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Kevin Welsh is raising awareness for Long COVID

By Kristin Rivers
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WILBRAHAM - Kevin Welsh is raising awareness for Long COVID, letting others know they are not alone.

Welsh, 33, is a lifelong resident of Wilbraham and got COVID for the first time on October 1, 2023. He was an academic advisor and professor at Southern New Hampshire University at the time and, before the pandemic, was a teacher at Minnechaug Regional High School.

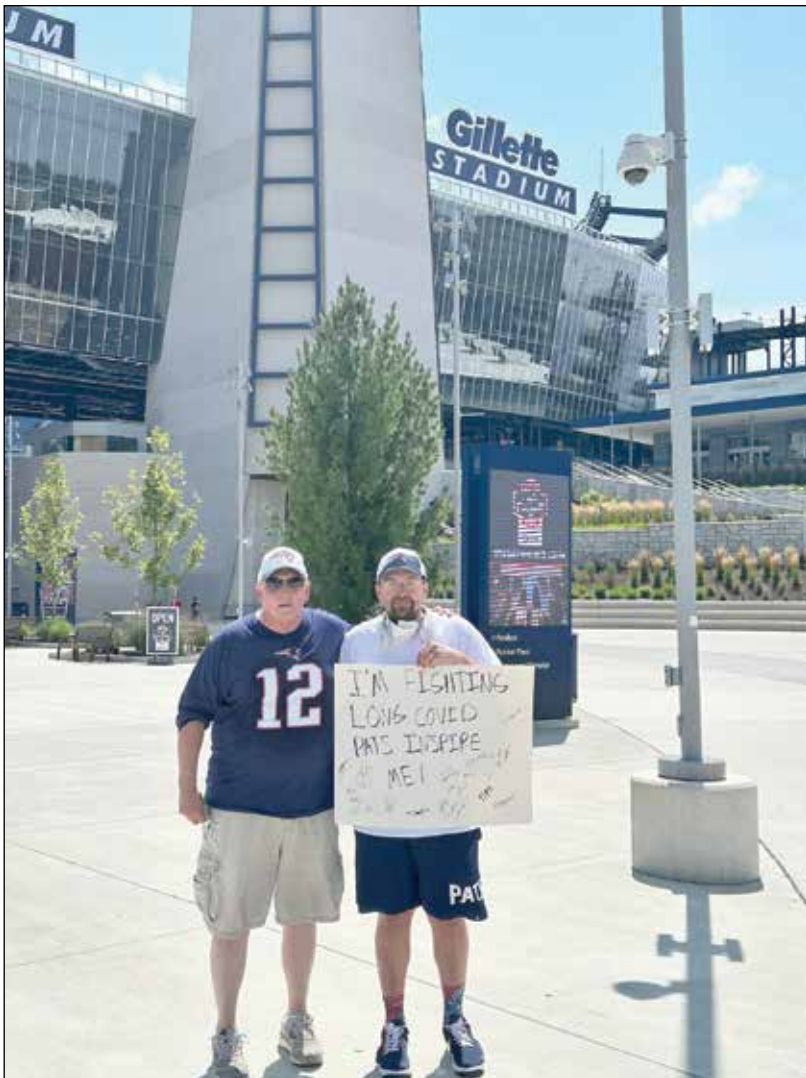
"I went the whole time without getting it. We had been keeping up with our vaccinations, we were doing everything we were supposed to be doing, but it gets ya. It gets everybody at some point, so I got it," Welsh said. "I wasn't hospitalized, but I was mostly really sick and it just never got better. Usually people with a COVID infection, a week to 10 days they're back on their feet. We got three, four, five weeks down the line and the only thing that was better was I wasn't testing positive anymore."

Welsh still had all the symptoms, including loss of taste and smell, fever, body aches, debilitating fatigue, cough and respiratory and cognitive problems. He, also, experiences vocal problems as due to the inflammation from the virus, the vocal folds in his throat "are actively closing off my airway covering my voice box."

"I've had three rounds of Botox injections into my throat to try to help and they haven't helped. I have another one set for the end of the month and that's the maximum they can do," Welsh said.

He elaborated on the debilitating fatigue he experiences.

"I now get what is called non-restorative sleep which means I'm asleep but my body does not re-



Photos courtesy of Kevin Welsh

Kevin Welsh, pictured right, stands with his father outside Gillette Stadium, the home of the New England Patriots, with a sign reading "I'm Fighting Long COVID. Pats Inspire Me!" that was signed by numerous players. Welsh is raising awareness for Long COVID.

charge its batteries essentially. In order to get through the day I have to take several naps and there is almost a narcolepsy aspect to it as I will fall asleep mid-conversation, mid-bite of food or really any random time," Welsh said. "I went from someone

that just needed a few hours sleep to have a great day, to someone that would sleep 24 hours a day if I could. Since I've been battling Long COVID I crave sleep like people

Please see **COVID**, page 4

Group offers space to discuss important issues

By Amanda Munson
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM – The Great Decisions Discussion Group had their second March meeting at the library on March 12, showcasing topics such as the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European security, with a brief video and group discussion following. Great Decisions is America's largest discussion program on world affairs, in which the library has been covering eight critical issues that were subjects of weekly

conversations.

The Foreign Policy Association mission is to serve as a catalyst for developing awareness, understanding and informed opinion



Submitted photo
A picture of The Great Decisions Foreign Policy Association briefing book that attendees were encouraged to read, which was offered by the library to check out.

on U.S. foreign policy and global issues, as defined on the FPA website.

The last two meetings were on

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MassDOT hosts virtual public hearing on Route 20

By Kristin Rivers
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krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - MassDOT hosted a virtual public hearing on March 6 for a proposed Route 20 Road Reconstruction Project.

The hearing presented a design for resurfacing and related work to improve the safety and function of Route 20. It would be accomplished through improving roadway pavement condition, improving intersection capacity and safety and complying with Healthy Transportation Directives that focus on increasing bicycling, transit and walking options by including wide shoulders, bike lanes and sidewalks.



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

Route 20 was the subject of a virtual public hearing hosted by MassDOT on March 6 to discuss a proposed road reconstruction project.

