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Photo courtesy of Rachel Hapgood

A group shot, courtesy of Rachel Hapgood, who proudly works as the teen services/young adult librarian for 10 years at the WPL.

## Teens enjoy “Paint, Sip, Fun” night

By Amanda Munson  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - Nestled in the Brooks Room at the library, Erin Boughamer instructed a room full of teens, painting the ‘Northern Lights’ while sipping on some light refreshments during Paint Sip Fun on Jan. 28.

With several tables and chairs set up, equipped with a variety of paints and brushes, the teens were able to watch Boughamer and follow her comfortably through the session to make a painting they were proud of.

Teen Services and Young Adult Librarian Rachel Hapgood talks about the painting program and the work relationship she’s shared with Boughamer on creating events that are loved by all ages. Hapgood began by commenting on how many years she has worked at the library.

“In November, it’ll be 10 years.

I love working with the teens, I love my coworkers and really enjoy it. I heard about Erin and that she was doing private parties. I had heard from friends how successful she was with younger kids at birthday parties and adult parties too. I thought that she might be a great fit for our Wilbraham teens,” Hapgood said. “I reached out to her and she came out, it’s one of our first programs that we continuously have repeated. It’s awesome she’s able to take 30 teens, we really can have a big group and we are able to accommodate. This is a pre-registered event, she’s able to keep everybody engaged, everyone is relaxing and having a good time.”

When talking with Minnechaug students Anna Dennis and Ashley Griguoli, both participants were encouraged by one another to join the art class. When asked how the school year was going, Dennis and Griguoli began talking about what

extracurriculars both were involved in.

“I am in the band and a lot of clubs. I found out about the event tonight from my mom. Together we usually go to the library a lot. We find out about the events and programs on the library website. My mom asked me if I wanted to go with Anna or one of my other friends to this event. It’s a fun hang-out space after school, easy to socialize. I am more of a drawing person but painting is really relaxing,” Griguoli said.

Adding to this was Dennis saying, “I am very involved with sports, I am a volleyball player. I found out about this event because of Ashley. I work with more watercolors and sketch too, but this is nice.”

The girls both remarked on how relaxing the painting class was for them, the instructions and process

Please see **PAINTING**, page 9

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## Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens looking for volunteers

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens at the senior center is actively looking for volunteers.

Friends President Claudia Kapinos, who has been a part of the Friends for a decade, first got involved when Vice President Tiny Burt and President Joe Lawrence were part of the Friends.

Please see **SENIORS**, page 17



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

Carol Keeney, a prior president of the Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens, and Claudia Kapinos, the current president of the Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens, pose for a photo with the plaque honoring Lorna Cox, a woman instrumental in bringing the Hampden Senior Center to where it is today.

## School Committee hears Youth Risk Behavior Survey presentation

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The School Committee heard a Youth Risk Behavior Survey presentation during their Jan. 23 meeting.

Presented by Brianna Berneche, program director for the Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth Coalition, it showcased 2024 data from middle and high school students enrolled in physical education in the spring, helping the coalition direct their efforts and get a pulse of what’s going on with students.

### High School Data

Berneche said depression and self-harm rates were decreasing since their peak during the pandemic.

“You can see from 2021, 2022, at its highest, now, back down to 28%. So, we’re just about back where we were

(with) pre-COVID numbers, which is really great to see,” Berneche said. “So, still room for improvement but on the right track.”

Suicide attempts and plans were low over the past year, but Berneche cautioned, “25% or more of our students is still a lot of students expressing depressive symptoms.”

However, students who need access to mental health services can get help. Out of 138 students who shared they needed counseling, 73% of them reported they were able to access help.

“And all of the students who were surveyed--so the 414 students--78% of them reported that they know how to connect to help if they need it. So, our goal, really, is to get that 70% number as close to 100% as possible,” Berneche said. “And that’s part of what we do as the coalition is try to make resources readily available and accessible for stu-

dents and their families.”

For driver safety, Berneche said there “are very low numbers of students reporting driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs,” with only 59% of students surveyed as the other 41% do not drive.

The numbers were 4% for alcohol, 4% for marijuana and 2% for other drugs.

For substance use, vaping and cigarette use increased slightly.

“But surprisingly, vaping is much lower now than it was at its peak around 2018,” Berneche said.

Vice Chair Sean Kennedy asked about the state’s ban on selling vaping products and those that had flavors in them.

“Do you remember what year that was? Is that correlated to this?” Kennedy said.

Please see **SCHOOL**, page 13



Turley photos by Dalton Zbierski





Kindrea enjoyed reading books to Tucker at the Hampden Public Library.



Siblings Claire and Patrick made friends with Tucker before their reading session.

Submitted photos Jeanne Moriarty

## Reading with Tucker returns to HPL

By Patricia Sullivan  
Correspondent

HAMPDEN - Children are invited to sign up to come to the Hampden Public Library and read a book to Tucker, a very special black Labrador retriever.

The Reading with Tucker program for children in kindergarten through fifth grades began in October 2024. Sessions are planned for February, March and April 2025.

Tucker is highly trained with a perfect disposition for the library job.

"He is exceedingly quiet," says his owner, Jeanne Moriarty of Hampden. "He's really sweet. He loves everyone and everything."

Kate Rumpalik, Hampden's youth services librarian, says that kids have been "super excited," to come in and read to Tucker.

"They bring in their own books

and usually spend a little time playing with him before reading aloud," Rumpalik said. "It's great for all kids, but especially for children who might be reluctant readers. Tucker is happy to be here with you and to listen."

Tucker is certified and insured by Bright Spot Therapy Dogs of Northampton, an American Kennel Club-approved nonprofit organization. Moriarty visits the Hampden Library with him as a volunteer.

Moriarty has bred labs for many years. She chose Tucker as the calmest dog in a litter of eight male puppies.

"There is nothing you could do to make this dog upset," Moriarty said.

At four years old, Tucker has already completed many training programs and competed at many venues, including in performance sports at the Big E. He's earned level three of the AKC's Canine Good Citizen Award and reached level two of rally

obedience.

He participated in Bright Spot's stress relief programs for college students at STCC and Elms College during falls finals week too.

Moriarty, a former teacher, enjoys bringing him to the Hampden Library.

"It's fun and light and everybody is happy," Moriarty said. "The children feel very special because they are receiving private one-on-one attention. Tucker lies there and wags his tail. He loves the moms, too."

There are four 15-minute sessions available to read with Tucker starting at 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 11, Feb. 25, March 11, March 25, April 8 and April 29.

To sign up children in grades K-5, email Kate Rumpalik, youth services librarian at the Hampden Public Library, at [krumpalik@cwmar.org](mailto:krumpalik@cwmar.org).

## If WMS becomes district-owned, will Hampden have to pay?

There were more questions than answers during a Wilbraham Select Board discussion.

By Dalton Zbierski  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - If all of Hampden's middle-school students attend Wilbraham Middle School, will the building be district-owned, and will the town of Hampden then have to pay a portion of its capital improvements?

This inquiry was pondered by the Wilbraham Select Board during its meeting on Monday, Jan. 27. The conversation, however, only seemed to produce more questions.

In a previous joint meeting of Select Boards, Wilbraham Clerk Marc Ducey discussed the item with Hampden Board of Selectmen Chair Donald Davenport.

"I asked specifically how Hampden felt about the middle school, regionalizing it and would they be willing to bear the costs of any capital improvements," Ducey said. "[Davenport] brought up the idea of pre-existing conditions. That would be an issue they would need to discuss with us or discuss with somebody."

At the funeral of a community member, Ducey ran into Hampden Selectboard Member John Flynn, and the conversation continued.

"We were talking a variety of things, and that came up. He said the same things as Don Davenport, which to me signals that we have some work to do, and we don't have a lot of time. I think we need to dig into this more," Ducey said.

Ducey encouraged Town Administrator Nick Breault to reach out to Hampden Town Administrator Briain Domina to arrange a meeting. Ducey stressed the importance of finding out an answer soon.

"I'm just really uncomfortable right now with the timeline we have to hammer this out," he said. "I would encourage that at some point in the very near future, the select boards and the School Committee have a meeting on this issue or some representatives of each if we want to go down that road. This is a big decision."

Breault spoke about a "disconnect" between how the towns are approaching, or understanding, the matter. He brought up capital apportionment and how it might relate to Wilbraham Middle School.

"So, capital is based on the high school enrollment for [grades] 9-12 at Minnechaug, but I think the language is saying and for any other district building, which seems to imply that if the middle school becomes a district-owned building, that capital will be based on the 9-12," Breault said.

Ducey responded by saying, "That makes no sense," and Breault put out a statement and question of his own.

"The point there is does Hampden know this or am I reading it incorrectly?" asked Breault.

Vice Chair Michael Squindo cited Section D of the "Lease of Present Member Schools" in the regional agreement.

"The last paragraph says, 'Any leased building being utilized for education of 100% of the district's students in a particular grade level irrespective of the town of residency will be treated as a district-owned building and capital costs will be apportioned in the same manner as any other district-owned building.'"

Select Board Chair Sue Bunnell asked several more follow-up questions.

"Is that only true if there's a declaration of the middle school as a district building or by default if all the students are there, does that mean it's a district building by default? Or does there have to be some process by which that's determined?" she asked.

Squindo said he is nervous that Hampden would take measures to ensure that not all of their middle school students attend Wilbraham Middle School.

"My initial thought to that is what happens when they pull one student back. It's no longer 100%... If you're trying to go to an absolute, it's pretty easy to get around," Squindo said.

Bunnell responded, "To send them where."

Squindo said, "That's a different conversation for another day."

And, Ducey said, "That's a fair comment."

At the end of the conversation, each board member agreed that it would be important to have dialogue with the Hampden Selectboard soon to bring more clarity to the discussion.

The Wilbraham Select Board and Hampden Selectboard plan to meet with the School Committee on Feb. 5 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the regional agreement.



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# Board holds second set of Building Utilization Committee interviews

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Select Board held their second set of Building Utilization Committee interviews on Jan. 27.

The candidates here were John McGrath, Brittany Meece, Christopher Duby, Megan Eischen, Kevin Rothschild-Shea and Sean Patrick Rooney, Sr.

To recap, the first candidates--interviewed back on Jan. 13--were Ernest Smith, Scott Drumm, Stanley Soja, Brad Senft, Joshua Mullen and Jeff Smith.

The Building Utilization Committee will be a nine-member committee comprised of six citizens and one member each from the Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee and the Planning Board.

The board later decided to make their final decisions on the six seats at their Feb. 3 meeting after Chair Sue Bunnell requested an opportunity to review the first set of candidate interviews along with the second set from the public access recordings.

On the other three seats, Planning Board Chair James Rooney and Finance Committee Member Jennifer Leydon were appointed to the committee for a one-year term beginning Jan. 28, 2025, and running through June 30, 2026. A representative from the Capital Planning Committee did not have a name yet.

McGrath has been in town for over 20 years and is a 2017 Minnechaug Regional High School graduate. He worked in property management, now owning his own residential and commercial property management business.

"I heard about it just through talk around town and figured I might as well throw my hat in. It's pretty much like managing the town's properties, which is nothing new to me and I thought I could bring some pretty fun experience to the table," McGrath said.

