseason tournament match.

The members of this year's squad are looking forward to competing in both the Western Mass. Class A and the Division 2 state tournaments.

The Falcons clinched a berth in the state tournament following their 8-2 victory over Berry Division rival West Springfield at the Olympia Ice Center, last Saturday afternoon.

"This is a very big win for us because we had lost our last two games," said Minnechaug senior Dom Fiorentino, who recorded his second hat-trick of the regular season. "We just want to enter the postsea-

son tournament with a little bit of momentum."

The Falcons (10-4, 5-4), who also defeated West Side by the same score back in the middle of December, were ranked 28th in the MIAA Division 2 power rankings at the end of last week.

Three of Minnechaug's final four regular season games are against Berry Division rivals. They're scheduled to face Longmeadow (Feb.3), East Longmeadow (Feb.5),

and Greenfield (Feb.7) before playing a non-league match versus Marlborough High School on February 14.

The last time that the Falcons captured the Western Mass title was 1999 when they defeated Longmeadow, 3-2, in the Division 3 finals.

"We haven't won the Western Mass. title since the late 1990's," said Minnechaug head coach Kyle Bousquet. "We still have some key regular season matches remaining. I'm hoping that we'll be playing our best hockey entering the postseason tournament."

This year's Western Mass tournament is scheduled to be held during the February school vacation week.

"We haven't won the Western Mass title in a long time, and it would be very special if we're able to win it this year," said Fiorentino, who's a third year member of the Falcons varsity hockey team. "We're just going to take it one game at a time."

Six of the seven Berry Division teams will qualify for this year's Class A tournament.

Besides scoring the three goals, Fiorentino was also credited with two assists in the second period.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com  
Ryan Mackie receives a pass with the backhand.

Fiorentino's classmate and linemate, Brody Faneuff, also recorded a hat-trick against West Side (5-9-1, 1-8-1)

"It felt very good to get my first hat-trick in today's

game," said Faneuff, who transferred to Minnechaug Regional from Pope Francis

Please see **PLAYOFF**, age 10



Dominic Fiorentino looks for the right opening to clear the puck.



Liam Faneuff heads up the ice.



### Generals get revenge in rematch with Falcons

Zahara Wilson makes a three-point attempt.



Ainsley Holden tries to beat the opponent's block on a layup attempt.

WILBRAHAM – After Minnechaug went to Pittsfield last Saturday and came away with a win, the Generals visited Wilbraham last Thurs-

day night and returned the favor, defeating the Falcons 50-33. The Falcons' offense was shut down for the most part in the matchup with no

one scoring in double digits. Minnechaug was led by Cailin O'Brien with nine points. The Falcons face Grafton on Saturday, Feb. 7 at 12:30 p.m.



Cailin O'Brien tries to overcome a block and make a shot.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com  
Ava Manning readies for a shot from beyond the arc.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli  
Max Baroni dribbles through traffic.

## Chaug boys basketball falls to Comp

WILBRAHAM – Last Saturday afternoon, Chicopee Comprehensive used a strong first half to defeat host Minnechaug 60-48. The two teams, playing a Saturday matinee, were close for most of the first half, but the Colts would built a seven point lead at halftime. They then shut down Chaug's offense in the third quarter and pulled away. Comp was led with a big game by Elijah Kleps with 24 points. Brody Fay was next with 19 points. Minnechaug got 14 points from Andrew Grasso and 12 points from Cohen Nelson. Miles Ferguson added 11 points. Minnechaug fell to 7-8 while Comp improved to an impressive 12-3 on the season.



Andrew Grasso keeps play moving around the perimeter.



Landyn Eldrige attempts a three-pointer.



Cohen Nelson tries to keep his balance.



Darren Duah tries to grab an offensive rebound.

## SPORTS

### T-Birds get better of Wolf Pack

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (16-20-4-2) muscled their way past their I-91 rivals, the Hartford Wolf Pack (16-21-4-1), capturing a 4-1 win on Saturday night before a sellout crowd of 6,793 inside the Mass-Mutual Center.

For a second straight night, Steve Ott's team got off to a quick start as Marc-Andre Gaudet jumped up through the slot area, received a drop feed from Matthew Peca, and picked the glove side on Dylan Garand to give Springfield the 1-0 jump at 6:55 of the first.

After a 2-for-3 night on the power play on Friday, the T-Birds man advantage did not get off to a strong beginning on Saturday, as back-to-back penalties brought an early end to a Springfield advantage and, instead, handed Hartford a 5-on-3. Brendan Brisson cashed in from there, one-timing a Justin Dowling pass through the wickets of Georgi Romanov at 13:20, equalizing the score, 1-1.

The T-Birds settled into the game as the second period began and, once again, a blueliner had the tone-setting goal for Springfield as Hunter Skinner glided down the left circle and snapped a bar-down wristler over Garand's glove at 3:38 of the second, restoring the T-Birds lead, 2-1.

Just over four minutes later, Otto Stenberg made a savvy play, sneaking behind the net to steal a drop pass from Garand and setting up Dillon Dube for a wide-open net at the edge of the crease, extending Springfield's advantage to 3-1 at 8:13 of the period.

Like Friday night, the Springfield defense and goaltending locked things down in the final period, as the penalty kill successfully thwarted a pair of Hartford advantages, and Chris Wagner added his fourth goal in as many games played into an empty net with 3:00 remaining to seal the T-Birds' second straight win.

### Railers score weekend sweep over Wheeling

WORCESTER – The Railers are two points richer today thanks to a generous donation by Parker Gahagen.

He turned in one of the best goaltending performances in team history Sunday. Gahagen stopped 34 shots to blank the Wheeling Nailers, 1-0. The victory allowed Worcester to sweep a 3 in 3 weekend against the team with the best record in the North Division.