The Highlights

The presentation was led by Joshua Bartus, project manager

Please see **ROUTE 20**, page 11

Night at the Y, Friday night fun for teens

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On March 8, the Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth (HWP4Y) Coalition teamed up with the Scantic Valley YMCA and the Wilbraham Fire Department to host a teens' night called "Night at the Y."

The YMCA was closed early that Friday so teens could come in and have a fun time with their friends. There was a dodgeball tournament, board games and even a workout class.

The fire department also gave a CPR demonstration and gave out fire hats.

The event was inspired after a survey went out to HWRSD students, asking them what kinds of events they would like to be a part of. Then, the coalition reached out to the YMCA and teenagers were able to have a fun night together with friends.

Bree Berneche, the director of the HWP4Y Coalition for over two years now, spoke on the event.

"We want teens in the communities to know that we have heard them," Berneche said. "We've asked and they've shared that they feel that there's a lot to do for kids and families, but they feel like there's not as much to do for teenagers, and so, we heard that feedback and we wanted to provide something for them. So one: we hope that the teenagers feel that we heard their concerns and we really want to be there for them. And two: we hope that they can take away the main message, which is that you do not need substances to

Please see **YMCA**, page 5

Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen
Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth Coalition ambassadors Brooke Johnson and Demetrius Holmes pose at their table in this fun photo.



Selectboard reviews updates on HWRSD regional agreement discussion

By Kristin Rivers
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HAMPDEN - The Selectboard reviewed the latest on the school district's regional agreement on March 10.

Chair Don Davenport explained the HWRSD Planning Subcommittee met on March 4 and that "most of the things have been agreed upon in the regional agreement."

"The outstanding item right now is if the Wilbraham

Middle School becomes a regional school, the sharing of the capital costs of any improvements that need to be done there," Davenport said.

When Selectboard Member John Flynn asked if there was any differentiation "between prior and ongoing or future," Davenport replied, "There is not right now."

At the subcommittee meeting, Davenport explained he brought up the point that "there was a number of capital needs that had not been met," including a feasibility

study.

"In the feasibility study it said, 'In which school would be used,' they said that either school needed a number of capital improvements if it was going to be a consolidated school because you get the increased student population and there was a number of things that needed to be done, and so there was quite a discussion about surrounding that," Davenport said. "It was determined that the best avenue right now would be to have the two Selectboards

meet in order to kind of hash out what would be reasonable and fair for both towns."

Davenport said this joint meeting was originally established for March 11, but Wilbraham's Select Board encouraged having legal counsels for both towns in attendance.

"So, I at that point said, 'Well, I have to check with my board about that because I can't make the determination on my own' and we canceled the meeting," Davenport said. "So, that's where we are."

Davenport said he, personally, thought legal counsel was not needed.

"None of this has been adversarial and I don't think it should be adversarial, but I do think we need to hash this out," Davenport said.

Flynn agreed legal counsel wasn't needed.

"I think you're right. We've had a good relationship having meetings before with them. I go back, Don, we had that meeting at the Wilbraham police station two years ago with both Finance

Committees," Flynn said. "I think it's a good chance for us to sit down and sooner rather than later."

After Flynn noted upcoming meetings in town, Davenport said he would check on an available date and Selectboard Member Craig Rivest would also check his schedule.

Rivest also agreed that legal counsel was not needed for the meeting.

Please see **BOARD**, page 8

FinCom approves four CPC applications

One application postponed

By Kristin Rivers
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WILBRAHAM - The Finance Committee approved four Community Preservation Project applications presented by the Community Preservation Committee on March 12. Tracey Plantier, chair of the Community Preservation Committee, explained six applications were received this year and five of them were voted to move forward for the Annual Town Meeting. The Finance Committee later approved the first four applications and postponed the fifth one to the next meeting pending more information.

The Applications
Application number one for the town office's Reserve was for Historic Records at \$50,000. "They kind of wanted to take it a chunk at a time. It's a very, very regular ask to do preservation of town records. Deb was nice enough to show the committee the records that are being preserved in town hall. We spent a site visit at town hall a week or so ago," Plantier said. Application Two was for the Old Meeting House and Carriage House, which Plantier said was a capital project to do lead abatement on both buildings. The figure was \$147,000. "Fixing dried boards, reattaching gutters where they're having some problems with water and repainting both buildings," Plantier said. "The biggest part of that budget is the lead paint abatement." The third application concerned disc golf and was submitted by the Parks & Recreation Department for the

disc golf group. This figure is \$19,500. "It is a pavilion. They actually say in the application gazebo but, really, pavilion if you saw the pictures of it. Benches and a brand new kiosk. The kiosk there's kind of in rough shape and that kiosk will be shared by the disc golf group as well as Open Space & Recreation to do maps and trail maps and announcements and hunting notices, etc.," Plantier said. When Joe Lawless asked if it was going to be building the gazebo or plans for building one, Plantier clarified the plan was to buy a pavilion kit and use volunteers "to put it together and build it and install it." "It's a pretty small estimate for the pavilion," Plantier said. After Jennifer Leydon asked about maintenance--including mowing--, Plantier said how the disc golf group does a lot of money collections and donations for playing, tournaments and pay for the mowing. "I think they did have some volunteers in the past, but that seems to have gone by the wayside. So, my understanding is they're using that to pay for mowing. They have a deal with the town to pay for a Porta Potty. They go, I guess, 50% in for paying for the Porta Potty in the area," Plantier said. "Relatively minor expenses. They came in front of us and basically said, 'The money's not really there to do capital projects in the location' but they're trying to pick up for small stuff." On Leydon's next question about being responsible for maintaining the gazebo, Plantier replied she would not be surprised if this came back and noted how the disc golf group "do a lot of hands-on work there" including trimming trees so there's open space.