Meece has been a resident since 2022 and is interested in the committee "simply to contribute in some way back to the community and get more involved locally."

and master's degree in Design Studies with a concentration in Risk and Resilience.

"Which, in other words, was urban planning for natural disasters and, from there, I worked in consulting for a bit doing geospatial analytics, which I feel is relevant--a little bit--to this committee and could bring an interesting perspective," Meece said. "The geospatial analysis, our clients were large, multinational investment banks, so we were working closely with our clients and the communities on the ground to help advise them on where and which infrastructure to make investments in rapid urban development kind of scenarios and different natural hazard scenarios."

In the last 10 years, she's worked for the state's Department of Transportation and held varying roles, highlighting her process improvement skills and working as a strategist across disciplines.

"I'm someone who's very passionate about making government work more effectively and more efficiently and we can always be doing better in putting our taxpayer dollars to better use, so I can bring that kind of process improvement lens to the group," Meece said.

Duby, a local business owner, also runs a construction company.

"So, I have a little bit of experience in the ways of construction and having an understanding of the codes, the things that you guys need to abide by when you're making decisions on these buildings that we're considering," Duby said. "I think that that's an important skill set to have just because people may not know when you update a building to a certain point, you have to make it up to today's standards. So, there's certain restrictions we're going to have to work with in when considering keeping or utilizing a building in a different capacity."

He's also a member of the Friends of Recreation, coached three sports and has been part of the community for 12 years.

"I do as much as I can, but this seemed like a really good fit for me just given some of the experience I have as well as how it pertains to serving our community," Duby said.

Eischen shared she's been in town for about three years and moved from the Midwest, where she was in state service for nearly 15 years and served as a commissioner for the city of New Brighton working on space development and public meetings.

Having a communications and marketing background, she currently is the director of Communications for the provost at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"So, I'm really interested in this position because I think I really would be a really good proponent of some of the things that we would be able to do with this. I'd like to get to know some folks in the community and I'd also like to serve just like I did in Minnesota," Eischen said. "So, I'm excited about this opportunity."

Rothschild-Shea is an architect and president of his own firm and has served "on a handful of boards over the years."

He's also familiar with the buildings in town both personally and professionally.

"My background, I think, uniquely prepares me to be familiar with--both from a personal side--our children, the education and history of tracking boards and the whole life of the community of the town," Rothschild-Shea said. "And professionally, what we do is exactly what we're talking about here. We survey existing buildings, familiar buildings, try to determine what is the highest and best use for structures, how that relates to a client's needs, their programs, their budgets. I'm familiar with everything from use groups to construction types to space allocation to accessibility to renovation. So, all of those experiences backfeed the ability to analyze what might be the highest and best use for a structure and/or a short or long-term."

Rooney grew up in Wilbraham and came back later on to raise his family, with his father having been a contractor and working with him too. He also worked in insurance and financial services for the last 25 years.

He also is part of the Friends of Recreation and has worked with the Wilbraham Hampden Academic Trust, wanting to join the committee due to his background and having time available as his son has gotten older.

"I don't see how there would be too many conflicts, if any at all, with helping out with this committee. I understand that it's a year and I don't necessarily see any problems with that," Rooney said.

Like the first set, several candidates also expressed interest in being on other boards and committees if they were not selected for this one.

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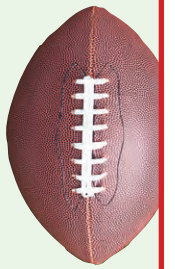
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# Wilbraham Fire Department commended after a busy week



Photos courtesy of the Wilbraham Fire Department

Wilbraham Deputy Fire Chief Matt Walch graduated from the Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program on Jan. 22.



Wilbraham firefighters extinguished a car fire near the Big Y Express on Jan. 23. Fortunately, damage was minimized, and the occupants belongings were secured.

The fire department experienced a large call volume from Jan. 21-26.

By Dalton Zbierski  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM – Over the course of a week in late January, the Wilbraham Fire Department experienced a flurry of activity.

From putting out multiple fires to completing rescue training on the Spec Pond ice and even celebrating the achievements of their own, the fire department was kept busy between Jan. 21-26.

Town Administrator Nick Breault gave the department a shout out during his weekly report at the Jan. 27 Select Board meeting.

“I had the opportunity to attend a firefighter pinning, which was a very well put together ceremony. It gave recognition for our fire staff,” Breault said.

Select Board Chair Sue Bunnell was there as well and agreed with Breault’s point of view.

“I also attended the pinning, and it was just a delightful ceremony,” Bunnell said.

Breault and Bunnell were speaking of an event that occurred on Jan. 15 to celebrate recent promotions and outstanding service.

Breault said it is great that Fire Chief Michael Andrews and the fire department staff go out of their way to recognize the accomplishments of their colleagues.

Breault also made it clear that the following week was one of the busiest for the fire department in recent memory.



Members of the Wilbraham Fire Department completed important ice and cold water rescue training on Spec Pond on Jan. 24.

“They just had a couple major events, and this past weekend, the chief told me they had about 50 calls. On any given weekend, they might get like 21 calls or something like that,” Breault said. “It’s been a very busy week to say the least for the fire department, so hopefully folks are getting rested.”

Bunnell seconded his statement.

“I guess it’s been a week,” she said.

To get an idea of the tasks that the fire department accomplished during this time frame, one can visit their Facebook page or read along here.

On Jan. 21, the fire department battled a blaze involving four school buses at a bus yard on Boston Road, according to Andrews. Fortunately, they were unoccupied. It took firefighters about two hours to put out the flames in



A two-alarm fire ripped through a Monson Road residence early in the morning on Jan. 26, but no one was injured. The home was severely damaged.

extremely cold conditions.

On Jan. 22, a ceremony was held to congratulate Wilbraham Deputy Fire Chief Matt Walch, who completed the Chief Fire Officer Management Training Program. Walch graduated that morning after months of taking classes, researching, writing and completing presentations.

On Jan. 23, Wilbraham firefighters extinguished another vehicle fire on Stony Hill Road adjacent to the Big Y Express. The department reports that the blaze was quickly put out, damage was minimized, and the occupant’s belongings were saved.

On Jan. 24, members of the department began their annual cold-water ice and rescue training sessions on Spec Pond. The department reminds residents that moving water is not safe to go on even if it’s frozen.

On Jan. 25, firefighters responded to an early morning, two-alarm fire on Monson Road. Fortunately, everyone made it out safely, although the home suffered extreme fire and water damage.

On Jan. 26, the fire department continued to handle an extremely high call volume, as was described by Breault.

Thanks to the efforts of the town’s firefighters, Wilbraham residents can be confident that the fire department will be there to keep them safe when the time comes.

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## VIEWPOINTS



I received an email from a Hampden resident on Dec. 6. She reported a bald eagle perched in tree in her backyard. She said, "The adult bald eagle sat in the tree for a while, then swooped over my house to the north. This was the first time I had a sighting of a bald eagle in my yard."

I saw an adult bald eagle perched in a tree by a field along Route 67 in New Braintree on Jan. 17. It is always a thrill to see an eagle.

The bald eagle is a large 31 inch long dark bird with a white head and white tail. Immature eagles have dark feathers with white mottling on the wings and tail and variable amounts of white on the belly. They keep their immature plumage for four years.

Eagles eat mostly fish and birds. They also will eat carrion and some mammals like rabbits. The female lays one to three bluish white eggs in a massive platform nest of sticks and vegetation lined with moss and grasses. These nests are placed on cliff ledge or in the fork of a tree.

Eagles congregate at feeding areas in late winter and early spring. They inhabit coasts, lakes and large rivers. The eagle has a repeat-

ed piercing scream given between a pair and a rapid series of chirps given at the nest. Eagle populations are recovering from series declines due to the use of DDT, which caused thinning of their egg shells.

### Bluebirds

A North Brookfield resident had half a dozen bluebirds at his feeder on Jan. 9. Another Hampden resident reported the bluebirds were back in a Jan. 17 email. He said, "He puts out a container of warm water every morning and puts a scoop of critter food on the ground every morning."

### Great blue heron

The same Hampden resident with the bluebirds said in Dec. 5 email a great blue heron "has been visiting my fish pond early mornings and late afternoons for the past couple of weeks. It has consumed over 20 goldfish in the three foot deep pond."

### Pine warbler

A reader some time ago had a bird with a lot of yellow. She identified it as a pine warbler. She said she never had a pine warbler come to her nugget feeder before and she has lived there for 40 years. She also included a photo of a mocking bird sipping sap from a maple tree after the yellow bellied sapsucker made multiple holes in the bark.

### Rescue of iced in loons

The Loon Preservation Committee reported, "On Dec. 14, [they] responded to a report from Weare Reservoir (aka Horace Lake) in Weare, New Hampshire. As the reservoir froze, a juvenile loon became trapped in a small (15 foot diameter) hole of open water. Fortunately,

the opening was not far from shore and LPC Senior Biologist, John Cooley, was able to make his way out across the newly-formed ice to capture it. LPC staff then evaluated the loon, taking blood and x-rays. No problems were detected, and the loon was released onto the ocean that afternoon." The loon received two bands per leg in a unique color combination that will enable us to identify it if it returns to a New Hampshire lake in the future.

The LPC also reported, "That same night [Dec. 14], we received a call from volunteers on Franklin Pierce Lake. There, too, a juvenile loon was icing-in and with cold temperatures predicted overnight, its situation was not likely to improve. On Dec. 15, LPC staff headed to the lake. The loon was much further from shore than the loon on Weare Reservoir had been, but the ice was solid and we were able to capture the loon. The loon was given a physical examination on site and no obvious problems were detected. Because it was late in the day and we wanted to make sure the loon had plenty of daylight to explore and get acquainted with its new surroundings, we opted to have the loon stay overnight with wildlife rehabilitator Maria Colby of Wings Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. We banded it and released it onto the ocean at Odiorne Point the following morning."

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



## When to claim Social Security and taxation of benefits

### Dear Rusty:

I am 65 and currently working full-time.

Can I apply for and start receiving my Social Security benefit? I'd expect to have to pay income tax on it if/when I do.

**Signed: Curious Worker**

### Dear Curious Worker:

If you are working full time, you should likely delay claiming Social Security at this time. At age 65, you haven't yet reached your SS Full Retirement Age, so you will be subject to Social Security's "annual earnings test" which limits how much you can earn from work while

collecting early benefits. The earnings limit for 2025 is \$23,400 and if you earn more than the annual limit, SS will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit.

If you earn significantly over the limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible to collect SS benefits. FYI, the annual earnings limit goes away when you reach your full retirement age, which for you is 66 years and 10 months, or March 2026.

As you obviously already know, a portion of your Social Security may be subject to income tax after you start collecting. The threshold for taxation of SS benefits depends on your IRS filing status – if you file your taxes as a single and your combined income from all sources (including half of the SS benefit you received during the tax year) exceeds \$25,000 then 50% of your received SS benefits are taxable.