The Railers have won five straight games overall. It is their longest winning streak since they won the first nine games of the 2022-23 season.

The game's only goal was scored by Anthony Callin at 12:05 of the first period. He was set up nicely right in front by Riley Ginnell, who slid a pass to him from behind the goal line. All things considered, there seemed to be no way that 1-0 score would

stand up for about 48 more minutes.

In fact, Wheeling dominated play for the next half hour. The Nailers had a 12-5 edge in shots after one period, then outshot the home team by 15-2 in the second period. Gahagen's goaltending allowed Worcester to survive that onslaught.

It was his first Railers shutout, the third this season by a Worcester goaltender. It was just the fourth Railers 1-0 victory of all time, the second ever at the DCU Center, the first here since Mitch Gillam beat Reading on Dec. 17, 2017.

Gahagen was in net for his team's 6-3 victory on Friday night, a match with an entirely different feel to it. Score almost doesn't matter, Gahagen said, although the shutout was very nice.

"My mindset is to keep

them wherever they are, whether it's zero or two," he added. "Keep them there and keep the momentum in our favor."

The whitewash was his 14th pro shutout covering three leagues, the AHL, ECHL and SPHL. They don't count for any more points than a 6-5 game, but they are relatively unique.

"It doesn't happen that often," Gahagen said. "A lot of factors, a lot of pieces have to fall into place. So it is a little more special when it happens because it doesn't happen that often."

Gahagen has been good wherever he has played but there seems to be something about the DCU Center. He is perfect in seven starts here including six wins with the Railers and one against the Railers, with Reading in October of 2024.

"It takes a lot of patience and confidence in their game," coach Nick Tuzzolino said of the triumph, "and also understanding that their defense can win the game. I think that was the big lesson. I said to them after the game — did we have our best stuff all night, and the answer was no. "That's not gonna happen with a 3 in 3. But when it came to crunch time we were able to make the right plays and be smart and that's what we were able to do."

This was the third straight game in which the Railers scored first and they never trailed throughout the entire 180 — make that 182-plus — minutes of hockey. They got off to a strong start Sunday and given how tired both teams were, a wide-open game was a definite possibility.

Callin never thought his

early one would be the only goal.

"I was hoping we'd get more of the same," he said.

Wheeling goaltender Taylor Gauthier was not as busy as Gahagen but as the Railers regained the momentum in the third period, Gauthier same excellent saves. He wound up with 17 for the day.

This a major step for the Railers in their push for a playoff berth but they are in a pack of teams that are in contention.

"It definitely makes us feel good," Tuzzolino said of the sweep, "but it is kind of short lived. If you look at our division, everybody's winning."

If they keep getting the goaltending they've been getting from Gahagen and Tristan Lennox, the Railers may not win every game, but they will have a chance to.



Brody Faneuff looks to pass away from the boards.



Jason Abeid is pursued by the opposition.



Jameson Murray focuses on the puck.

#### PLAYOFF

from page 9

before the start of the school year. "I never had a hat-trick when I played at Pope. It was cool that Dom and I each had one in the same game."

Brody isn't the only member of his family playing for the Falcons hockey team.

His twin brothers, Liam and Cam, are juniors. The trio

were starters in a game for the first time in the Falcons 3-2 loss to East Longmeadow on January 29.

"That was a very cool experience for us," Brody Faneuff said. "It's a memory that we'll have for the rest of our lives."

Senior Kelly Balog, who's also a member of the Falcons first line, was credited with six assists in the second meeting against the Terriers.

"Our first line has been playing very well," Bousquet

said. "When they're playing like they did in today's game, it's very difficult for other teams to beat us. Dom, Brody, and Kelly have more than twenty points so far this season."

The duo of Balog and Brody Faneuff assisted on both of Fiorentino's goals during the opening period.

Senior Enzo Hrycay also scored a goal during the first 15 minutes of the match, which was assisted by senior Jacob Moore, and Liam

Faneuff.

The Falcons entered the second period holding a 3-1 advantage.

The first Terriers goal was scored by senior Jason Placentini.

Balog netted the first goal of the second period at the 3:10 mark.

Twenty five seconds later, Brody Faneuff made the score 5-1 with his first goal of the game, which was assisted by both of his linemates.

Seven minutes later,

Fiorentino received a pass from Balog before firing a shot into the net for his milestone goal.

Brody Faneuff scored a short-handed goal three minutes into the final period. He then completed the Falcons' scoring with his third goal with 4:35 remaining.

With 1:55 left, West Side senior Liam Frisbie netted a power-play goal.

Minnechaug sophomore goal Chase Folli was credited with 13 saves.



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#### WORK-TO-RULE

from page 8

mittee is completely volunteer and meets 2-3x during the year to award a significant amount of scholarship money to students to assist them with higher education costs. The graduation vocal committee as well as the graduation speech committee are voluntary as well. These collective efforts

help to shape the graduation ceremony, which is enjoyed by literally hundreds of families. On the lighter side, the annual Staff vs. Seniors basketball game is a highlight for many.

Even less visible are the many conversations educators have with students before and after school that help students feel connected to adults and navigate their lives. In mid-

dle school especially, many teachers allow students into classrooms during lunch or prep times when a quiet, safe, or less overwhelming space is needed. Anxiety and other unpredictable social and emotional needs do not follow contracted hours and for some students access to trusted adults is critical in the outcome of situations as well as the student's immediate well-

being and long term success.

All these commitments, often unnoticed, showcase the profound dedication educators have towards enriching student experience and community life, underscoring the need for recognition and support for contracts that gives them the means to maintain their own family life.