"It's kind of a combined maintenance. So, I think anything that's in anyone's wheelhouse to fix. There's a lot of volunteer effort going on, but if it's not, there's probably going to be some new requests," Plantier said. When Vice Chair Kevin Hanks asked about a maintenance-free material for the gazebo, Plantier said the committee talked to the group about that too. "Make sure you get something that's going to last. We didn't talk specific materials," Plantier said. "So, we just said, 'Don't get something cheap. Just find something solid that's going to last.' There's no sense in going back out there instead of having to replace it in 10 years." On the benches--a question asked by Patrick Kiernan--Plantier said they would be around the disc golf course. "They do have some that they hand-built. If you ever walk the disc golf course, there's some lumber tree trunks and stuff that have been used. But, they're going to go formal benches. They have to be permanent benches I did tell them that. That's part of CPA Funding, they have to be permanent. They can't be able to be moved, so they can be used for resting at the different locations," Plantier said. Kiernan asked this next. "So, their intent is to be used for an athlete or user, not a spectator?" Kiernan said. Plantier replied, "A spectator would be welcome to use them," but the intention would, also, be mostly for an athlete or user. On Kiernan's additional questions, Plantier said she could follow up on them and get back to him. Application number four for Amy's Sparkle Park would be for adding features. The amount is \$51,861.20. "So, they're just extending

the use of it. I guess it's extremely popular. Just keeping it up-to-date and getting a few more features to it," Plantier said. The fifth application focused on the Spec Pond walking path for \$25,000. "I believe it was 100 feet of walking path that connects to an ADA part of the playground area that's missing right now. So, it's 100 feet of walking path to connect the ADA kind of path that's there and it sounds like it's going to connect to the dock area, where the fishing dock area is," Plantier said. Xiomara Albán DeLobato asked this. "Are you saying the ADA just so that we're ADA-compliant?" DeLobato said. Plantier said she didn't believe the applicant said it needed to be ADA-compliant. "It was just in the description that it was going to connect to the ADA portion of the sidewalk that's there," Plantier said. CPC Member Gordon Allen added this. "But I'm sure that the portions are going to put in is more in the ADA home. That's the reason for it," Allen said. Mike Mazzuca noted the \$25,000 and asked about the material to be used. "I'm just trying to wrap my head around the expense for the length," Mazzuca said. Allen replied he thought the applicant put that figure in "as the highest that it would possibly be." "Chances are that it would be much less than that. Otherwise, I believe it would be concrete," Allen said. Plantier also discussed a last-minute application received by the CPC and addressed the rejected application. Readers can find that story in this week's edition.

Hiking Club March Hikes

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Hiking Club has oodles of March hikes, as several were rescheduled from February because of harsh weather or road conditions. And the Wilbraham Senior Hiking Club has two March hikes. As always, these hikes are all "weather permitting". The Wilbraham Hiking Club Hikes are:
March 23 at 1 - Springfield Reservoir in Ludlow
March 26 at 10 - Shenipsit State Forest Soapstone Mnt, Yellow, Brown and Webster Rd Loop - Somers, CT
March 27 at 10 -Mass Central Rail Trail in New Braintree
March 31 at 10 - Mitteneague Park in West Springfield
For more info on these hikes (and possibly additional hikes), use the club's TeamReach App

or write to wilbrahamhiking@gmail.com. Members who use the TeamReach App are notified when hikes are canceled or rescheduled. and the Wilbraham Senior Center Hikes are:
March 28 at 9:15 - Laughing Brook in Hampden
To register for these hikes and for information about snowshoeing with the Senior Center hikers or upcoming group trips and to register for Senior Center hikes, contact Jen at 596-8379.

Wilbraham Earth Day 2025

WILBRAHAM – Keep Wilbraham Beautiful is excited to announce this year's Wilbraham Earth Day Clean Up Event. The event will take place on April 12 at Fountain Park from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and everyone is welcome to attend. Volunteers are also needed! To learn more, visit <https://sites.google.com/view/wilbraham-earth-day-clean-up/home?authuser=0>.

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ALL ABOUT TOWN

Get to know your town employee: Rebecca Moriarty

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN – 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 Rebecca Moriarty, executive director at the Hampden Senior Center.

What do you do in your position?

In my position I am responsible for the day-to-day operations of the senior center. I prepare the annual budget, apply for grants, supervise staff and maintain the senior center building.

The most rewarding part of my position is meeting the people who come through the doors daily, listening to their stories and connecting them with programs and services.

Describe an average day at the office?

The best part about this job is that no two days are ever the same. Most days you will find me at my desk taking care of administrative tasks or meeting with someone for a SHINE insurance appointment.

Other days I'm moving tables and chairs and setting up for a program or I'm in the kitchen cooking a meal or a delicious dessert with Outreach Coordinator, Wendy Cowles.

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

I was raised in Wilbraham and graduated from Minnechaug Regional High School. I then went on to receive my bachelor's degree in Gerontology from Quinnipiac College (now University) in Hamden, CT.

I started working as the Senior Center Director here in November of 2002. In 2007, I became a Certified



Becky Moriarty

fied Senior Center Director through the Massachusetts Association of Council on Aging and Senior Center Directors (MCOA) and I have been a Certified SHINE Counselor for over 15 years.

In 2016 I received a Business West 40 Under Forty Award and was chosen as the MCOA Director of the Year in 2022. I continue to attend workshops and training to maintain my certifications and be able to provide the best programs and services available.

I have been a resident of East Longmeadow for the last 20 years.

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

In a small town like Hampden, all town departments are supportive of one another and work together to be sure the needs of Hampden's residents are met. In April, Jane Budynkiewicz from the Board of Health will be retiring from her position.

Jane has always been the person I call with questions on just about anything related to the town and she always knows or finds the answer for me.

Jane will be missed, and I wish her all the very best in her retirement.

What is the most fulfilling part of your job?

The most fulfilling part of the job is meeting and helping people. From Medicare, MassHealth and

other insurance questions to referring someone to the Outreach Department for Fuel Assistance, SNAP, Brown Bag, Farm Share, in home help and so much more, at the end of the day it's nice to know that I've made a difference in someone's life.

What inspired you to take on the position?

I knew from a very young age that I wanted to work with older adults, thanks to a great relationship with my grandparents. When I first heard about this position I was working at a job where I sat behind a desk and didn't have any face-to-face contact with people.

This position allows me to have one-on-one interactions with older adults and allows me the opportunity to provide programs and services to allow people to live and thrive in the community well into the later stages of life. When I started, I was the youngest senior center director in the state, but I took a chance and have happily been here for almost 22 years.

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

The Hampden Senior Center is located at 104 Allen Street in Hampden. The hours are Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

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crave food.”