But if you file taxes as "married/jointly" and your combined income is over \$32,000, then up to 85% of your received SS benefits are taxable. Thus, whenever you claim SS, you may wish to consider having income tax withheld from your SS benefit. This is optional, and you can do this by submitting IRS Form W-4V to your local Social Security office, or you could choose to increase your income tax withholding at work or, alternatively, pay estimated income taxes

quarterly.

So, whether you can claim Social Security now depends entirely on how much you will earn from working full time prior to your FRA. If you exceed the annual earnings limit before your FRA, SS will take away some of your benefits or, if you greatly exceed the earnings limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible to get benefits until you either reach your FRA or earn less. But note, if you decide to claim early and any SS benefits are withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit, you will get credit for that in the form of a slightly increased benefit after you reach your full retirement age.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for 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.

## 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.



## The Wilbraham-Hampden TIMES TEAM



**EDITOR**  
Kristin Rivers  
[krivers@turley.com](mailto:krivers@turley.com)



**ADVERTISING SALES**  
Jocelyn Walker  
[jwalker@turley.com](mailto:jwalker@turley.com)



**SPORTS EDITOR**  
Greg Scibelli  
[sports@turley.com](mailto:sports@turley.com)

The Wilbraham-Hampden Times is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977.



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Letters to the editor should be 350 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources. Send letters to: Editor, Wilbraham-Hampden Times, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-682-0013 or via e-mail to [krivers@turley.com](mailto:krivers@turley.com). The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon.

### Correction Policy

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

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



# W.H.A.T. hosting gala on Feb. 15

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Hampden Academic Trust is hosting a gala event from 6 to 10 p.m. on Feb. 15 at The Starting Gate at GreatHorse in Hampden.

The gala will honor students, educators and the community in the school district with live music during a cocktail hour, a plated dinner with live entertainment from a local comedian, a DJ with dancing, silent and live auctions, raffle prizes and speeches from board members, recent grant recipients in attendance and Superintendent Dr. John Provost.

Formal attire is required.

Tickets can be purchased at [www.whatfund.org/news-events](http://www.whatfund.org/news-events) by clicking "Purchase Tickets."

W.H.A.T., established in 2003, is a nonprofit organization comprised of parents and friends in the district investing in the schools and teachers, having funded over \$200,000 in grants to teachers to support programming for children.

In 2024, funded projects were playground equipment at Stony Hill School, PE equipment at Soule Road School and Wilbraham Middle School, 26 standing tables at Minnechaug Regional High School, MathRacks to supplement math and science education for the lower elementary schools and speakers for Black History Month.

Vice President & Committee Chair Alexandra Ryan explained the gala not only raises awareness for W.H.A.T.'s mission, but also this year's goal of raising \$50,000 to fund current grant applications received in 2024.

"The biggest ones being a renovation

of the Stony Hill School cafeteria, which (Principal) Monique Dangleis has been so creative in her efforts to fund and we are supplementing that budget and it looks like we'll see that through to completion," Ryan said. "And the rest is--not allocated for--but the primary allocation of the earliest funds that we received will be towards the library renovation at Mile Tree School, including new seating and tables that foster a greater sense of collaboration in the library. As well as a beautiful mural that ties in the school mascot with the giant reading nook that they have in that space. So, also, to create some creative and visual interest in the room."

Ryan added other "very worthy" grants approved by the Grant Committee will be announced at the gala.

Ryan said W.H.A.T. is always working to engage the community in fundraising opportunities, including the first-ever Family Fall Fest held at Fern Valley Farms in September 2024.

"It was a massive success and I think created a lot of buzz about our organization and what exactly we're contributing to the district and how families by showing up to our events are also supporting that cause, no matter how small their contribution," Ryan said. "Whether they're buying a \$5 raffle ticket or sponsoring an event with their business or with their family for a few thousand dollars, they'll know exactly where that money is going."

Ryan, who has been on the board for five years--with the last four as director and this being her first year as the Vice President--enjoys the relationships she's building with the administration.

"Getting to know the principals at each school, what their needs are, what goes on in their schools in an intimate way and what support the Grant Commit-

tee can provide has been rewarding for me," Ryan said.

Briana LaChappelle, W.H.A.T.'s brand marketing director, joined the board this past summer and stressed the importance of spreading awareness, knowledge, events and connecting with the community.

"It has just been a breath of fresh air to meet the fellow board members and see the excitement that they have behind their initiatives with just getting involved with the community," LaChappelle said.

LaChappelle noted the direct impact W.H.A.T.'s work has.

"We see it directly in the classrooms and through the administration and what's happening. We have our kids and neighbors who are speaking to items that have been funded or grants that have been approved," LaChappelle said. "It's wonderful to see the direct impact and speak to other people who have experienced it as well with our families."

Ryan said for anyone who wants to apply for a grant, they can apply at [www.whatfund.org/grants](http://www.whatfund.org/grants).

"It'll bring you to a Google form that asks all the necessary questions about the project, the amount requested, a budget summary showing how the awarded money will be spent. Include any permissible pictures, testimonials, etc., that would benefit from all the funds that you're requesting," Ryan said. "And a brief narrative that includes what the outcome is, what the goal is."

Ryan and LaChappelle look forward to the gala, including elevating the experience to new levels.

"I think the feedback I've been getting so far is like, 'Is this going to be like going to a wedding at GreatHorse?' and I was like, 'Oh yeah. It's going to be like

a wedding at GreatHorse.' Which, in this region is the best it gets," Ryan said.

"It just happens to be right after Valentine's Day, so it's a great excuse to have a date night out with your significant other or grab some of your girls for Galentine's Day," LaChappelle said.

Ryan wants the community to know the gala is their premier event and most important of their fundraising year for budgeting and grant funding, encouraging them to lend their support, no matter their contribution.

She also hopes to see families bring kids to family events, pizza parties or say hello when they see someone from W.H.A.T. out in the community.

"Everyone I meet on the 15th, I hope I see you out and about and I hope that you remember me and I hope that it's a positive experience at the gala event and beyond," Ryan said.

## Super Bowl Safety

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## OBITUARIES

### Death Notices

**Dr. Gerald LaVerne Paist**

*Died Jan. 24, 2025  
Services are private  
Neill Funeral Home*

### Dr. Gerald LaVerne Paist

Dr. Gerald LaVerne Paist ("Gerry") passed away peacefully at Harrisburg Hospital on January 24, 2025. He was a resident of Country Meadows Mechanicsburg since April 2024.

Born in Williamsport, PA, Gerry was the son of Thomas Holland Paist, Jr. and Ethel Ann (Hubbell) Paist. He grew up in Willow Grove, PA and attended the Upper Moreland School District, where he graduated Valedictorian of the class of 1957.



Gerry was very active in Scouting and attained the rank of Eagle Scout. During his senior year, Gerry was selected to tour Europe with the World Friendship Organization. While there, he visited 18 European countries and received the Queen's Scout Badge, the highest award in English Scouting.

Following high school graduation, Gerry earned a B.S. in Mathematics from Lafayette College and Masters and Doctoral Degrees in Educational Administration from Harvard University.

After teaching Mathematics at Stoneham and Framingham School Districts, Gerry served as Assistant Dean of Westfield University in Massachusetts. He then became the Superintendent/Director of Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School, where he served for 47 years. Currently he is the longest running School Superintendent in the United States.

Gerry will be remembered lovingly by his sister, Susan Hubbell Whyte (Howard) of Carlisle, niece, Kimberly Eshbach Barger (Chad) of Mechanicsburg and grand nephews, Alec Barger and Chase Barger. Burial will be private at West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd, PA.

The family would like to thank Country Meadows Mechanicsburg and UPMC Harrisburg for the excellent care given to Gerry. Also, the family would like to express their gratitude to Greg Salois, Eric Duda, Jim Jyz, Dan Whaley, Scott Moynihan, Mark Moynihan and Tim Moriarty for their ongoing support and friendship.

Memorial donations can be sent to: Pathfinder Vocational Technical High School, 240 Sykes Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

Services will be private and at the convenience of the family.

Wilbraham-Hampden Times

### OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph.

**Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: [obits@turley.com](mailto:obits@turley.com).

*Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.*

## Players Announces Casting for Spring Musical 'Cabaret'

WILBRAHAM – Wilbraham United Players (WUP) is thrilled to announce the cast for their highly anticipated spring musical, "Cabaret."

"Cabaret," a beloved musical by John Kander and Fred Ebb, tells the story of an aspiring writer and his experiences at the Kit Kat Klub, a provocative nightclub where the lines between entertainment and the political unrest of pre-World War II Germany blur. With iconic songs like "Willkommen," "Maybe This Time," and "Cabaret," this production is sure to bring the unforgettable world of 1930s Berlin to life.

Emcee- Jayse Matrishon  
Sally Bowles- Carolyn Averill  
Clifford Bradshaw- Chris Morey  
Ernst Ludwig- Ben Crow  
Fraulein Schneider- Christine Greene  
Herr Schultz- Doug Lebel  
Fraulein Kost/Fritzie- Jami Wilson  
Kit Kat Girls- Noelle Hisgen, Shelly Capen, Julia Adamo, Naidelyn Cruz, Meghan Snapp  
Kit Kat Boys- John Woytowicz, Zach-

ary Ciano, Tully Russell, Antonio Mutti

Cabaret is directed by Deb Trimble, musical direction by Ben Mabrey, and choreographed by Jacqui Panasian. The show is licensed and permitted to perform by Concord Theatricals.

Tickets are now available for the show, including special cabaret tables, which will run from March 28 through April 6 at the Wilbraham United Church.

For ticket information and to purchase your seats, visit [www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org](http://www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org).

Support Wilbraham United Players with Show Sponsorships

Show sponsorships are now available for local businesses and individuals looking to support this community-driven theatre production. Sponsorships provide great exposure and a chance to be part of an amazing artistic experience. For more information about sponsorship opportunities, please contact WUP at the details below.

Visit Our Website for More Information

For more details about the Cabaret production, sponsorship opportunities, and to purchase your tickets, please visit [www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org](http://www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org).

Wilbraham United Players  
Email: [info@wilbrahamunitedplayers.org](mailto:info@wilbrahamunitedplayers.org)  
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Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

The Select Board discussed school funding during a budget process discussion at their Feb. 3 meeting.

## Wilbraham Select Board talks school funding

The board dove into the budget process on Monday

By Dalton Zbierski  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM – The Wilbraham Select Board spent nearly two hours delving into the budget process during Monday's meeting, and part of the discussion focused on funding the Wilbraham-Hampden Regional School District.

As the board began tackling the regional school assessment, Town Administrator Nick Breault offered an update as to where the town stands currently.

"I just put in a placeholder to say we'd put in a 5% number. This would be subject to some debate, I'm sure. One percent is \$287,000," Breault said.

That would result in the town offering the district approximately \$1,435,000.

Each board member acknowledged that Monday's conversations were occurring early in the process and that the numbers could change significantly moving forward.

However, the elected officials offered different takes on the matter.

Clerk Marc Ducey said he recently spoke to school district officials. If level service is currently around \$1.4 million, Ducey said it would be difficult to "go backwards on that number."

Noting that he was only speaking for himself, Ducey expressed concern about "already chewing into the \$350,000" of excess capacity.