### This week in recreation

#### Heather Hitchcock with Essential Canine Dog Training

WILBRAHAM - Does your dog want to show off his skills? Can they hold a sit long enough for you to go to the mailbox and back? Can they sit nicely by your side while you talk to the mail carrier? Let's get your pup out to practice these skills! Join me at Memorial School at the Beginner Obedience Training or the Canine Good Citizen class beginning Wednesday March 4, 2026.

In these classes, you and your dog will learn

new skills and help you improve your relationship with your dog. Specifically, the class will work on stays, recalls, not jumping & some attention games. Your dog will get exposure to other dogs and people in a controlled environment. Helping to teach your dog to focus on you and not the others is a key component to the classes.

I am a local award-winning dog trainer, a AKC approved instructor and evaluator & national level competitor. I have over 40 years of experience with training and showing dogs and am committed to work-

ing and training with the most effective & motivational techniques for each individual dog. Additionally, I am a long-standing member of the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club, the United Schutzhund Club of America & Bright Spot Therapy dogs.

I look forward to meeting you and your dog at one of these upcoming training courses!

NOTE: To register and for more information on all of the programs the Wilbraham Recreation Department offers, please visit [Wilbrahamrec.com](http://Wilbrahamrec.com)

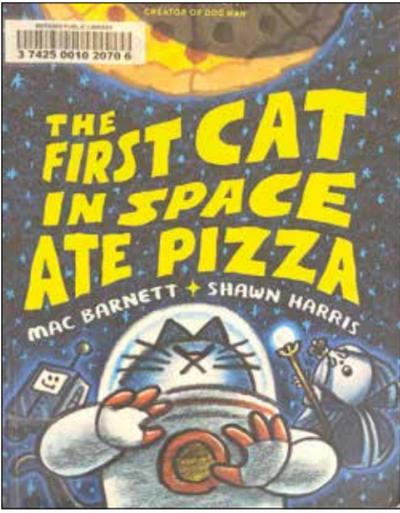


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Turley photos by Angelina Acevedo  
Graphic Novel Book Club's book for the next months meet, "The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza."

**BOOK CLUB**  
from page 1

stuck with Boring Becca (their monitor). But then they started to play a kickball Dungeons and Dragons kind of game and had fun. I really liked how they all came together for the game, and it's kind of like this club where we all come together," he said.

Skills beyond reading are developed in the group, with Hageman highlighting social and collaborative skills.

"Whether they are playing a group game or sharing snacks, they are practicing how to build friendships, work together on crafts, and engage in meaningful conversation with their

peers," Hageman said. To round out the meet, new graphic novels were given to the kids to read for next month's meet, "The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza". Along with the book, members could vote on which graphic novel they want to read after.

Graphic Novel Book Club is very popular amongst kids, which leads to an amazing time each month. Hageman shares that "because the club is so popular, it is frequently full with a waitlist."

"We encourage families to check our online events calendar for openings, but if you can't snag a spot, don't worry! The library offers plenty of other exciting options,

including our monthly LEGO Club," Hageman said.

Hageman oversees the club's meets, and shares that not only do the children get something from this event, but so does she.

"My favorite part is watching new friendships bloom. There's something special about seeing two kids realize they both love the same author, or laugh at the same joke in a book. It's one of the most rewarding parts of my job," Hageman said.

Graphic Novel Book Club is loved by both adults, and very much by children, further enforcing the importance of reading and friendship for all.



Members of Graphic Novel Book Club playing the game drawing Simon Says.

# PET PAGE



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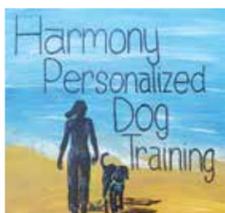
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## Winter Weather and Your Dog's Paws

Winter weather brings real risks to your dog's paws. Between icy surfaces, freezing temperatures, and harsh sidewalk chemicals, it's important to keep your dog protected each time you head outside. Here are some tips on what you can do to reduce irritation, prevent injury, and keep your dog comfortable during cold-weather walks.

Paw pads are tough, but they are still living tissue and can be damaged by repeated exposure to freezing temperatures, moisture, and chemicals. Dogs that walk on untreated snow, icy sidewalks, or salted pavement day after day may experience cumulative irritation that worsens over the course of the winter. Common issues include: dryness,

cracking, and chapping of paw pads. Snow and ice can build up between the toes and around the pads. Prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures can reduce blood flow to the paws, increasing the risk of frostbite. Chemical exposure to sidewalk salt and de-icing agents can burn paw pads, causing stinging and inflammation. Here are some solutions to avoid these issues.

- 1. Dog Boots.** These are the most reliable way to keep paws safe from ice, salt, and extreme cold. Tips for success:
  - Let your dog practice wearing the boots indoors so they get used to the feeling.
  - Reward them with treats to build a positive association.

- Make sure the boots fit snugly but aren't so tight that they alter your dog's gait.

- If the boots stay on through walking or running and don't rub, they're the right fit.

- 2. Paw Balms and Petroleum Jelly Barriers.** If your dog isn't a fan of boots, paw balms and petroleum jelly-based products provide a protective alternative. Paw balms such as Musher's Secret work by moisturizing a dog's paw pads and forming a protective barrier between them and harmful or rough surfaces like snow and ice. Apply a generous layer before walks and wipe off any residue afterward to keep your floors clean.

- 3. Always Wipe Your Dog's Paws After Walk.** Even if your dog wears boots or balm, wiping their paws is an essential step after every winter outing. Even short walks or romps around the yard can expose paw pads to salt, ice melt chemicals, moisture, and grit that cling to the skin and fur between the toes. If left behind, these substances can dry out the pads, cause redness or cracking, and increase the risk of your dog licking their paws excessively, which may lead to digestive upset or skin infections. Using a towel to thoroughly dry each paw also helps reduce moisture buildup that can contribute to chapping or fungal growth.