Other symptoms include developing blood problems he never had before, high blood pressure and becoming B12 anemic.

After many visits to his primary care, Welsh said it got to the point where they said “We can't really help you,” sending him to a Long COVID clinic in Hartford, CT. There, he tried medications and nebulizers, physical therapy, speech therapy and cognitive therapy, which didn't work.

“So I started there around December 2023 and then—and now—it's still so new that there's still not, really, a ton that's known about Long COVID. It's mostly just trying to treat symptomatically and it doesn't really work,” Welsh said.

He later got a phone call from the physical therapy that the clinic in Connecticut was closing after “the doctor put in her resignation and didn't tell any of the patients.”

After searching throughout Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island and the Boston area, Welsh went to Massachusetts General Hospital where he's been ever since, with a team of seven or eight doctors who are heads of their departments. He now goes there several times a month to try to find answers, taking part in studies and experimental trials.

“Once we got into Boston with these doctors, they were very clear from day one that if I was not fully vaccinated and boosted, then my infection would have killed me,” Welsh said.

After getting Long COVID, Welsh shared he had to resign from his job at SNHU and could no longer do things such as going out to a restaurant.

“Life has paused. Everybody, the world, has gone back to normal. My world has not and we don't know when it will. There's a good chance these are things I deal with for the rest of my life,” Welsh said.

Another difficult thing for Welsh is when he wears a mask when going to the grocery store, sharing the reactions he and others experienced.

“The looks, comments, that I get for wearing a mask in public and coughing and being winded. COVID is still so politicized that people—anyone who goes out in public with a mask—whether it's me, my family, other people, we get criticized for it and it's terrible. It shouldn't be that way. At the end of the day, how does somebody doing something to protect themselves impact somebody else's everyday life?” Welsh said.

Welsh added he kept this to himself “for a long time,” but decided to share his story to raise awareness.

“There's 30 million people in the country dealing with Long COVID. Some people



Photos courtesy of Kevin Welsh

The Team Welsh wristbands supporters wear to support Kevin Welsh, who's battling Long COVID.

have been sick since COVID began in 2020. So, it's something that needs to be talked about more, researched more, supported more,” Welsh said.

Since sharing his story, people have reached out to Welsh with their own stories and wristbands in the gray and teal LONG COVID colors that read, “Team Welsh” on one side with a ribbon and “Fight Long COVID” on the other side, were created by him and his former team at SNHU to stay connected and garner support. His doctors at MassGeneral also wear the wristbands and have had people reach out to them to learn more.

They are also sponsored by a local insurance agency owned by his father.

“It means the world to me that people want them, that people want to show me the support in what I've done,” Welsh said. “Everybody that's gotten one has taken a picture of themselves wearing it, so I have a collage at home full of pictures that shows me I'm not doing this alone.”

This support has also expanded to the New England Patriots, who partnered with Team Welsh last summer after Welsh reached out to the team about his story and wanting to do something for his father's 70th birthday. The team hosted the family during training camp “and went above and beyond to make sure I was safe” from a personal valet to a special roped-off area so people weren't around him.

After the practice, the players came over to Welsh, who had a sign saying, “I'm fighting Long COVID. Patriots Inspire Me!” Numerous players signed it and also gave him a signed football, later spending time talking with him.

When Welsh reached out to the team again to thank them and shared about the wristbands, they responded within an hour asking for 50 to 75 wristbands for the players and staff.

“So, the entire Patriots roster, the coaching staff, the Kraft Family--the owners--all have these wristbands and a letter from me expressing my appreciation for their support and telling them my story so everyone there knows my story,” Welsh said. “In the next week or so, we're sending out

enough for the roster of the Celtics.”

To date, Welsh added, almost 300 of these wristbands have been distributed, with more sought as people learn his story. The prior and current presidential administrations have, also, received these wristbands.

“It has nothing to do with politics. It's about the position in the country, to have the most powerful person in the country aware of Long COVID and the fight

that goes along with it. I don't care what party you're on. Just to have that support is incredible,” Welsh said.

He, also, has a goal of doing a fundraising event with the wristbands and community to support Long COVID research, expressing gratitude to his family—including his parents--the community and supporters for their love and support.

One thing Welsh wishes people knew about Long COVID was this: the impact on every person is different.

“I have met many people through this that have developed things like Type 1 Diabetes from Long COVID. I've met people that had to get pacemakers because of Long COVID, but they don't have the cognitive issue, they don't have the vocal issue, they don't have the blood problem. So, it's going to present itself differently to every person that has it, which is why it's so hard for people to diagnose it,” Welsh said.

He also encouraged people to keep pushing for support from their doctors or to seek a specialist to get the support and help they need.

“It's going to take you time to find the doctors, but there are doctors out there that will believe you, what you're fighting and they will. They will help you,” Welsh said.

His message for the community was this: to be kind and to remember the kindness that was shown during the pandemic “to everyone that was putting their lives in jeopardy for us” from the Amazon and UPS drivers to the grocery store workers.

Also, remember and support those struggling with COVID or Long COVID today and not to leave them behind.

“COVID has impacted our lives forever, and personally, for the community, I just know what this community is capable of. I've lived here my whole life. I've seen this community rally behind any number of great people and worthy causes and to know that there's some people already who now know the story are now getting my story out,” Welsh said. “I know that once it's read and out there, that I'm going to have the whole community supporting someone who's been raised and lived here for my entire life.”

To get your own Team Welsh wristband and learn more, email teamwelshlongcovid@gmail.com.

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Teenagers enjoy a game of UNO together during the Night at the Y at the Scantic Valley YMCA on March 7.

YMCA from page 1

have fun and to have a good time.”

Jackie Hafner, the com-

munity engagement coordina-
tor for the coalition, has been
with the HWP4Y since April
2024.

“There’s not many plac-
es to go as a young person



Jean Dirico taught the workout class and continues to tech workout classes at the YMCA.

Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen



Hampden-Wilbraham Partners For Youth Coalition members Colleen Goodreau, Jackie Hafner and Bree Berneche worked very hard to put together the Night at the Y.