"What I would suggest is take out \$200,000 out of that reserve, make it \$250,000, and take \$150,000 out of the school budget, make it a \$1.3 million increase or whatever it is, and get us out to the \$1 million excess capacity," Ducey said.

Ducey followed up by saying that he made the suggestion because he doesn't want to start digging into excess capacity. He also pointed out where the increase stood in past years.

"We traditionally have given them about \$800,000 a year, except for the past few years," Ducey said.

Select Board Chair Sue Bunnell seconded Ducey's observation, recalling a much lower placeholder in the past.

"Five percent, while it may be not far from what we've done or had to do, it's a lot more than what we used to put it," Bunnell said.

Vice Chair Michael Squindo was hesitant to take anything off the school district's plate. He made it clear that the schools could be in for a hard year financially.

"I think the bottom line is it's going to be a tough budget year, for schools in particular," Squindo said. "Based on the knowledge I have, I would support holding what we have in the schools right now."

Squindo noted that one way or another, the conversation is going to be had, and he expects that it's going to be a

"very tough path."

"We've seen significant cost increases in the past three years that we've been cutting budgets in terms of what the schools need," Squindo said.

He added that with what he is hearing from the public about the special education programs that are impacted and cut through CBA and how it affects students with extreme needs, it will be difficult to give less money.

Ducey responded that the district's special needs expenses have dropped by a lot this school year.

"I believe that special ed needs this year are going down dramatically... The special education charges decreased from \$23,000 to \$2,000," Ducey said.

Squindo answered that either way, giving less money will impact general education.

"I think there's significant pressure on the schools financially," Squindo said. "So, I don't know if it's as simple as let's keep a million in excess capacity and let's [give] what we've always given the schools because those [strategies] don't recognize the realities that the schools are facing."

Squindo said that many district positions weren't brought back in recent years because of how the school system is budgeted. He added that when looking at the past 10 years, there has been a major decrease in the overall investment the district has received.

"It has had an impact on what everyone's concerned about, which is that we're not the number one school district anymore," Squindo said.

He expressed that just because federal COVID-19 money has gone away doesn't mean that the community should stop supporting the programs that it funded.

"How can we be what the public wants us to be if we continue to undermine how much we're funding the schools. I understand it's in the context of a broader conversation, but I can't arbitrarily support reducing it on the basis of getting excess capacity to a million," Squindo said.

Squindo then noted that part of the conversation "absolutely" has to be about putting pressure on the state to do their part funding wise. But the community must step up in the interim, he said.

"I also think we have to recognize that until the state does that, the burden is on us. We have to take that seriously when we look at the needs of our students," Squindo said.

After more discussion, Bunnell voiced that she could see validity with each of her fellow board member's concerns.

"I do agree with Marc's point to some extent," Bunnell said. "We need to have a discussion and a serious conversation about much money we can give to the schools to support them."

After much conversation, the board decided to drop the placeholder down to \$1.3 million.

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Minnechaug students Anna Dennis and Ashley Griguoli duel it out, after taking a well deserved break from painting.



Anna Dennis and Ashley Griguoli are pictured hard at work painting the "Northern Lights".



The library has been hosting this specific painting workshop style for over 10 years, offering options from teen to adult.



Turley photo by Amanda Munson Local Artist Erin Boughamer smiles while showing how to blend paint colors to the group of teens.

**PAINTING** from page 1

was simple to follow, and how it only took a couple of paint strokes to make a great painting and art piece they could show off at home.

Griguoli and Dennis also wanted to thank their parents for helping them come and be able to participate in the event.

"I've actually done two classes with Erin and I tend to come to every event at the library because it's really fun and I get

to do it with Ashley and with friends. I grew up in Wilbraham and always came to the library. There are books and activities, it's really cool," Dennis said.

"I think there's definitely something for everyone, come to the library!" Griguoli said.

This program was sponsored by the Wilbraham Friends of the Library.

To learn more about upcoming programs, visit [wilbrahamlibrary.org](http://wilbrahamlibrary.org).

# Fathers Grief Support Group Starting Jan. 30

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

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

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

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

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

## Polish Food Sale Feb. 5

INDIAN ORCHARD - A Polish Food Sale with Golabki, Kapusta and cabbage, potato and cheese, sweet cheese and blueberry pierogi will be sold on Saturday, February 8, 2025 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Immaculate Conception Church Hall, 25 Parker Street, Indian Orchard, MA. All are welcome to come and purchase.



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# CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

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# A COMMUNITY GALLERY

## Students Enjoy Family Fun Night!



Submitted photos Megan Harrigan

Students and families enjoyed holding the Springfield Thunderbirds flag before game time.



These students got to sing the National Anthem ahead of the big game.



The excitement was building—and then some—for Family Fun Night.



Another shot of the students with the Springfield Thunderbirds flag.



Families were in the stands ready to enjoy Family Fun Night.

*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. Please note that if you send us a photo of the Times in different parts of the world, please include a recognizable landmark in the background. Examples: Eiffel Tower; castle in Spain.

# WILBRAHAM

The Zamboni ride during intermission was a fun treat!

On Jan. 20, students and families from all four local elementary schools enjoyed Family Fun Night during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Springfield Thunderbirds game. Over 350 residents were in attendance!

Students also got to hold the flag on the ice at the beginning of the game, sit in the penalty box, cheer on the players in the team tunnel, ride the Zamboni during intermission and even sing the National Anthem.

The mascots from all the schools also came and posed for photos with the families.



The students—and the mascots—were ready to have some fun with the

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# WILBRAHAM HAMPDEN

**Community Bulletin Board**

*Happy 6th Birthday*  
**Amelia Mawla!**

*May your birthday be as bright and wonderful as you are, Habibti.*  
Love always, Baba & Mama




the Thunderbirds!

## WFD takes part in ice rescue training



Photos and caption courtesy of Wilbraham Fire Department

Members of the fire department began their annual cold water and ice rescue training evolutions at Spec Pond on Jan. 24. There was a traffic cone on the ice that is part of our training scenario, which was later removed over the weekend. Often the fire department is asked how thick is safe ice? Ice on moving waters in rivers, streams, and

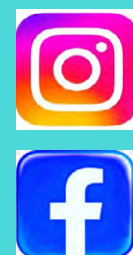
brooks is generally not safe. The thickness of ice on ponds depends on factors such as water currents, depth, and natural objects like stumps or rocks. Daily changes in temperature can cause ice to expand and contract, which affects its stability. Because of these factors, no one can declare the ice to be safe.

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# PET PAGE

## READERS!

Send in your pet picture for our "Pet of the Month" and receive a free weekend get-away or spa package for your pet courtesy of Porter Road Pet Care. Email your photos to: [jwalker@turley.com](mailto:jwalker@turley.com). Please include your name and your pet's name.



### PET OF THE MONTH



#### Meet Fynn!!

He is 5 years old and lives with his parents Julia and Devin in Wilbraham. He loves to play soccer and frisbee and go for walks. He really enjoys his outside playtime.



### Indoor Winter Boredom Busters

When you and your dog are feeling a little cooped up these are two super fun games you can play together. Mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise for your dog. So, these games are also designed to work out your dog's mind. They are easy to play and all you need are a few of your dog's favorite treats.

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2. Park your pup — Tell your dog to "sit" and "stay" while you hide. Start with some easy hiding spots, like behind a piece of furniture. As your dog gets used to the game, try moving to harder spots.
3. Ready or not, here they come! — Say "okay" and let your pup come find you. If they're having a hard time, call out their name to give them a hint.
4. Reward time — When your pup finds you, make sure to give them lots of praise and reward them with a tasty treat.

#### Find My Treat

1. Keep away — Temporarily put your pup in their crate or a room where they can't see you and close the door.
2. Secret Chef — Choose some super smelly dog treats and hide them in different areas around the room. If they need help you can scatter a few pieces of food across the floor leading to the hidden treat until they get the idea of how the game works.
3. Bon Appetit — Let your pup follow their nose and sniff out their treat. They'll have a blast honing their "hunting" skills.



### ELDOTC East Longmeadow Dog Obedience Training Club

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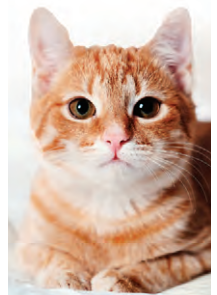
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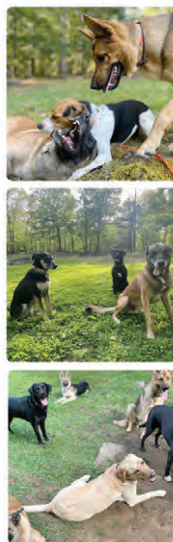
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Socialization Obedience Class beginning Feb. 17 (Dogs must be fully vaccinated). Inside Belchertown Rec Dept., 66 State St., Building #1, Belchertown Register online at [www.belchertownma.myrec.com](http://www.belchertownma.myrec.com) Under "Programs" Class description on website

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# Minnechaug Grad returns to WSU as artist in residence

Recent debut at Carnegie Hall



Photos by Molly Noori of Brooke deRosa, Michael O'Halloran, and Diana Farrell

WILBRAHAM - Diana Farrell, a 2002 Minnechaug Regional High School Graduate and 2006 Graduate of Westfield State University, will be returning to Western Mass as an artist in residence.

During that time, at 3 p.m. on Feb. 8, Farrell will also give a recital to support a scholarship for a future alumna at her alma mater.

On Jan. 31, Farrell had her debut at Carnegie Hall in Weil Recital Hall for the semi-staged world premiere of "The Yellow Wallpaper," where she served as librettist and played the role of Jane.

Farrell is, also, the founder of Lyric Opera of Orange County.

Also in the cast was composer Brooke deRosa as Jenney, Baritone Michael O'Halloran as producer and the role of John, Jane's physician husband, conductor and pianist Carl Pantle leading the chamber ensemble, Terpsikord, known for their artistry and dedication to contemporary repertoire.

The semi-staged production was directed by veteran opera director Cynthia Stokes.

Set against the backdrop of the oppressive "rest cure," a 19th-century treatment for women suffering from so-called hysteria, "The Yellow Wallpaper," written by Charlotte Gilman, weaves an evocative score and poignant text to explore a woman's psychological journey from confinement to liberation. The work draws inspiration not only from Gilman's story but also from the life and contributions of female physician Mary Putnam Jacobi, a contemporary of Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, the inventor of the rest cure.

Jacobi's advocacy for women's health and scientific rigor contrasts sharply with the pseudoscientific practices that often undermined women's autonomy.

On the production, Farrell shared this in a press release.

"This opera is a tribute to the voices of women-past and present-who continue to fight for control over their own bodies and health," Farrell said. "Though the methods seem absurd in 2025, the story of The Yellow Wallpaper is as relevant today as it was in Gilman's time. In the libretto I quote the real life work and words of Dr. Weir Mitchell and his male colleagues who created and anecdotally defended the "rest cure," and Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi, one of the first woman physicians whose scientific and rational documentation negating the rest cure was simply ignored by so many medical professionals at the time. It seemed a bizarre parallel to know that it's been 150 years since Jacobi began her methodical work and the nearly 130 years since Gilman first published the novella based on her experiences, and yet in many places women are still not allowed autonomy over their bodies and care. The characters of John (the physician husband) and Jenney (the ever present housemaid) help demonstrate the outside elements of this real life debate while Jane deteriorates in front of them."