(Based on an article that first appeared at GeniusVets)

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 All hardwood.  
 Tree length available  
 \*Also have seasoned softwood for outdoor boilers (Cheap). Quality & volumes guaranteed!! New England Forest Products  
**(413)477-0083**

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

### WANTED

#### WANTED TO BUY

#### ALWAYS BUYING ALL ANTIQUES:

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

Call Paul 413-206-8688.

### WANTED

#### ALL ANTIQUES AND OLD STUFF WANTED.

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

Donald Roy (860) 874-8396

### SERVICES

**DRYWALL, PAINTING AND CEILINGS,** plaster repair. Drywall hanging. Taping & complete finishing. All ceiling textures. Fully insured. Jason at Great Walls.  
**(413)563-0487**

### ELECTRICIAN

#### PJ's Electrical MASTER ELECTRICIAN

**Licensed & Insured**  
 Providing safe, reliable electrical services for residential and commercial projects.

#### NOW OFFERING FREE CONSULTATIONS.

Call today to schedule your appointment.  
**(413) 366-1703**  
 (Lic. #24046-A)

### SERVICES

#### LICENSED ELECTRICIAN

I offer good quality electrical work, no project too small. Service upgrades, pools, trustworthy, dependable & insured.  
 Master Elec. #20773A.  
 Text/call Luis **413-218-3301**.

#### ZEN ELECTRIC COMPANY LLC

Fully licensed and insured; Master Electrician on staff. Call for all your electrical needs. No job too small. Senior citizen and Veteran Discount. A veteran owned company. MA License #8101A1.

Call John at **(413)206-6509**

Every customer gets a free gem stone.

### HOME IMPROVEMENT

Handyman Services  
**Walker**  
 Home Improvement  
 Finish Carpentry • Framing • Drywall • Painting • & more!  
**(413) 687-5552**

### SERVICES

#### CHAMELEON PAINTING & REMODELING

INTERIOR/EXTERIOR Remodeling & Deck Specialists  
 Residential/Commercial  
 Fully Insured • Free Estimates  
**413-351-1147**

### INSTRUCTION

#### NRA Certified Basic Pistol Course

with Live Fire for License to Carry permit \$140.  
 Matt Marcinkiewicz  
**muscione@hotmail.com**  
**413-537-0620**

### LANDSCAPING

#### A+ ROZELL'S LANDSCAPING & BOBCAT SERVICE

Excavator Services  
 Overgrown property?  
 Extreme Brush Cutting!  
 Shrub, Stump, Tree Removal  
 Lawn/Arborvitae Installed  
 Loam, Stone, Mulch, Sand  
 Storm Clean-up  
 Small Demolition/ Junk Removal  
 Insured  
**Josh Rozell 413-636-5957**

### SERVICES

#### RUBBISH REMOVAL

**BOB ROBILLARD'S RUBBISH REMOVAL** Attics, Cellars, Garages cleaned, Pools/Hot Tubs Removed. Family owned/operated since 1950 **(413)537-5090**

### SNOW REMOVAL

#### SNOW REMOVAL

Roof Raking, Small Driveways, Sidewalks Cleaned. Call Tim **413-563-2229**.

### TREE WORK

**AAA-TROM'S TREE SERVICE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE.** Residential removal of trees, Free estimates, Fully insured W/Workman's Comp. Remove them before the wind takes them down. Cordwood, stump grinding. Call **413-283-6374**.

**DL & G TREE SERVICE-** Everything from tree pruning, tree removal, stump grinding, storm damage and brush chipping. Honest and Dependable. Fully insured. Now offering a Senior Citizen and Veteran discount. Call today for free estimate **(413)478-4212**

### STUMP GRINDING

**DL & G STUMP GRINDING** Grinding stumps of all sizes, insured & certified. Senior discounts. Call Dave **413-478-4212**

### AUTO

#### CASH FOR JUNK AND REPAIRABLE CARS

**FREE TOWING FAST SERVICE CASH PAID AS IS CALL OR TEXT 413-219-6839**

### HELP WANTED

The Resident Care Facility at Saint Joseph's Abbey, 167 North Spencer Road, Spencer, MA has an opening for a **PART TIME FACILITY COOK.** Hourly wage negotiable depending on experience and related skills. Requirements: High School Diploma or GED. Ability to speak and read English required. Must be able to understand written policies and procedures. Must be able to work unsupervised while following food safety protocols.

For more information and to apply, contact **Wally Connor, Facility/HR Manager at (508) 885-8700 Ext. 550** or by email: **wally@spencerabbey.org**

The Town of Huntington is seeking a part-time Town Hall **Floater/Selectboard Administrative Assistant/Assistant Town Clerk.** \$20-\$22 per hour based on experience. 15 hours per week. Application and complete job description are available online at **www.huntingtonma.us** or by emailing **admin@huntingtonma.us**. Position is open until filled. *Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.*

Wilbraham United Church is hiring a part-time, experienced **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/BOOKKEEPER.** Apply to **Wilbraham United Church, Attention: Alesia; 500 Main Street; Wilbraham, MA 01095.** More information at **www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/about-us-2/**

### REAL ESTATE

#### FOR RENT

**AGAWAM APARTMENT SUBLET.** 1st Floor, 2BR, 1BA, electric heat, laundry, off-street parking. \$1345/mo includes water, trash removal. Available 3/1/26. Good credit score 650+, references. Dog 40lbs or less \$50/mo., cat \$25/mo. Elaine **413-544-4330**.

**PALMER: 1 BR Apt. No Pets/No Smoking. BRETON ESTATES 413-283-6940**

### FOR RENT

All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development "HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

## 2026 TAX TIME

### CHANTEL BLEAU ACCOUNTING SERVICES

For Full Accounting & Tax Service  
 Registered Tax Return Preparer

228 West St., Ware, MA 01082  
**413-967-8364**

Call For An Appointment



The IRS does not endorse any particular individual tax return preparer. For more information on tax preparers go to [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).