Firefighters Jeff Witek, Kevin Brown, and Joshua C. Sterling from the Wilbraham Fire Department came to the Night at the Y to continue their initiative on empowering youth.

in Wilbraham or Hampden. And this was a great venue for them to sit down and chill and play cards or basketball and they said they wanted a place to go, so we were able to collaborate with the community,” Hafner said.

In attendance was Debbie Kelder, the executive director at the Scantic Valley YMCA, who has been with the organization for over 20 years.

“I was super excited about

this opportunity to partner with the with the Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth and offering a safe space to our teens to come and have a good time and enjoy each other’s company and be active,” Kelder said. “Having a space that’s all their own and not having our building open to the community, I think was a really good idea and great to do.”

Running the workout class

St. Cecilia Women’s Club April Meeting

WILBRAHAM – The St. Cecilia Women’s Club will host their next meeting on April 8.

It will be an Evening of Reflection with Fr. Douglas McGonagle.

Liturgy is at 5:30 p.m. followed by soup & sandwiches at 6 p.m.

Fr. McGonagle will be our guest speaker following mass and a light supper. Hope you can make it.

Please bring children’s clothing to this meeting for infants and toddlers in need.



A wall sit contest commenced that night, one of the many fun activities teens enjoyed.

was Jean Dirico. She teaches high intensity interval group fitness classes along with a Cardio Crush class at the YMCA. She has been teaching for 12 years.

“I love working with young adults and teenagers and there’s so much fun, so I was excited to meet some kids from town and show them how fitness can be fun,” Dirico said.

The Wilbraham Fire Department was also in attendance and enjoying the night, giving teenagers a CPR demonstration, giving out firefighter hats and empowering youth.

Firefighter and EMS coordinator Jeff Witek shared that he has also been to a few coalition meetings in the past.

“Every event they have, they invite us out and do fire safety, digital little CPR training, all that good stuff,” Witek said. “I have kids myself so you’ve got to follow them up through programs and like that the coalition does.”

The HWP4Y stressed they want to raise awareness and are open to everyone and they are always here to help if people need it.

Next up, HWP4Y plans to have a Glow in the Dark Volleyball event for the Wilbraham Middle School in April, so watch for more information. They also plan to get student input to organize a bigger spring event very soon.

To learn more about HWP4Y, visit hwp4y.org.



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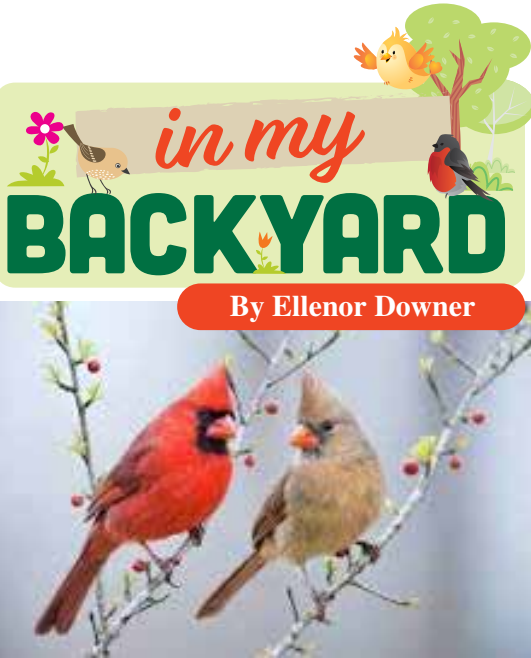
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VIEWPOINTS



Male and female cardinal

I received an email from a Worthington resident, who reported the one male “red bird” in his yard all winter.

He said, “I feel like I know him and throw seeds to a special place he likes. His habit of showing up in the dim light of dusk and dawn almost makes him shine. He’s real quiet right now, but I really look forward to hearing him as it warms up.”

The red bird is also known as the northern cardinal. The male cardinal is bright red with black around the base of its red beak. The female is grayish brown above with buffy color below. Her beak is reddish and she has dark around her bill, but not as black as the male.

Both sexes have crests and are 8 ½ inches long.

Although the Worthington resident said the cardinal was quiet now, soon he will sing a series of clear repeated whistles that vary and sound like “whoit whoit whoit, cheer, cheer, cheer.” The call is a metallic “chip.” Both male and female sing.

The female cardinal lays two to five buff white eggs with dark marks in a nest of twigs, bark strips, vines, leaves, rootlets and paper lined with fine grass and hair. They build their nest in dense shrubbery or among branches of small trees.

Bird watchers may witness mate feeding, a common ritual between a breeding pair. The male picks up a seed and brings it to the female. They touch beaks and his mate takes the offered seed. Mate feeding continues through egg laying and incubation.

Cardinals come to feeders. They feed either on the ground and come to platform style feeders. They prefer sunflower seeds, safflower seeds and cracked corn.

Tuesday morning I saw a female cardinal in a lilac bush. I love to see the male cardinal perched on a snow covered branch or ground especially after newly fallen snow. I have a pair of cardinals, which I usually see early in the morning or at dusk.

Red-winged blackbirds

The Worthington resident saw a red-winged blackbird at his feeder and heard them on snow shoe recent hike by a beaver pond. He said, “They don’t sound very confident and I wonder what they find down there with the pond totally frozen and the cat-tails denuded by the wind.” He said, “The arrival of redwings is exciting for me, as I consider them our first migratory returns.”

Bald eagle

In his email, the same resident wrote about seeing a bald eagle. He said, “Two weeks ago driving along the East Branch in Cummington, I saw an eagle lite in a dead tree, break off a small branch and fly off, hopefully to a new or repaired nest. It sure didn’t feel like spring then and even today [written March3] I

had zero degrees this morning.” He also reports pretty good numbers of goldfinches at his feeder along with the winter regulars.

Brimfield birds

On Feb. 19, I received an email from a Brimfield resident, who sends emails on a regular basis. He said, “Hope you survived our recent bout of nasty weather. Our driveway was cleared on Sunday evening and subsequently turned into a skating rink. Fortunately I had lots of sand and rock salt and a little calcium chloride on hand. Using all of that, I was able to get our cars up and out of the driveway. Of course I had to get the frozen garage doors unstuck before I could get the cars out of the garage.”