A fully-staged production of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is also planned in Southern California in Fall 2025.

# Selectboard receives latest updates on MVP FY25 Action Grant

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Selectboard received updates on the Municipal Vulnerability Program FY25 Action Grant on Feb. 3.

The action grant is for the Main Street Bridge Replacement at East Brook and Green Infrastructure Solutions project.

Christopher Lyman, staff civil engineer at Howard Stein Hudson, explained for the bridge design, MassDOT Chapter 85 comments were received and a meeting took place on November 25, 2024 after a new design guide was released that fall.

"Some of the comments they've given were in result to that new bridge design guide. We felt with the town that our design met the standards of the time we submitted it and we shouldn't be held to the newer standards that had just come out because it would potentially increase the cost of the bridge on the town," Lyman said. "It's not an uncommon MassDOT thing to hold designers and towns to new design guides that come out at final design because the bridge is at final design. So, basically we're working with MassDOT to resolve those comments..."

Lyman said he sees those comments being resolved and after feedback is received, the plans will be revised and a final design submitted in May 2025.

On the bridge permitting, there was a Notice of Intent and Endangered Species MESA/NHESP review in August 2024, followed by orders of conditions from the town's Conservation Commission the following month.

"We recorded those notes this past November and added the fish and wildlife language they've given us through their review to the construction documents," Lyman said. "We also got our approval from the Mass Historical Commission be-

cause we are surrounded by biomes and historical houses right next to the bridge. We got approval from the Mass Historical Commission and we also got approval from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers because there is some dredging we're doing for this to be able to put in the abutments to the bridge, and then once we get our Chapter 85 permitting resolution... the bridge permitting should be all done from that standpoint."

Right-of-Way work to stabilize the bank in or around the house property is also ongoing in coordination with Mass Audubon, with Lyman adding an attorney is preparing a consensual order of taking agreement in progress.

"Once we have that order of takings agreement, we'll pass it on to the town to pass it as a warrant article at the Annual Town Meeting in May just to approve the permanent easement that's required for this project," Lyman said.

From there, Lyman added the Right-of-Way actions would then be executed and recorded by the Hampden County Registry of Deeds. He also clarified to Chair Don Davenport the board would have the documentation for this in preparation for the town meeting.

On the green structures part of the grant, which had concepts originally prepared by Landscape Interactions in 2023 and the Conway School in 2024, Lyman stressed it's not going to be designed as part of the bridge and is a concept design, adjacent to Main Street at the Laughing Brook Sanctuary.

"Again, it's up to the town whether they actually choose to fund to build this or not," Lyman said. "Again, we've been working with the town and Mass Audubon and Mark (Langone) at the DPW to make sure that the design we're creating is both manageable and maintenance from a maintenance standpoint. Those concerns about being hard to maintain we've gone through the design where it's going to be mostly dif-

ferent types of grassland that can be mowed by Mass Audubon and then that stuff that's along the road that can be easily mowed by the town."

After Davenport asked about the green, Lyman clarified it's for flooding and treating water going into both the brook that makes it way down to the Scantic River.

"So, it's really to help with water quality," Lyman said.

Lyman then showed a map of what the catch basins would look like, which would go up Glendale Road and Scantic Road and have a grassy area where it would infiltrate and go or put into overflow controls.

"Basically that means if the water gets too high we're not flooding Mass Audubon property. We're going to a controlled structure and go back into the brook. At least it would be treated from any oil or salts that come off the roadway itself that are caught in those catch basins," Lyman said.

After further discussion on this portion and that a submission for the preliminary design would be anticipated in March 2025, Lyman said there would be three community outreach videos.

One would focus on the water and where does it go, nature-based solutions and Hampden's resiliency plan, while the second is an overview of Hampden's MVP process from planning to final design of the bridge. A video trailer would promote the town's videos at other meetings and events.

Interviews with town staff and Mass Audubon have been completed and photos and videos are still in the works for locations, along with internal editing of recordings. After this, they will be for public viewing at a town forum to be determined.

"As I've said, at the end of all this, you'll also get the finalized bridge plans, the estimate and the spectacles that go along with it," Lyman said.

To view the full report and progress, visit [arcg.is/1DWb10](http://arcg.is/1DWb10).

## SCHOOL from page 1

Berneche was unsure, adding she would get back to Kennedy with the information and how she's a facilitator of the iDecide program that students take if they are caught with substances on school grounds.

"Every single one of those kids uses a flavored vape, so, they are still getting them somehow, somewhere," Berneche said. "They actually say they wouldn't use the vapes if they weren't flavored, so something to note."

Cannabis and drinking use also increased.

"So, you can see the 12% increase from the 9% and then the cannabis use around the same. Another thing to note about the alcohol and cannabis use is that these are two substances that are more widely and socially acceptable in the community," Berneche said.

Kennedy also asked about Zyns, which are oral nicotine pouches.

"Are we tracking that now? That seems to be the new replacement for (that)," Kennedy said.

Berneche thinks they are being used the same amount as vapes, "but it's much harder to see."

"But I have heard that some students are using those and Zyns also just came out with a Zyn toothpick. So, they could be chewing what looks like a toothpick, but it's nicotine. So there's lots of things on the market that are changing all the time. It's very hard to keep up with the

new, very hidden strategies that these new companies (do)," Berneche said.

On students' attitudes towards substances, the consensus was students think their parents would disapprove of substance use more than friends.

"So, really, our goal is to try to get this gap. So you can see parents is in blue and friends/peers are in the orange. So, we really want to get these numbers as close together as possible and we want students to think that their friends also disapprove of them using substances," Berneche said.

Students' perceptions of friends' disapproval of substance use, she added, are increasing over time.

"Which is a really great trend to see that friends are not approving of substance use. So, we're really moving in a positive direction with this data and also because we know, especially during the high school time, that friends are extremely influential," Berneche said.

### Middle School Data

For the middle school data, 382 students were surveyed in seventh and eighth grades.

Berneche said many middle school students were struggling with mental health, with 53% reporting sometime in the past year, nothing was fun or interesting. 31%, meanwhile, reported they felt sad or hopeless "almost every day."

"Which is a diagnostic criteria for depression. So the 31% number is compared to the high school num-

ber at 28%, so it is a bit higher for the middle school students," Berneche said.

On substance use, vaping has "declined sharply."

"This past year it was barely 1% reported they use any vaping devices in the last 30 days and only one student reported having vaped on school property in the last 30 days. So, very low reporting rates here," Berneche said.

Drinking and cannabis use also decreased to 1%.

For students' attitudes towards substances, Berneche said the numbers between parents and friends were closer, which is the goal for the high school.

"So, we really want to keep this up and carry it through high school as much as possible," Berneche said.

Another highlight was about half of middle school students have talked with their parents about vaping in the last year, but not as much about other substances.

"So, it's very important to have these conversations early and often to really embed those prevention strategies at an early age and this will help set them up to have great prevention strategies as they get into high school," Berneche said.

Berneche concluded the presentation by highlighting the other programs and initiatives the coalition is using or will do soon, including Teen Mental Health First Aid.

Families can learn more by visiting [hwp4y.org](http://hwp4y.org).

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# ALL ABOUT TOWN

*Get to know your town employee: Paula Dubord*

By Kristin Rivers

Editor

krivers@turley.com

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

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

This week, we talk with Paula Dubord, director of elder affairs at the Wilbraham Senior Center.

**What is your favorite thing about the town?**

It's my town. I moved to Wilbraham when I was a toddler and have been here ever since. It has retained its small town feel, yet offers everything you need.

**What do you do in your position?**

Director of Elder Affairs – aka Senior Center Director. My duties include assess the needs of seniors, developing and implementing programs, activities and services to serve our senior population.

**Describe an average day at the office?**

Every day is different, with an average of 140 people walking through the doors of the new senior center. I am responsible for the daily operations, preparing and handling the budget, including applying for and maintaining records for grants, supervising 4 employees and 230 volunteers.

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

I have lived in Wilbraham since 1965, My husband and I graduated from Minnechaug in 1980 where we were voted

class couple.

We purchased our home in 1984 and raised our two children in town. My son is now raising my three grandchildren on the same street I grew up on in town.

I love to travel anywhere there is a beach. And my team will always be the Boston Red Sox, even when they stink.

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

Over the past 14 years as we worked to get a new Senior Center, I worked with every town department in some capacity. I am very lucky to work with caring professionals who have the town's best interest at heart.

In the building process, we had three different town appointed committees, made up of wonderful Wilbraham residents who gave up their valuable time to help make this new center happen.

**What is the most fulfilling part of your job?**

Helping Wilbraham Seniors. Sometimes you can help solve a problem for them, offer solutions and sometimes it is just listening.

Taking the time to make personal connections. We may be the only person they have to talk to. And seeing the thousands of people who are now enjoying the new center.

**What inspired you to take on the position?**

I was hired as a part time typist 35 years ago, when I was looking to make a few dollars to help raise my family. I honestly never thought I would make this a career, but I have made so many connections with the seniors and met so many interesting people, I am grateful for answering that ad 35 years ago.



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

We are at 250 Springfield Street and open Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

The Council on Aging was established 55 years ago. We are the only social service agency in Wilbraham, serving all ages in need of fuel assistance and SNAP.

We are also a small-staffed department, with three full time positions and 2 part timers.

We have 230 volunteers, who we could not operate without. Since opening on March 18, 2024, 1,928 individuals have attended 25,469 programs activities

or events.

**What do you want the community to know about your position?**

Everyone who works at the Senior Center does so because we want to help people. We are not good at self-promotion, but we are here to assist any Wilbraham Senior.

If you have a question or concern, please reach out.

Interested in taking part in our 'Get to Know Your Town Employee' series? If you'd like to be featured in a future edition, reach out to krivers@turley.com to learn more.

## SCHOOLS

### CAMPUS NOTES

#### Endicott College announces Dean's List

BEVERLY - Endicott College, the first college in the U.S. to require internships of its students, is pleased to announce its Fall 2024 Dean's List students. In order to qualify for the Dean's List, a student must obtain a minimum grade point average of 3.5, receive no letter grade below "C," have no withdrawal grades, and be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits for the semester.

The following students from Wilbraham have met these requirements:

Aidan Cordis, Graphic Design  
Nicolas Disa, Finance  
Norah Doyle, Digital Media  
Lauren Kasper, Events Management  
Kayla Rivera, Graphic Design,

#### Quinnipiac University fall 2024 Dean's list

HAMDEN, CT - The following area students were named to the dean's list for the Fall 2024 semester at Quinnipiac University:

To qualify for the dean's list, students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.5 with no grade lower than C. Full-time students must complete at least 14 credits in a semester, with at least 12 credits that have been graded on a letter grade basis to be eligible. Part-time students must complete at least six credits during a semester. Names followed by an asterisk denotes with honors.