Personal & Small Business Federal & All States

### FAST TAX USA TAX PREPARATION SERVICE

413-348-2279

IRS Certified Tax Preparers  
 Independently owned and operated. Over 25 years experience.

1622 B North Main Street, Palmer, MA 01069

www.FastTax-MA.com

Free E-File & Direct Deposit



Call your local Turley Publications sales representative for information and rates on advertising your tax service here!  
**413-283-8393**

588 Center Street  
 Ludlow, MA 01056  
 www.ajefinancial.com  
**(413)589-1671**

Personal, Business, Corporate and Partnership Tax Filing  
 Bookkeeping and Accounting Services  
 Trusted Experts Since 1995

Call Your Local Turley Publications Sales Representative For Information And Rates On Advertising Your Tax Service Here  
**CALL 413-283-8393 TO PLACE YOUR AD TODAY!**

## FILL OUT AND MAIL THIS MONEY MAKER

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

CATEGORY:			
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40

**Quabbin**  
 Village Hills  
 Circulation: 50,500

**Suburban Residential**  
 Circulation: 59,000

**Hilltowns**  
 Circulation: 9,800

All Three ZONES for \$26.00 for 20 words plus 50¢ for each additional word.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Weeks: \_\_\_\_\_ X per week rate = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Credit Card:  MasterCard  VISA  Discover  Cash  Check# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_  
 Amount of charge: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**GREAT VALUE!**  
**ALL 3 ZONES NOW FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!**

Make checks payable to Turley Publications

**OUR CLASSIFIEDS REACH 50 COMMUNITIES EVERY WEEK!**

**PART 3** from page 5

nalized and up and working and playing with it enough to know how to use it, so we can have it staffed and have it rented as people want to use it," Blanchard said.

Blanchard added this item would only be for the spring and a seasonal item.

"I've heard a lot of demand for it, so I'm working on getting that thing cranked up," Blanchard said.

**Facilities Department**

Facilities Manager Herb Foley noted some needs

coming up for FY27, with the biggest item being he and Town Administrator Brian Domina "working on putting everything together" after the move to the new town hall, including looking at custodial and paper products and talking with department heads.

"We're going to start lumping a lot of this stuff together. So, we have the space here now. Do we go out and buy products and have it on hand and stuff like that? Some of these conversations—people don't know—me and Brian have literally

sat down and we want to put this all together this year," Foley said. "And how we want to take our maintenance and maybe combine them together and make sure that buildings are being taken care of out of one account. Custodial staff being taken out of one account, paper products and stuff like that. So, it's a work in progress."

Flynn agreed. "It's a growth thing. I mean, last year, obviously, Dan was still using this building for basketball, etc, but the custodial in those bathrooms was funded a

different way, if you will, because obviously it didn't come out of the town hall use then. Maybe in the school doing it, etc," Flynn said.

Foley summarized the overall goals as a work in progress and he has a lot of ideas.

"We just got to sit down and really hit home and put it all together," Foley said. "Me being out in the buildings, we try to not spend money and doing some of the work myself instead of hiring out. We had a sewer problem in the building over the weekend. I was out there ripping a pan-

el off of a thing in the sewer house this morning, putting that back together, stuff like that, so we wouldn't have to come back out and spend it."

He added that some stuff needs to be replaced down the road, and he has a list in the works.

"So, capital-wise, we have some capital-wise stuff we want to do. Nothing huge," Foley said.

After noting other upcoming projects and praising the department heads and admins for their support and input, Foley concluded his report.

**SPACE** from page 4

Applicants will be selected and contacted by our committee and their contact information provided to the Space and Rocket Center to complete the registration for the summer camp.

The following is the web page devoted to the Janice Voss scholarship on the website of the Space and Rocket Center. Voss was selected for the NASA Space Program in 1991 and flew five missions, traveling a total of 18.8 million miles in 779 orbits over 49 days: <https://rocketcenterfoundation.org/team-members/dt-janice-e-voss/>

**PUBLIC NOTICES**

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

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Hampden Probate and Family Court**  
 50 State Street  
 Springfield, MA 01103  
 (413)748-7758  
 Docket No. HD26P0169EA  
 Estate of:  
**Julie Ann Hayes**  
 Date of Death: 12/15/2025  
**CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**  
 To all interested persons:  
 A Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Life Care Center Wilbraham of Wilbraham, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that

**Kathleen Brunelle of Wilbraham, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **With Personal Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.  
**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
 You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/24/2026**. This is **NOT** a hearing date, but a **deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection** if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within **thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.**  
**UNSUPERVISED**

**ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE**  
**A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.**  
 WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.  
 Date: January 27, 2026  
**Rosemary A Saccomani**, Register of Probate  
 02/05/2026

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**RIGHT OF WAY MAINTENANCE**  
 As required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 132B, National Grid (New England Power and/or Massachusetts Electric Company) hereby gives notice that it intends to selectively apply herbicides along specific transmission line rights-of-way in 2026.  
 The selective use of herbicides to manage vegetation along rights-of-way is done within the context of an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program consisting of mechanical, chemical, natural, and cultural components. In right-of-way vegetation management the pest or target is vegetation (primarily tall growing) that will cause outages and safety issues. National Grid's IVM program encourages natural controls by promoting low growing plant communities that resist invasion by target vegetation. The selective use of herbicides and mechanical controls are the direct techniques used to control target vegetation and help establish and maintain natural controls.  
 National Grid may utilize any of the herbicides noted the MA Sensitive Materials list. Rodeo, and possibly one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, will be applied directly to the surface of stumps immediately after target vegetation is cut (Cut Stump Treatment). Garlon 4 or Garlon 4 Ultra will be applied selectively to the stems of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Basal Treatment and Dormant stem treatment). Krenite S or Rodeo, mixed with Escort XP, and one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, or Milestone will be applied selectively to the foliage of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Foliar Treatment). Cambistat as a tree growth regulator. Applications shall not commence more than ten days before nor conclude more than ten days after the following treatment periods. The herbicide mixes and additional information about rights of way management in Massachusetts can be found here:  
<https://www.mass.gov/rights-of-way-vegetation-management>  
 Municipalities that have rights-of-way that were treated in 2025 but may require some touch-up work in 2026:  
**Hampden, Wilbraham**  
**TREATMENT PERIODS**  
**Feb 1–May 30, 2026**    **May 30–Oct 15, 2026**    **Oct 15–Dec 31, 2026**  