He took part in the Great Backyard Bird Count of Saturday and Sunday. He said, “I had nine species Saturday, things got a little more interesting on Sunday when there were 15 species seen including an adult sharp-shinned hawk that chased some junco into a quince bush (it missed) and a Carolina wren.”

Bluebirds

He had a pair of eastern bluebirds earlier in the day on Feb. 18 and later five bluebirds showed up, two males and three females. He said, “That’s the most we have ever seen in the yard. Previously we had seen a single bird a few times and a pair investigated a nesting box one year but were chased away by house wrens.”

Non-bird critters

During the snow/ice storm in February, my daughter and I saw a wet opossum digging in the snow for seeds while clearling my walk and driveway. On March 1, two of my grandchildren and I saw a porcupine in a tree while driving on our road.

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



Did we make a mistake starting my wife’s Social Security now?

Dear Rusty:

I hope we haven’t made a mistake.

My wife just applied for her Social Security benefit. She was born in May 1962 and the estimated amount of her benefit is \$1,280 per month. Her work income last year was \$5,616; however, mine was about \$65,000. I do not plan on taking my benefit until the age of 70 in July of 2027.

My worry now is about the penalty for earning too much. We figured that since her income was so low, we wouldn’t have to worry about that penalty, so we signed her up, and then it hit me: what if they look at my income, especially since our tax return is filed as Married Filing Jointly. Do we have a problem, or are they just going to look at her income to determine if there is a penalty? I hope I haven’t messed this up. Also, I think I read that any penalty you are assessed for earning too much is returned to you once you reach Full Retirement Age; is that true?

Signed: Uncomfortable Senior Citizen

Dear Uncomfortable Senior:

First, let me ease your anxiety – you haven’t “messed this up.” While it’s true that your income will be included when the IRS determines how much of your wife’s Social Security benefits are taxable, changing your IRS filing status is usually not wise. However, considering your combined income and your “married/jointly” IRS filing status, up to 85% of the SS benefits your wife receives during the tax year will be included as part of your overall taxable income as a married couple. Your wife’s monthly SS benefit is about \$1,280, so about \$13,000 annually will be included in your Adjusted Gross Income when you file your taxes. You can have income tax withheld from your wife’s SS benefit by filing IRS Form W-4V at your local SS office (you can have 7%, 10%, 12% or 22% withheld). Note your wife’s tax obligation for this year will be less because she will not get SS benefits for all of 2025.

The other thing you are concerned about is whether your income will be counted when determining if your wife will be subject to Social Security’s “Annual Earnings Test” and the answer to that is “no.” At her current earnings level (about \$5,600), your wife is well below the annual earnings limit (\$23,400 for 2025) for those col-

lecting early Social Security benefits. So, the AET will not apply and will not reduce your wife’s monthly Social Security benefit. FYI, if her earnings did exceed the annual earnings limit, it is true that some of the resulting penalty would be recovered after she reaches her full FRA of 67.

Note the distinction between “taxation of SS benefits” and the “annual earnings test” for those collecting early benefits. Taxation of benefits is always based on your joint income when filing married/ jointly, but the Annual Earnings Test looks only at your wife’s personal work earnings until she reaches her FRA.

As I expect you already know, by claiming now (at age 62 plus), your wife’s monthly SS retirement benefit will be permanently reduced (by about 26%). Until you later claim your SS benefit, your wife will receive her reduced personal SS retirement amount. But, when you claim, her benefit amount will be reassessed to see if she is also entitled to an incremental amount as your wife. If her SS entitlement at her FRA (even though she claimed at 62+) is less than 50% of your FRA entitlement, then her benefit will increase. However, she will not get the full 50% of your FRA entitlement because she claimed her own SS retirement benefit before her FRA (more likely, she will get about 34% of your FRA entitlement).

In the end, you really did not make a mistake by filing for your wife’s Social Security to start now. By the time you personally apply at age 70, your wife will have collected about \$46,000 in Social Security benefits which, I’m sure, will be helpful. And only a relatively modest amount of income tax will be paid on her Social Security benefits.

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

Sweet potatoes get my vote

My dad was a “meat and potatoes” kind of guy. Mashed, baked or fried, potatoes were his thing.

Growing up, we usually had potatoes most nights for dinner. Since I have been an adult, I don’t eat potatoes very often at all.

I often wonder if that particular Irish gene missed a generation, since I prefer the sweet potato over the regular potato any day of the week. Read on to learn all about this nutritional powerhouse.

According to www.nutritiondata.com, sweet potatoes are “low in sodium, and very low in saturated fat and cholesterol. They are also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6 and potassium, and a very good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and manganese.”

If these facts aren’t reason enough to try adding this veggie to your garden this growing season, delight in the fact that it is also a very pretty vine!

In fact, once I grew “sweet potato vine” in the planter boxes at Old Sturbridge Village. I didn’t know at the time that the variety I was growing also produced bountiful tubers. It was one of those obvious things that I just didn’t put together.

It’s kind of funny that when I attempted to grow them on purpose at home, they were an utter failure. By the time I peeled the thumb-size roots, there was literally nothing left to eat.

It is time for a refresher on sweet potato culture.

Sweet potatoes require a long growing season – somewhere between 90-150 days. The tender shoots are cold sensitive, and must be planted into the ground after all danger of frost has passed. In our area we use Memorial Day as our “frost-free date.”

Then, the edible root, aka the sweet potato, must be harvested be-

fore the first frost of fall. By my records, the first frost usually occurs in early to mid-October.

This equates to 100 days bare minimum of growing time.

You can purchase plants through the mail or try sprouting your own from sweet potatoes purchased from the grocery store.

Dick Raymond, author of my favorite gardening book of all time, “Garden Way’s Joy of Gardening” (Storey Publishing \$24.95) has some great tips for doing this: Seven or eight weeks prior to Memorial Day, simply cut the spuds in half lengthwise and lay them down in moist peat moss in a shallow tray. Cover with plastic wrap and place in a sunny window until sprouting occurs.

Slips should be separated and planted about six inches deep, twelve to fifteen inches apart from one another.

He advises to water well for the first two weeks; after that sweet potato plants are reportedly somewhat drought tolerant. When fertilizing, choose a formulation that is a bit lower in nitrogen, otherwise you will have lots of vines at the expense of sweet potatoes.