Sydney Beebe, Aelan Lisowski\*, Samantha Moore\*, Andrew O'Toole, Kevin Tessicini

#### Rotary Scholarship applications now available

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

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

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

#### Polish Junior League of Massachusetts awarding scholarships

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

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

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

Selection is based upon financial need and academic achievement.

Applications are available online at [www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications](http://www.polishjuniorleaguema.org/applications).

#### Wilbraham Women's Club to Award Scholarships

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

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

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

#### Wilbraham Junior Women's Club Scholarship

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

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

Completed applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2025 and mailed to: Wilbraham Junior Women's Club, Attention Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 14, Wilbraham, MA 01095.

### NOTICE

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# SPORTS

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## Chaug girls take two straight from Comp



The Minnechaug defense sets up to guard their end of the court.



Elizabeth Woytowicz sprints down the court.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



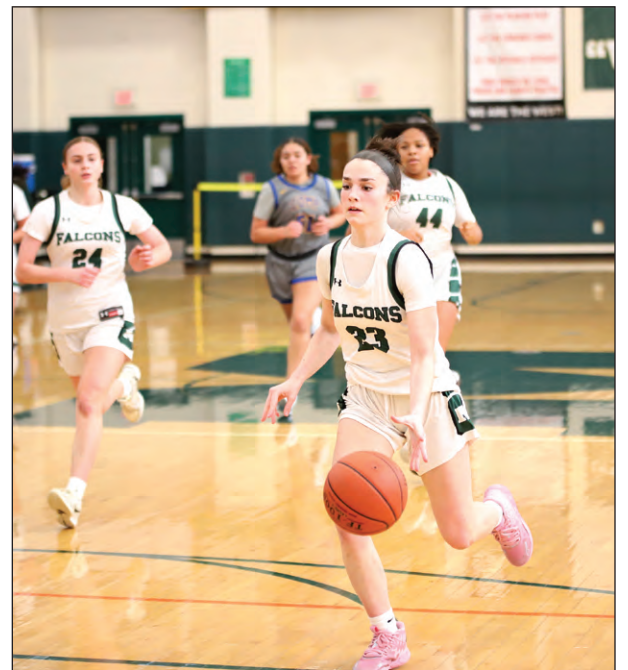
Ava Ofcarcik thinks about her next move.



Keira Horne attempts to inbound the ball.



Alani Botas reaches out for a loose ball.



Lyric Nelson has the breakaway and goes for the open layup.

WILBRAHAM – The Minnechaug Regional High School girls basketball team continues to win, grabbing two consecutive victories over league rival Chicopee Comprehensive on Jan. 25 at Minnechaug and Jan. 27 at Comp. In the home win, a 62-39 triumph, Minnechaug got 15 points

each from Elizabeth Woytowicz and Lyric Nelson. Ava Ofcarcik had 13 points and Brie Foisy had 11 points. The Falcons have now won seven straight games and are 9-2 overall. Minnechaug will next face Central on Feb. 8 at 12:30 p.m. at home.

## Falcons fall after taking double-digit lead



Josh Disa powers his way to shot.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Logan Conboy looks for the backwards layup. More photos on page 16

## Falcons score sweep of Westfield

WILBRAHAM – Last Monday afternoon, Minnechaug moved to a perfect 9-0 with a 113-70 win over Westfield.

Alayna Lucas had a pair of wins for the Falcons. She took the 100 freestyle and 50 freestyle events. Chelsea Ortega was also a double winner. She took the 200 individual medley and the 100 backstroke. Claire Pouliot was a winner in the 100 breaststroke. Gabriella Harding won the 10 flystroke. Minnechaug won two of the three relays.

The boys swimming team were 108-57 winners to improve to 6-3 on the season. Dawson Rice was a double winner, getting the 100 flystroke and the 200 individual medley. Brady LePage took the 100 freestyle and the 100 backstroke. The boys also took two of the relay events.



# T-Birds get huge weekend sweep

DES MOINES, IA — The Springfield Thunderbirds (21-17-2-2) got points from 14 of their 18 skaters in a 7-2 drubbing of the Iowa Wild (14-26-2-1) on Saturday night inside Wells Fargo Arena.

The T-Birds wasted little time jumping in front for a second straight night, as Simon Robertsson and Hugh McGing capped a 2-on-0 with McGing cashing in on a one-timer past Jesper Wallstedt just 1:22 into action. Otto Stenberg also picked up an assist as all three players on the line broke point droughts of three or four games.

Sam Bitten, playing in the building his brother Will called home for three seasons, joined the fun at 5:47 with a perfect bar-down wrister from the right circle to push the lead to 2-0 off set-ups from Samuel Johannesson and Leo Loof. Johannesson has now registered a point in five of his last six games.

Vadim Zherenko drew the starting assignment in net and held his own with 16 stops in the opening period. Johannesson provided a helping hand after Zherenko made a mini-breakaway save on Hunter Haight, and the young blueliner successfully kept Mikey Milne from cashing in on a rebound to keep the score deadlocked.

Iowa finally would break through on its 16th shot of the period as Travis Boyd crashed the far post to tap home a 2-on-1 pass from Matthew Sop to get the Wild deficit down to 2-1 heading into the first intermission.

There were more parallels from Friday's game early in the second period, as McGing unleashed a perfect shot under the crossbar at 2:23, beating Wallstedt for his second of the evening and restoring the two-goal lead, 3-1.

Iowa put together their best push of the night over the next five minutes, culminating in a tally by Luke Toporowski to cut the margin back to a single goal, 3-2, at 7:26.

Just as it appeared the Wild would change the tide of the game, the T-Birds had other plans as Nikita Alexandrov drove the net front from the right circle and beat Wallstedt to the near post to make it 4-2 just 17 seconds after the

Toporowski goal. The Springfield attack poured it on from there. Michael Buchinger announced his presence at 8:49, jumping into a play as a trailer before snapping a wrister past Wallstedt to make it 5-2 off a cross-ice setup from Matthew Peca.

Another potential momentum shift came at 13:39 of the second when Dylan Peterson barreled in on net, taking a shot on Wallstedt before colliding with the Iowa netminder. Peterson was given a five-minute charging major, setting the stage for the Wild power play to try to climb back into the game. Wallstedt was forced to leave the game as Samuel Hlavaj came on in relief.

Instead of the moment sparking the home team, the T-Birds only further added to their lead when Peca intercepted a pass in the neutral zone, skated into the zone on the right wing, and snapped another perfect shot upstairs past Hlavaj for his team-leading 16th goal, making it a 6-2 game heading into the third.

The Wild had no answers for Zherenko in the third, despite Iowa throwing 16 pucks on the T-Birds net and 50 total by the night's conclusion. The third-year goalie finished with a season-high 48 stops to earn the win, and Alek Kaskimaki capped off the offensive onslaught with his second goal in two nights at 17:12 of the third to round out the scoring.

Dalibor Dvorsky will be in action on Sunday and Monday at the AHL All-Star Classic presented by Spotlight 29 Casino in Palm Springs, California. The rookie star will first participate in the AHL All-Star Skills Competition presented by Silvercrest on Sunday, Feb. 2 (9:00 p.m. ET). Then, on Monday, Feb. 3, Dvorsky and the Atlantic Division will look to take home the 3-on-3 crown in the 2025 AHL All-Star Challenge presented by Spotlight 29 Casino at 9:00 p.m. ET. Both events can be seen on NHL Network and AHLTV powered by FloHockey.

Springfield next takes to the ice on Friday, Feb. 7 to begin a home-and-home set against the Providence Bruins at Amica Mutual Pavilion.



Nathan Pace drives the line.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Miles Fergus passes on the run.

## Falcons fall after taking double-digit lead

WILBRAHAM — Last Tuesday evening, the Minnechaug Regional High School boys basketball team suffered a tough loss 60-63 against Commerce. The Falcons previously defeated Commerce on the road. In the second matchup, the Falcons had an 11-point lead after just one quarter. But Commerce's offense picked up as the game went on and they were able to take a lead late and hold on to it. The Falcons dropped to 7-7 on the season. Miles Fergus led the Falcons with 27 points while Nathan Pace had 17 points. The Falcons will next meet Northampton on the road Feb. 6 at 7:30 p.m.



Andrew Grasso enters the offensive end of the court.

# Railers score win over Mariners

PORTLAND, ME — The Worcester Railers HC (18-19-2-4 42pts) took down the Maine Mariners (16-23-3-0, 35pts), on Sunday afternoon by the final score of 5-2 in front of a crowd of 4,421 at Cross Insurance Arena. The Railers are back on the ice next at the DCU Center taking on the Atlanta Gladiators on Wednesday, February 5th at 7:05 p.m. EST.

Worcester scored first Sunday afternoon when Matt Ustaski (1-0-1) scored 5:23 into the first. Maine answered back with a goal of their own from Wyllum Deveaux (1-1-2) to tie the score at 1-1 heading into the second. Connor Welsh (1-0-1) was the second period's lone scorer giving the Railers the 2-1 lead. Maine tied it early in the second period with a goal from Lynden McCallum (1-0-1), but shortly after the Railers grabbed the lead right back when Cole Donhauser (1-1-2) scored a shorthanded goal to give the Railers the 3-2 lead. The Railers finished the third period by scoring two more goals, the first scored by Mark Cheremeta (1-0-1) 15:52 into the third, and the second an empty net goal from Matias Rajaniemi (1-0-1) giving the Railers the 5-2 victory.

The scoring got started by the Railers 5:23 into the first when Matt Ustaski (2nd) found the back of the net off a pass from Jordan Kaplan. Maine tied the score at 1-1 just under ten minutes later off the stick of Wyllum Deveaux (8th).

Shots favored Worcester 20-10 in the first period.

It took nearly 17 minutes of second period action for either team to score. It was Connor Welsh (5th) who scored giving the Railers the 2-1 lead. His shot from the left point deflected off of a Maine Mariner and beat Bischel high. Shortly after the Railers goal, they went on the penalty kill following a five-minute major for boarding called on Griffin Loughran. The Railers successfully killed the first 2:32 of the Maine power play to wrap up the second period. Worcester outshot Maine 31-17 in the second period.

The Railers started the third period by killing the remainder of the Maine power play, but shortly after the penalty expired Maine was able to net one. It was Lynden McCallum (15th) who scored for the Mariners. The Railers did not wait long to regain the lead, as Cole Donhauser (5th) forced a turnover at center ice and took it all the way home and scored the shorthanded goal giving the Railers the 3-2 lead. Mark Cheremeta extended the Worcester lead to 4-2 with his breakaway goal 15:52 into the third period. Matias Rajaniemi (2nd) capped off the Railers five goal night with his empty net goal 17:27 into the third, securing the 5-2 win for Worcester. Shots favored Worcester 8-7 in the third and 40-25 in regulation.



Max Baroni sends a pass to his left.



**SENIORS** from page 1

"I knew both of them. They were just wonderful, wonderful people. So, Tiny passed away and because I was working here--volunteering--they asked me if I would be vice president and I said, 'Well what's involved?' 'Oh, it's very easy. We meet twice a year, two meetings that's it,'" Kapinos said. "They said, 'You're already volunteering so you know what we do,' and I said, 'Well, that's great.' So, I said, 'Okay, I'll be the vice president.'"