CST	Foliar	CST
Basal	CST	Basal
Dormant stem	Basal	Dormant stem
	Cut stubble	

*\*The exact treatment dates are dependent upon weather conditions and field crew progress.*  
 Further information may be requested by contacting (during business hours, Mon–Fri from 8:00 am–4:00 pm):  
 Mariclaire Rigby, National Grid,  
 939 Southbridge Street, Worcester, MA 01610.  
 Telephone: (781) 290-8310 or email: [mariclaire.rigby@nationalgrid.com](mailto:mariclaire.rigby@nationalgrid.com)

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 24 Water St., Palmer • 80 Main St., Ware

**PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE**

- 1 Email all notices to [notices@turley.com](mailto:notices@turley.com)
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

**Public notice deadlines are Friday at 3 p.m.**  
 visit [www.publicnotices.turley.com](http://www.publicnotices.turley.com)

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**A Sales Career That Helps Our Community Thrive**

**NOW HIRING**

**Ad Sales Consultants**

Help our community's small businesses thrive with personalized and local advertising solutions.

**Join our team!** Turley Publications is looking for an outgoing, energetic person interested in selling advertising for our 12 community newspapers. The right candidate will assume an established territory with a portfolio of customers.

You must be a self-starter with excellent communication and organizational skills. Basic computer skills are required. Previous print sales experience is preferred but we will train the right candidate.

**Apply Today!**    *Offering a competitive commission structure, 401k, and health plan.*

**Turley Publications**  
 Local News & Community In Print & Online

Send resume & cover letter to:  
 Jamie Joslyn  
 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069  
 Email: [jamie@turley.com](mailto:jamie@turley.com)

**CLUES ACROSS**

1. Native American group of N. California
5. Geological times (Brit. sp.)
10. Tool to remove
12. Rods
14. One who renews
16. They precede C
18. Chatter incessantly
19. \_\_\_ King Cole, musician
20. Insect parts
22. One from Utah
23. The world of the dead
25. Singer Redding
26. NBA legend Nelson
27. Indicates wrongly
28. Unhappy
30. Anger
31. Dark brown
33. Some are in kitchens
35. Made a mistake
37. Damp
38. Type of fuel
40. Actor Damon
41. What thespians do
42. One's mother
44. Disallow
45. Swiss river
48. A banana has one
50. Philippines lake and volcano are two
52. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
53. Agave
55. Journalist Tarbell
56. One-time tech giant
57. Indicates upon
58. Intestinal bacteria
63. Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
65. It goes with nook
66. A fashion
67. Very eager to hear or see

**CLUES DOWN**

1. Witch
2. Utilize
3. Writing utensil
4. Where rockers go to work
5. Subsides
6. Consume
7. Greek mythological figures
8. California mountain town
9. Tin
10. Muse of lyric and love poetry
11. Animates anew
13. Humorous criticisms
15. Cool!
17. Worst
18. Wet dirt
21. Designed to be useful
23. Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
24. High schoolers' test
27. Computer device
29. Indian territory \_\_\_ and Diu
32. A place to sleep
34. AI tool
35. Pass or go by
36. Indicates a purchase
39. A digital tape recording of sound
40. More (Spanish)
43. Disfigured
44. White (Spanish)
46. Church building
47. Georgia rockers
49. Type of surgery
51. Much \_\_\_ about nothing
54. Make by braiding
59. Local area network
60. Unit of work or energy
61. Member of indigenous people of Thailand
62. Liquefied natural gas
64. Distance to top

# Monthly Highlights for February at the Hampden Senior Center:

Please call 566-5588 to RSVP for all events or register for classes at the senior center.

Lunch is provided by Greater Springfield Senior Services daily at 12:00 noon. Suggested donation is \$3.00 per meal. You must reserve lunch by 11:00 a.m. at least one day prior. Feel free to schedule your lunch reservations for the month.

### WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY

Remember to watch channels 22 & 40 for information about cancellations and/or delayed openings.

Watch for HAMPDEN SENIOR CENTER and GREATER SPRINGFIELD SENIOR SERVICES for information.

### SOUP-er BOWL Lunch

Friday, Feb. 6 at Noon. Cost is \$3 per person.

Join us for a delicious lunch of Turkey Rice Soup and a sandwich made by Becky & Wendy with dessert generously donated by JGS Lifecare.

Stay to play Super Bowl Trivia with The Trivia Guy, Paul Federico, with a chance to win some great prizes.

### Valentine's Day Luncheon

Friday, Feb. 13, at Noon. Suggested donation of \$3 per person for lunch.

Come and enjoy a delicious meal of Rosé Chicken, Pasta, Salad, and Garlic Bread, provided by GSSSI, and Tiramisu for dessert, provided by The Reserve at East Longmeadow.

Patrick Tobin will be here to sing and entertain you with the sounds of Frank Sinatra.

Please call 566-5588 to reserve your seat. Space is limited.

"This program is funded in part by a grant from the Hampden Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by Mass Cultural Council, a state agency."