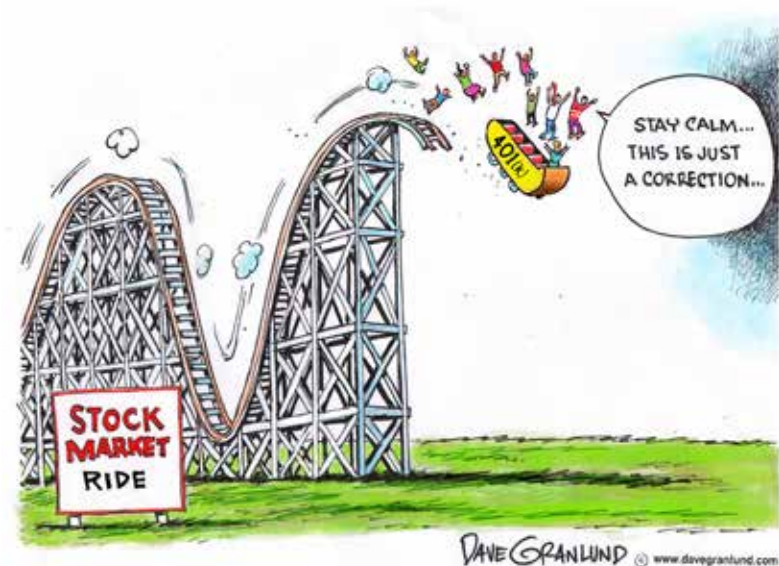
Dig up your bounty on a dry day, being extra careful not to damage the skin. Don’t leave them exposed to the sun for more than an hour and don’t wash them either.

Picky, aren’t they?

Fresh sweet potatoes aren’t all that sweet – a curing period of two weeks in the dark at 70-80 and at high humidity will bring out the great flavor we are accustomed to. Long-term storage should be at temperatures around 60 degrees.

To make sweet potato fries simply cut the root into thick wedges then toss them with seasoned olive oil (or a favorite salad dressing). Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for one

Please see **GARDEN**, page 15



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Correction Policy

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

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

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Wilbraham-Hampden Times welcomes readers to participate in this year’s election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to Wilbraham-Hampden Times, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to krivers@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that Thursday’s newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

For more information, call the editor at 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspaper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor’s Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in Wilbraham-Hampden Times.

Life in &

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

WILBRAHAM HAMPDEN

A COMMUNITY GALLERY

Battle of the Sumobots at TWB

Submitted photo and caption Samuel Kar Kin Lam
WMS students from the school's Robotics Club show off their sumobots at TWB: (L-R) back row: Michelle Kyei Ohemeng, Liam Shattuck, Emmett Shattuck, Liam Matthews, and Jason Cao; front row: Reid Blanchard, Willis Lam, Nolan Carney, Martin Garcia, and Ellen Di Nino.



COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

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

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



Wilbraham Women's Club inducts new members

Submitted photo and caption Sue Agnew
The Wilbraham Women's Club inducted three new members at its March meeting. (left to right) membership chair Pam Auslander, new members Marie Bienvenue, Chris Sagalyn, Marilyn Snyder, and club president Maureen Mikuszewski.



WFD recognizes kids for wearing helmets

While Fire Department staff was on the road on March 12, they came across some young residents enjoying the weather, but more importantly, wearing helmets while riding their bikes. Members had some fire department giveaways for their safe practices. Always wear your helmet while riding! It's the best way to protect yourself and stay safe.



HFD responds to down tree and wire

On March 7 during recent strong winds, Glendale Road was closed between #223 and N Monson Rd due to wires and a tree down. The road later opened to one lane of travel while National Grid made repairs.



HFD assists in brush fire response

On the afternoon of March 10, Brush 1 and Squad 1 responded to Upper Hampden Road to assist Monson Fire Department with a brush fire. Crews assisted with fire suppression and overhaul.



Photos and caption courtesy of Hampden Fire Department

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
March 8, 2025

Photo and caption courtesy of Wilbraham Police Department
In light of #internationalwomensday, we would like to acknowledge and thank two of Wilbraham PD's finest, Officers Beaudry and Tassone. Not since Cagney & Lacey or maybe Rissoli & Isles has there been such an all-star female duo on WPD's evening shift. Make sure to say hi the next time you see them.

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MORIARTY from page 4

The senior center started out as a one room operation in the basement of the Town House in the Melville Room over 40 years ago. Through great persistence and fund-raising efforts, the senior center moved into the Allen Street location in 1999 allowing for a much bigger space for programs and services.

What makes the senior center unique is that this is the only social service agency in town, so we are not only seeing those who are over the age of 60. We are committed to helping anyone who comes to us for help regardless of age.

What do you want the community to know about your position?
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center is not run by one person, but rather an amazing team of staff and volunteers.

The staff is second to none and is made up of Wendy Cowles (Outreach), Sharon Woodin (Receptionist), Joi Giuggio (Receptionist), Tina Doran (Program & Volunteer Coordinator) and Rudie Voight (Custodian) and the over 70 volunteers who help throughout the year. This position is made better by the team of people who stand beside me every day with the same goal in mind; to help people.

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.

BOARD from page 1

“There’s nothing that we’re discussing that would be in a contract or violation because nothing’s been written yet. So, we wouldn’t need legal counsel until any verbiage was agreed upon,” Rivest said.

Since this meeting, a joint meeting with Wilbraham’s Select Board has been confirmed for March 19 at 5:30 p.m. in the Town House Auditorium.

Flynn liked Davenport’s recap of the meeting.

“I thought it was pretty good and I think the numbers they’re talking, I mean we’re 18% of the population of WMS, well, we’re 18% in the district too, so that is what it is,” Flynn said. “Now, I just think to get by one sticking point, I thought the discussion about the regional agreement changes were pretty accurate. It gets back to almost that house reconstruction thing. Once you touch part of it, you’re stuck with how much more.

But to go away and push on, is DESE pushing too much for some of this—I want to say--extraneous stuff, but pretty soon they’ll be telling you what font to print it in.”

“Well, there was a lot of silly stuff they’re asking for,” Davenport said. “I think they—I mean, the superintendent—they had, the last time, they had 66 comments and we asked the superintendent to talk to him and get rid of him and he got rid of him.”