When Lawrence later passed away, Ted Zebert told Kapinos she was now president. After thinking it over, she took on the role.

"We were starting to get a little bit more organized with meetings and stuff like that, so I said, 'Okay, I'll be president.' But I knew that the senior center was looking to expand and I knew that that would be a huge, huge job with the fundraising, and it scared me, quite frankly. Because that's not what my background is in," Kapinos said. "But I thought, 'Well, we'll give it a try. We'll see.' So, then kind of got involved in this and with the failure of the vote, we're still going to be very, very actively fundraising."

Kapinos added the Friends are working on new ideas with "a few things coming up this year that I'm excited about."

"The big need is volunteers. Not just the board members, but the volunteers who help us out here on a daily basis. So, that's huge. So, moving forward, we're not giving up on raising money," Kapinos said. "We got a lot of work to do and we need help."

Kapinos explained the board can have 15 people, with 13 currently serving and two positions open.

"The more volunteers we have, the better. So, that's what we're looking for is more people from the outside to come in and realize that they can be so helpful to us. Even if it's one or two things a year that they help us with. So, that's our goal is to bring more people into the senior center who want to work and help us," Kapinos said.

One item of note coming up is the Friends hosting a meet and greet on Wednesday, April 30, at 6 p.m. to tell people what they do and introduce themselves.

"It'll be very informal. Just have people come in and maybe have some Hors d'Oeuvres and just chat. Answer some questions," Kapinos said. "I'm sure there's a lot of people out there that would say, 'I would love to help but I don't have a lot of time.' Give us what you can, we'll accept anything you can give us and if you work during the day, we're going to be having more and more evening events, fundraisers that they can help us with."

Kapinos's favorite thing is seeing the people at the activities and events.

"I love interacting with them. I really enjoy working in the kitchen for the daily meals and getting to know the people that come in. They are so appreciative. They just can't thank us enough and it's just wonderful to serve them here," Kapinos said.

She also reflected on how the senior center came to be where it is today, sharing with the Times a CoA document from 1987. In it, it mentioned how 5,586 meals were served in the Melville Room--where the senior center was at the time--by 13 volunteers.

3,408 home meals were also delivered to shut-ins by seven volunteers. The site manager was Janis DeGrandpre and Lorna Cox, Kapinos added, had helped organize the dinners.

"These people back then were working so hard and they had a vision to build this building 25 years ago and here we sit," Kapinos said. "They deserve so much for what they did it's just amazing."

Carol Keeney, a former president of the Friends and current member of the Senior Center Building Committee, got involved when she was an administrative assistant for the Board of Selectmen--now the Selectboard--and had bought land from Cox and her husband.

"She said to me, 'You know how to type, don't you?' and I said, 'Yeah I do,' and she said, 'You need to be the president of the Friends' and I went, 'Okay.' So, I became president of the Friends when I was working in the Selectmen's office," Keeney said.

Keeney also reflected on the dinners Cox organized in the Melville Room, which helped create seed money to get an architect for the senior center's permanent location, later followed by a grant through the state.

Also, very generous people gave donations towards the building when Keeney took over the dinners.

"I used to help Lorna with the dinners. She would go to the Melville Room at 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning. She'd cook all day and I'd help her. I used to help her shop the whole week before," Keeney said. "She was a powerhouse."

Kapinos encourages the community to get involved and support the Friends and their events.

"We're planning on being around for a very long time and working hard. So, anybody's interested, we can find a spot for you," Kapinos said.

To learn more about the Friends, contact Kapinos at 413-478-5462.

To learn more about volunteering, stop by the senior center and connect with Administrative Assistant and Volunteer Coordinator Tina Doran.



Liza, Stuart, Lily and Audrey at Science Showcase.



Maddie, Grace and Macie at Science Showcase.

Photos courtesy of Michele Mistalski

# Soule Road School hosts Science Fair

By Sophie Sutter and Maddie Fontaine

WILBRAHAM - This winter, Soule Road School held a science fair to culminate their unit on the Earth's Place in the Universe.

The fair included all of the fifth graders' amazing ideas and wonderful inventions. Families were invited to the showcase to see how much hard work had been put into each project, and to hear the students fluently inform their visitors about their topics.

The judges of this creative science fair were the fourth graders from Soule Road School and all of the fifth grade parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and family friends, who were able to attend the event. The superintendent, Dr. John Provost, also attended the fair, and listened to as many projects as he could, asking questions and participating in the fun activities that the students developed.

The fair took place on Jan. 7 and 9 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. in the Soule Road School cafeteria. The requirements these students had to meet were: a visible title, teaching at least five facts, having an interactive component (such as a quiz or a game), and finally an eye-catching display.

In the end, there were three groups that won the science fair. Not only do the winners get the bragging rights for this accomplishment, but they also get to go to Boston, Massachusetts

to share their creations with other student scientists from across the state.

The first, second, and third place winners will be attending the Boston field trip.

Third place went to Emma Althen, Sophia Sikorski, Claire Barrinatt, and Aria Osorio. Their topic was the Layers of the Earth.

They demonstrated that Earth is made of the inner core, outer core, mantle, and crust. They had a word search and a matching game for visitors.

When asked about their favorite part of the project, the team reported, "We like creating the project together and showing it off."

They added, "The Science Fair was fun and exciting."

Coming in second place, Maddie Fontaine, Grace Langone, Macie Taylor and Adrianna Campbell developed their presentation about Weights on Other Planets. The group presented about the gravity on each planet compared to the gravity of Earth.

Their Jeopardy game assessed not only what the visitor learned about weight on other planets, but also other fun facts about each of the other terrestrial planets and gas giants.

They told us, "We liked working together and making the planets the best."

And finally, in first place was Sofia Gonzalez, Davida Ingman, Olivia Salema and Emma Pafumi with their

project about Planets in the Solar System. They used a motor to display the planets rotating around the sun.

The quiz at the end of their presentation tested their audience's understanding after their presentation.

This group shared that they "like presenting and showing off what we learned about the planets."

Originally, Mrs. Linda DeMarey initiated Soule Road School's participation in this competition, but Mr. Brett Overgaard took the reins this year and organized The Science Showcase for January 2025.

Mr. Overgaard reported, "The students worked on the project in class for three months and in the closing month of December students were coming in for recess to work on their projects, and I was truly impressed by the dedication of all of the student scientists, not just the winning groups."

Mr. Overgaard also stated, "The winning groups are going to be presenting to space scientists on May 9 at the New Balance Field House in Boston, Massachusetts."

The three groups of winners for the science fair all had different projects on different subjects in science, and they all get to share their creations with other talented fifth graders from across the state.

Mr. Overgaard, who is a huge inspiration and amazing teacher, guided the students through an incredible collaborative process and true scientific learning.



Zenovia, Logan and Kylie at Science Showcase.



MC and Sophie at Science Showcase.



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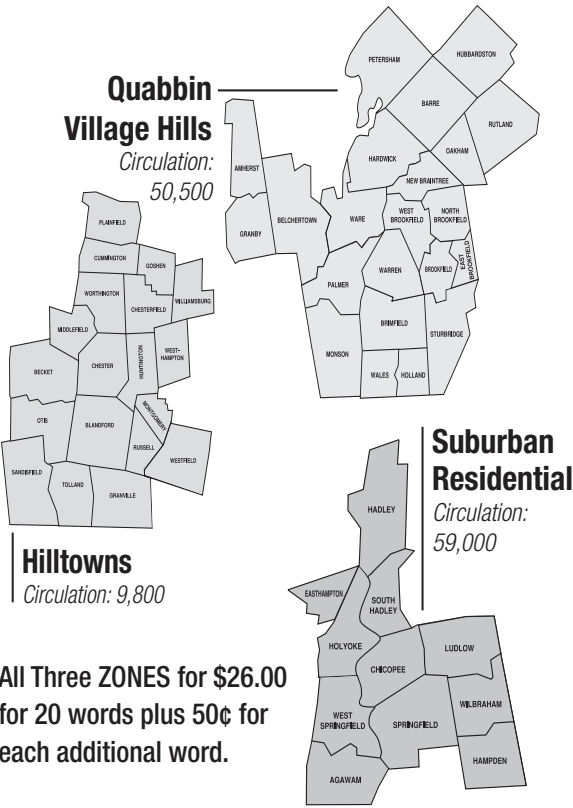
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**Town of Hampden Zoning Board of Appeals**  
The Hampden Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 6 PM** in the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, MA, for those interested in the petition of Eric Ainsworth, owner of EDA Sports, to appeal the decision of the Building Inspector regarding a Cease and Desist order dated October 15, 2024 under Section 7.12 (4) "No noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odors, heat, glare, unsightliness or other nuisance is produced" related to his home occupation located at 308 Somers Road. The Board will also hold a visit of the site, including weapon discharge sound comparisons, on February 19, 2025 at 1 PM at 308 Somers Road, Hampden. The public may attend but may not comment or ask questions at this visit.  
The petition and related materials are on file in the Town Clerk's office and may be viewed during normal business hours.  
For the Board,  
L. Jed Berliner, Chair  
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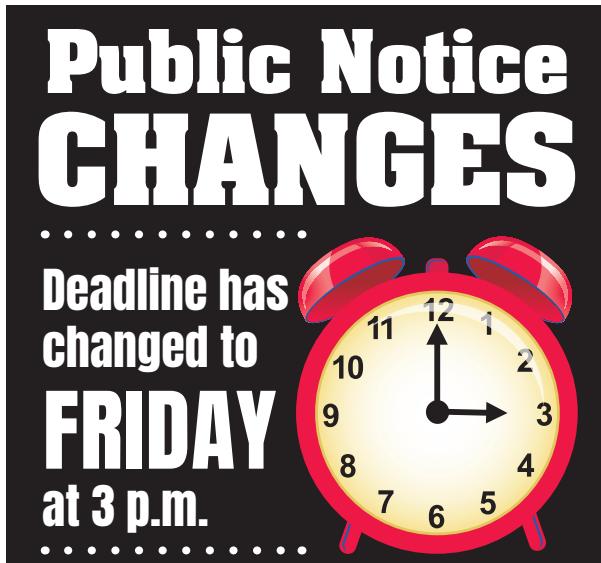
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To all interested persons:  
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Laura E Farrell of Wilbraham, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.  
The Petitioner requests that: **Laura E Farrell of Wilbraham, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without 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 02/24/2025.** 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 CODE (MUPC)**  
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. **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.  
Date: January 27, 2025  
**Rosemary A Saccomani**, Register of Probate  
02/06/2025  
**Town of Hampden Notice of Public Hearing**  
The Hampden Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday,

February 26, 2025 at 6:30 PM in the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, MA on the application of Hampden Veterinary Clinic Realty, LLC (28 Somers Road) for a Special Permit with Site Plan Approval under Section 6, Table of Use Regulation 4.26, for the expansion of the existing parking lot located at 28 Somers Road within the Business District. The properties are currently owned by Hampden Veterinary Clinic Realty, LLC, Dr. Penny Peck (28 Somers Road, Parcel 12-038-000) and 16 Somers Road, LLC (16 Somers Road, Parcel 12-039-000). Information related to this application is on file in the Town Clerk's Office and is available for review by the public during normal business hours.  
Madison Pixley, Chair  
Hampden Planning Board  
02/06, 02/13/2025  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This ad is pursuant to MA Gen. Law Ch.255, Sec. 39A as of **February 21, 2025** the following motor vehicle will be for sale to satisfy a garage keepers lien:  
Vehicle :  
**2014 BMW XI**  
VIN:WBAVLIC59EVY17128  
COLOR: Gray  
LKO: Ludero Monterio  
67 Fuller St Apt 1  
Brockton MA 02301  
R & S Assoc. Inc