### Fat Tuesday

Tuesday, Feb. 17. This is a FREE event.

Celebrate Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) with us! Stop by for a free Donut Dip donut and coffee.

### Hot Chocolate & Puzzle Palooza

Tuesday, Feb. 24, 1 to 3 p.m. This is a FREE event.

Come and enjoy a Hot Chocolate Bar sponsored by Vantage Health & Rehab of Hampden and have fun with a friendly jigsaw puzzle competition! Work in randomly assigned teams to see which team can finish a 300-piece puzzle the fastest. Prizes will be awarded!!

Puzzle-making is good for you! It can help improve your memory and mood and reduce stress!

### Diamond Dotz, Anyone?! - Project is on display at the center.

Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 1 to 3 p.m.

Cost is \$5 per person, paid when you sign up. Pre-registration is required.

Create three Irish-themed Diamond Dotz wall hanging signs for your St. Patrick's Day decorating.

### Greeting Cards with Ellie

Monday, Feb. 23, 1 to 3 p.m. Cost is \$3.00 per person. All materials are provided.

Come and discover endless possibilities for creating your own personal greeting cards. Learn new techniques each month. Class will meet on the 4th Monday of every month.

### PWR! Moves Group Exercise Classes with Lisa Kern, OT, Reiki Master/Holistic Therapist

Mondays from 9 to 10 a.m. Cost is \$10.00 per class, or purchase 8 classes for a prepaid rate of \$65.

A Parkinson-specific exercise class that "makes function exercise" to keep you moving and doing more of what you want to do! As you practice, you will be challenged phys-

ically and cognitively while working on fitness goals: strength, balance, agility, aerobics, and flexibility. Exercises are designed to improve your fitness, counteract your PD symptoms, and increase your daily activity. This whole body, function-focused exercise class will push you to do more than you think you can in a fun, empowering, and enriched environment!

### Indoor Cornhole

Mondays at 10 a.m. All are welcome! No experience necessary!

### Monday Ukulele with Amy Scott - Drop-ins are welcome!

Current session runs through March 9.

Beginner Ukulele - Mondays, 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Cost is \$7 per class.

Advanced Ukulele - Mondays, 1 to 2:30 p.m. Cost is \$10 per class.

### Common Threads Led by Joan Tompkins, PhD

Mondays, Feb. 9 and 23 at 12:45 p.m.

The group will meet in person on the second and fourth Mondays of the month. Joan will join via ZOOM.

Lunch is available at Noon, and a table will be reserved for the group. If you wish to have lunch, please sign up by 11 a.m. on the Friday before. Suggested donation is \$3 per meal.

### Living Stronger... Longer... with Lamar Moore

Tuesdays from 2:15 to 3 p.m.

Current session runs through March 31.

Cost is \$6 per class. Join Lamar to learn about balance and how it impacts your overall health and wellness. Get tips on strength training and cardiovascular endurance to increase mobility and flexibility. "It's never too late to start making progress on your health span. Muscles and

balance are the two things you can train and improve even as you age.

### Pickleball at Thornton Burgess, 85 Wilbraham Rd.

Wednesdays, 8 to 9:30 a.m., 9:30 to 11 a.m., or 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

This program is for new players and beginners who want to learn the rules and practice playing.

### Pickleball Clinic with Mary Grassetto

Wednesday, Feb. 25, at 11 a.m.

We will have a clinic on the fourth Wednesday of every month during the 11 a.m. session, where we will run drills and practice games to hone our skills.

If you are not registered for the 11 a.m. session, please call to sign up for the clinic. Space is limited.

### MEMORY CAFÉ

EVERY FRIDAY AT 10:15 a.m. Please call Wendy for more information.

Sponsored by: Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens & private donations.

The Memory Café is a welcoming place for individuals with memory challenges, along with caregivers, family, or friends, to gather in a safe, supportive, and engaging environment.

Here's what's happening at the Memory Café in February:

Feb. 6 - Mindful Movement with Lisa

Feb. 13 - No Café, Valentine Luncheon - (Sign up at the front desk for this special event)

Feb. 20 - Ukulele with Amy

Feb. 27 - Music w/Renee

### "African Drumming" with Jason

Current session runs through April 10.

Fridays from 2 to 3 p.m.

All are welcome! No previous experience is necessary.

Cost is \$7 per class for drop-ins.

### "Come What May" Boutique... is open in our lobby for all to shop during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

We accept donations of new or gently used clothing, outerwear, accessories, and footwear.

All proceeds from Boutique sales will benefit the needs of the Senior Center.

### Lobby Learning

Don't have time to come in and sit for a long presentation? We understand! Lobby Learning is aimed at welcoming businesses and organizations to provide helpful information to you. You are welcome to stop in to pick up information and speak one-on-one with representatives in the senior center lobby and stay for as long as you need to get your questions answered. Perhaps there is an organization you would like us to welcome? Please let us know.

Feb. 5 - Shiloh Angels

Feb. 12 - Infinite Hair by Katie

Feb. 19 - Elms College Nursing Students, Heart Health

Feb. 26 - STCC Dental

### HELP US STOCK OUR SHELVES with Disinfecting Wipes.

Thank you to those who donated toothpaste last month. Every month, we will target a different item to help fill monthly Personal Needs Bags.

Due to space constraints, please refrain from purchasing warehouse-sized items.

Elms College Nursing Students will be here on Thursdays, starting Feb. 5, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Students will do blood pressure screening and provide educational health information.

### Did you know we offer the following services....

FREE Blood Pressure Clinic - Walk-in 9:15 to 10:45 a.m.

Tuesdays with Ann Maggion, RN, or Ruth Haley, RN

Thursdays with the Elms College Nursing Students.

Gift Cards are available and make great gifts!

Anyone is welcome to schedule appointments for these services.

Please call 566-5588 to schedule your appointments.

### Need a button sewn? Pants hemmed? Fix a rip? Help is on the way!

Fridays, Feb. 13 and 27 from 10 a.m. to Noon.

The senior center welcomes seamstress extraordinaire, Georgina Hamilton, on the second and fourth Fridays of every month to help with your tailoring needs and more.

This service is FREE, but donations will be accepted for senior center programs and services.

### D & R Farm, Winter Farm Share is back!

February 18. Pick-up at 9:30 a.m.

D & R Farm will once again offer fresh produce twice a month, starting in January and running through May. FREE with SNAP/HIP if you qualify! If you do not qualify for SNAP/HIP, you may purchase a share for \$40 cash per month. NEW applications are required. If interested, please call Wendy at 566-5588 to sign up!

### WARMING HEARTS PROGRAM for Homebound Older Adults in Hampden

Do you know an older adult in Hampden who is homebound and could use some mid-winter cheer? Let us know! Our warming hearts deliveries are a small way for us to let people know we are thinking of them and that we are here should they need anything. Deliveries will include soups, treats, games, and more and will take place during February. Interested in delivering? Call Wendy at 566-5588.

## Put Our Team To Work For You. 4 Local Offices - Global Network

THINKING ABOUT BUYING OR SELLING? **HELPFUL INFO**

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WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT A CAREER WITH LANDMARK? **TEXT "CAREER" TO 866-583-4640**

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**HIRING ASSOCIATES FOR OFFICES IN:** Wilbraham, East Longmeadow, Monson, and Springfield

 Dawn Rodgers 478-2605	 Nick Ferrara 386-4523	 Kathy Esser 348-3803	 Sue Rheaume 478-0671
 Zoe Czaplicki 519-9224	 Dot Lortie 478-1940	 Linda Alston 246-8616	 Sandy Wegrzyn 519-1056

## CALL US FOR DETAILS ON ANY OF THESE PROPERTIES

SINGLE FAMILY LISTINGS				
STATUS	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	LIST PRICE	SOLD PRICE
NEW	79 Arvilla St., Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Ranch	\$289,900	
ACT	31 Canterbury Cir., E. Longmeadow	7 room, 3 bed, 2f, 2h bath Colonial	\$639,900	
ACT	7 Ashbrook St., Springfield	10 room, 4 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$379,900	
UAG	85 Baldwin Dr, Hampden	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Ranch	\$225,000	
UAG	67 Hill Ter., Ludlow	8 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial, Gambrel/Dutch	\$450,000	
UAG	37 Wyndermere Pl., Ludlow	11 room, 4 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$620,000	
UAG	80 Jean Dr. Springfield	9 room, 4 bed, 1f, 1h bath Cape	\$269,900	
SLD	92 Juniper Ridge Dr., Agawam	8 room, 3 bed, 2f 1h bath Ranch	\$799,900	\$760,000
SLD	19 Westminster St., E. Longmeadow	6 room, 4 bed, 1f 1h bath Ranch	\$299,900	\$310,000
SLD	30 Saugus Ave., E. Longmeadow	9 room, 3 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$504,900	\$525,000
SLD	142 Amherst St., Ludlow	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Cape	\$314,900	\$330,000
SLD	246 El Paso St., Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Cape	\$272,500	\$280,000
SLD	30 Lively Lane, Springfield,	Sixteen Acres, 5 room, 3 bed, 1f 0h bath Ranch	\$279,900	\$290,000
SLD	30 Athol St. Springfield	8 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$284,900	\$299,000
SLD	254 Hartwick St., Springfield	5 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Ranch	\$309,900	\$315,000
SLD	98 Pine Grove St., Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 1f 0h bath Ranch	\$319,900	\$350,000
SLD	74 Blanche St., Springfield	Sixteen Acres, 5 room, 2 bed, 1f 1h bath Ranch	\$319,900	\$300,000
SLD	28 Decorie Dr Wilbraham	7 room, 4 bed, 2f 0h bath Cape	\$480,000	\$485,000
SLD	14 Brookdale Dr., Wilbraham	7 room, 4 bed, 3f 1h bath Colonial	\$489,000	\$510,000

CONDOMINIUM LISTINGS			
STATUS	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	LIST PRICE
ACT	140 Chestnut St., U:210, Springfield	3 room, 1 bed, 1f 0h bath Mid-Rise	\$84,900
ACT	140 Chestnut St., U:819, Springfield	3 room, 1 bed, 1f 0h bath Mid-Rise	\$84,995
ACT	140 Chestnut St., U:816, Springfield	3 room, 1 bed, 1f 0h bath High-Rise	\$87,000
UAG	54 High Pine Cir., U:54, Wilbraham	6 room, 3 bed, 2f 1h bath Townhouse	\$494,500

LAND LISTINGS			
STATUS	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	LIST PRICE
ACT	7 Old Reed Rd., Lot:6, Monson	8.50 Residential acres (370,260 SqFt)	\$99,000
SLD	Lot 16 Woodhill Rd., Monson	2.17 Residential acres (94,525 SqFt)	\$72,500 <b>\$70,000</b>

COMMERCIAL LISTINGS		
STATUS	ADDRESS	LIST PRICE
ACT	599-609 Page Blvd., Springfield	3278 SqFt Mixed Use Building \$850,000

**Search LandmarkRE.com For All Listings In Western MA**

 Eileen O'Sullivan 505-9244	 John Moltenbrey 427-5176	 Shari Lokey 218-8811	 Luci Giguere 575-2837	 Ann Paquette 626-6871	 Maria D'Angelantonio 575-2898	 Ann Marie Martin 206-1161	 Art Ferrara 348-5827	 Alyssa Rhodes 896-9269
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