PO Box 543  
Wilbraham MA 01095  
413-596-4374  
02/06, 02/13, 02/20/2025  
**Wilbraham Community Preservation Committee**  
**Annual Public Hearing**  
The Wilbraham Community Preservation Committee will hold its Annual Public Hearing on **Thursday, February 13, at 6:00 PM** in the conference room at the Wilbraham Town Hall, 240 Springfield Street.  
The purpose of this hearing is to get input from the general public as it relates to Community Preservation efforts in Wilbraham in

the categories of Open Space, Historic Resources, Recreational Land and Community Housing. Members of other municipal boards and committees as well as Town employees are also welcome to attend. This hearing will be followed by a regular meeting of the Community Preservation Committee. The agenda for the hearing/meeting will be posted on the Town Hall outdoor bulletin board and on the Town's website at <https://www.wilbraham-ma.gov/> at least 48 hours prior to the meeting time and date.  
02/06/2025



**Public Notice CHANGES**  
Deadline has changed to **FRIDAY at 3 p.m.**



# SENIORS

## Monthly Highlights for February at the Hampden Senior Center:

HAMPDEN – The following programs will occur at the senior center on Allen Street in the coming weeks.

The Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens offer their sincere thanks to the sponsors who donated to the January 2025 Calendar Raffle Fundraiser. Because of the generous donations we received from our sponsors, 100% of the proceeds, which totaled \$2,380.00 will go towards the needs of the Senior Center.

Please consider supporting these local businesses.

Rick Green Insurance, La Cucina di Hampden House, John Flynn, Bobbi Grant, Tom Farrow, Architecture Environment Life, Inc., Mane Event, Ferrindino Maple, Kinderhook Flowers & Gifts, Rice Fruit Farm, Rediker Software, Bilton's Mountain-side Orchard, Lou's Bagel Nook, Hampden Beauty Nails, Hampden Liquors, Mountain View Restaurant, Reid's Corner, Chet & Son Painting, Vermette Family, Howarth Family, Joan & Mike Shea, Fox Glove Antiques, The Nest, Quabog Country Club, and those sponsors who wish to remain anonymous.

Thank you to all who purchased calendars, and supported the Hampden Senior Center, and Congratulations to all the Calendar Raffle Winners. All winners have been notified.

### WARMING HEARTS PROGRAM for Homebound Older Adults

Do you know an older adult in Hampden who is homebound, and could use some mid-winter cheer?

Call to let us know who they are! Our warming hearts deliveries are a small way to let people know we are thinking of them and that we are here should they need anything. Deliveries will take place in February and include soups, treats, games, and more. Interested in delivering? Please call 566-5588

and speak with Wendy

### Elms College Nursing Students

will be here on Thursdays, starting Feb. 6, from 9:15 am to 12:00 pm.

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

### Valentine's Day Luncheon

Friday, Feb. 14 at Noon

Come and enjoy a delicious meal of Chicken Cordon Bleu, Parslied Carrots, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Wheat Dinner Roll, and a Chocolate Dessert provided by GSSSI. Entertainment provided by Baird Souls, Soulful Rockin' acoustic memories WITH A KICK!

Cost is \$5 per person (\$3 suggested donation to GSSSI for meal/\$2 for entertainment).

Please call 566-5588 starting February 3rd to reserve your seat. Space is limited.

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

PICK-UP is on Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 9:30 am.

D & R Farm offers fresh produce once a month, from January through June.

FREE with SNAP/HIP if you qualify! If you do not qualify for SNAP/HIP, you may purchase a share for \$20 cash each month.

Please let us know if you need your shares delivered.

New applications are required. If interested, contact Wendy at 566-5588 to get your application in! Shares are limited.

### STCC Dental Hygiene Students

will be here on Thursday, Feb. 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Stop by their table to learn about the im-

portance of oral health.

### Common Threads Led by Joan Tompkins, PhD

New Time, Mondays from 11 a.m. to Noon – Newcomers will meet at 10:30 am.

We invite you to join us as we share many things such as:

- Loneliness vs Feeling Lonely
- Adapting to Life Changes
- Finding purpose for our life as Seniors
- Bereavement as well as Joyous Moments

There is no charge to join this group. All are welcome. Please call 566-5588 to reserve your seat.

### Reiki, anyone?

Scheduling appointments for Friday, Feb. 7.

Lisa will be here on the first Friday of every month.

Reiki (ray-key) is a safe and gentle therapy that involves placing hands on or near a fully clothed person to promote healing by improving the flow-of-energy in the body.

Lisa Zizza is a Level 3 certified Reiki Master in the Usui Tradition.

Cost is \$30 for a 30-minute session or \$60 for a 60-minute session (recommended). By appointment only.

Lisa is offering \$10 off your first session. If interested, please call Lisa directly at 413-455-6990.

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

12-week session through March 26. New Students Welcome!

Tuesdays, 2:15 pm to 3 p.m.

Learn about balance and how it impacts overall health and wellness. Get tips on strength training and cardiovascular endurance to increase mobility and flexibility.

Cost is \$6 per class. Please call 566-5588 to reserve your spot.

### "African Drumming" with Jason

12-week session through March 28. New Students Welcome!

Fridays, 2:15 to 3:15 p.m.

Cost is \$7 per class. Space is limited (call ahead for availability). Please call 566-5588 to reserve your spot.

### Making Music with Sue

New 12-week session begins Feb. 24 through May 19.

Mondays, Noon to 1 p.m. - Beginner Ukulele and Recorder

Mondays, 1:15 to 2:30 p.m. - Ensemble Class (Ukulele, Recorder, Percussion, & Vocals) Cost is \$60 for the 12-week session if paid in full and receive two free classes, or \$6 per class (call ahead for availability).

Please pay cash or make checks payable directly to: Susan McHand

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

### "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.

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

Thank you to those who donated liquid hand soap last month. Every month we will target a different item to help fill our shelves to provide non-food items to SNAP recipients.

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

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

TEXT "GUIDE" TO 866-583-4640

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

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 Kathy Esser 348-3803	 Sue Rheame 478-0671	 Dot Lortie 478-1940	 Tom Avezzie 218-7991
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 Dawn Rodgers 478-2605	 Nick Ferrara 386-4523	 Eileen O'Sullivan 505-9244	 John Mollenbrey 427-5176
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 Zoe Czaplicki 519-9224	 Linda Alston 246-8616	 Steve Lortie 427-4122	 Kathi Calabrese 374-5867	 Shari Lokoy 218-8811	 Maria D'Angelantonio 575-2898	 Luci Giguere 575-2837	 Ann Paquette 626-6871	 Ann Marie Martin 206-1161	 Sandy Wegrzyn 519-1056	 Art Ferrara 348-5827	 Alyssa Rhodes 896-9269	 Chrissy Albano 374-6254
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### CALL US FOR DETAILS ON ANY OF THESE PROPERTIES

SINGLE FAMILY LISTINGS				
STATUS	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	LIST PRICE	SOLD PRICE
ACT	2 Anna Marie Lane, East Longmeadow	8 room, 4 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$899,900	
ACT	313 Bennett Rd., Hampden	7 room, 3 bed, 2f, 1h bath Cape	\$545,000	
ACT	70 Moody St, Ludlow	4 room, 2 bed, 1f, 0h bath Ranch	\$255,000	
ACT	210 Moulton Hill Rd., Monson	7 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Colonial	\$450,000	
ACT	170 Blanche S., Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Ranch	\$364,900	
ACT	21 Mountainbrook Rd., Wilbraham	7 room, 4 bed, 2f, 0h bath Colonial	\$460,999	
CTG	117 Buckingham St., Springfield	10 room, 7 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$269,900	
CTG	27 Oakland St, Wilbraham	8 room, 4 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$489,900	
UAG	8 Andrew Cir, Hampden	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Ranch	\$729,900	
UAG	299 Stony Hill Rd., Wilbraham	8 room, 4 bed, 2f, 0h bath Antique	\$374,900	
UAG	495-497 Springfield St., Wilbraham	9 room, 4 bed, 2f, 0h bath Colonial, Cottage	\$499,900	
SLD	28 Roosevelt Ave., Agawam	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Ranch	\$289,900	\$289,900
SLD	5 Granger Dr., Agawam	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Ranch	\$389,900	\$420,000
SLD	60 Anvil St, Agawam	7 room, 3 bed, 2f, 1h bath Cape	\$529,900	\$531,000
SLD	322 Elm St., East Longmeadow	7 room, 3 bed, 1f 1h bath, Colonial	\$345,000	\$345,000
SLD	55 Devonshire Ter., East Longmeadow	7 room, 3 bed, 2f, 1h bath Ranch	\$639,900	\$650,000
SLD	577 Converse St., Longmeadow	7 room, 4 bed, 3f, 0h bath Cape	\$479,900	\$480,000
SLD	55 Norman St., Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$274,900	\$275,000
SLD	152 Carroll St., Springfield	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Cape	\$279,000	\$289,000
SLD	5 Olney Ave., Springfield	5 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Raised Ranch	\$335,000	\$335,000
SLD	23 Rachel St., Springfield	7 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$365,000	\$360,000
SLD	28 Maple St, Wilbraham	6 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$419,000	\$394,000
SLD	218 Mountain Rd., Wilbraham	8 room, 4 bed, 2f, 0h bath Antique	\$599,000	\$545,000
CONDOMINIUM LISTINGS				
NEW	101 Mulberry St., U:502, Springfield	3 room, 1 bed, 1f, 0h bath Mid-Rise	\$84,999	
ACT	5 Southwood Cir., U:5, Hampden	4 room, 2 bed, 2f, 0h bath Garden	\$399,900	
ACT	308 Miller St., U:17, Ludlow	4 room, 2 bed, 2f, 0h bath Garden, Half-Duplex	\$408,000	
UAG	270 Nassau Dr., U:270, Springfield	4 room, 2 bed, 1f, 0h bath Garden	\$224,900	
MULTI FAMILY LISTINGS				
UAG	15 Page Ct, Chicopee	2 unit, 13 total rooms, 4 total bedrooms 2 Family	\$435,000	
UAG	13-19 South St., Palmer	4 unit, 18 total rooms, 9 total bedrooms 4 Family	\$379,000	
SLD	326 East St., Chicopee	2 unit, 12 total rooms, 6 total bedrooms 2 Family - 2 Units Up/Down	\$349,900	\$360,000
COMMERCIAL LISTINGS				
ACT	599-609 Page Blvd., Springfield	3278 SqFt Mixed Use Building	\$950,000	
UAG	2703 Boston Rd., Wilbraham	Commercial Building	\$385,000	

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