When Rivest brought up Minnechaug Regional High School and how that works with the current regional agreement, Davenport explained for a capital expenditure there--if there is one--it’s broken down “by the ratio of students in that building.”

“But we own that building, like, jointly?” Rivest said.

“And the land,” Flynn added.

“We own the land and the building jointly,” Rivest said. “So, that’s apples and orang-

es almost.”

“And that’s the whole thing about in my mind that’s a bit of a bugaboo with us participating in a building that is still on the books in Wilbraham and the land,” Flynn said. “I know a lot of social comments about how this is only a precursor to getting a new middle school.”

Rivest added he watched the Planning Subcommittee meeting, sharing this.

“I didn’t think it was in the right context that we’re allowing Hampden students--as I think you alluded to before, Don--nobody’s allowing Hampden students to go to that school. They were no choice,” Rivest said.

Flynn agreed and appreciated Rivest’s pushback on that.

“I know Marc Ducey’s a--throw it out there because it’s known--is a fearless advocate for Wilbraham and he should be. On Finance, he’s got a lot of experience. Maybe the comment was, I think,

inappropriate at that point and I think you made that point back to him and I think we can move on from there,” Flynn said.

Davenport clarified it was, actually, two comments from Select Board Clerk Marc Ducey.

“One, that they were allowed to go there and the other thing was that we gave them the privilege to go there,” Davenport said. “The opportunity to go there.”

Rivest said what he sees happening now is “it may be opening old wounds to new criticism again.”

“So, we know the history, we know the past, we know why the kids are there,” Rivest said.

“And we are where we are,” Davenport said.

“And so we got to move forward and, I think, like you said, the opportunity for the six of us to sit down with our administrators,” Flynn said. “We don’t need lawyers...”

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Hall of Fame names senior all-stars



Alani Botas makes her way across the court during a game this season.

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the team rosters for the 2025 Western Massachusetts Senior High School All-Star Games. On Thursday, March 20, the Hall of Fame will host the 2025 All-Star event on the Jerry Colangelo Court of Dreams at the Hall of Fame. A total of 60 players were selected from different divisions within the region to participate in three games that will showcase the top seniors in their final high school contest.

“We are proud to host the top high school basketball players from Western Massachusetts at our 14th annual All-Star celebration at the

Basketball Hall of Fame,” said John L. Doleva, President and CEO of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. “Residents of Western Mass. are encouraged to join us as we honor these exceptional seniors as they play the final game of their high school careers.”

A committee of local coaches and media members who represent each division on the boys’ and girls’ sides selected the teams. Using the designated classes for the PVIAC Tournament, the players will be divided into six teams: two girls’ teams, two boys’ teams of Class A and B players, and two boys’ teams of Class C and D play-



Ava Ofcarcik takes a pass during the 2024-2025 season.

ers. Only graduating seniors are eligible for the All-Star Games. Rosters can be found on the next page.

For the 14th year, the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame will recognize one boy and one girl as the Western Massachusetts Players of the Year. A special presentation will be made for the recipients during halftime of one of the participating games. A panel of local media members selects the award winners, who are recognized for their achievements on the court in addition to their sportsmanship and character off the court.

The three All-Star Games will be held on Thursday,

March 20. The first game of the evening will feature the Class C and D boys’ teams at 5:30 p.m., followed by the girls’ matchup at 7 p.m., and the final game will showcase the Class A and B boys’ teams at 8:30 p.m.

Tickets for the All-Star Games are available at the Hall of Fame box office on the night of the event. Each ticket provides access to all three games that evening (Adults: \$20, Students: \$10). Advance tickets can also be purchased online.

Representing Minnechaug Regional High School will be Alani Botas and Ava Ofcarcik.



Submitted photo

Weber competes in nationals

WILBRAHAM – Seven-year-old Callan Weber of Wilbraham made the trip to Ypsilanti, Michigan on Feb. 15 and 16 to compete in the U14 AAU National Track & Field Championships. Callan competed in the difficult 1500m, 800m double while also competing in the long jump. On day one of the meet Callan competed in the Long Jump and the 1500m for his first two events of the weekend. Callan was able to get onto the podium in the Long Jump taking six place and earning his first Track & Field All American Honor of the weekend. Callan came back a few hours later in the 1500m with a personal best of 6:28.88 to win his first na-

tional championship. Callan led the race from start to finish, besting the second-place finisher by over 33 seconds. On day two of the competition Callan competed in the 800m. Callan was trailing in the race but was making moves during each lap of the four-lap race and on the last turn of the final lap Callan made a huge move to overtake both the second and first place runners and with a lean at the line took the win with a personal record of 3:07.04 to earn his second national championship of the weekend. Callan is now a 12 time All American in track and Cross Country and a two-time national champion.

Jenne ready for first year with Chaug lacrosse

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—Luke Jenne, the first-year girls lacrosse coach at Minnechaug Regional, conducted his first official practice of the season on St. Patrick’s Day. It was a day that he had been looking forward to since December.

“I was hired for this coaching position before the holidays and I’m very excited about it,” Jenne said. “The girls have been holding captain practices and they also played in a lacrosse league this past winter at Sports World in Windsor, Connecticut.”

Jenne took over the varsity coaching duties from Maggie Kennedy, who stepped down at the end of last season due to personal reasons.

Jenne played both football and lacrosse at Longmeadow High School. He was also a member of the Westfield State University football team for one season. He’s currently living in Wilbraham with his family.

Lacrosse has been a big part of Jenne’s life for many years.”

His varsity coaching career began as the boys’ lacrosse coach at Cathedral High School/Pope Francis from 2014-18. He also coached the boys’ vari-

ty lax team at Suffield Academy for a couple of years.

A year ago, Jenne was the defensive coordinator for the boys’ lacrosse team at Wilbraham & Monson Academy.

“While I’ve coached several boys’ lacrosse teams, I’ve only coached the girls at the club level,” Jenne said. “My wife, Bethany, and I started Swift Elite for both boys and girls here in Wilbraham two years ago. We run clinics and are planning to hold a summer camp in July. My daughter, Isalina, was a member of the Minnechaug j.v. lacrosse team last year, so I’m very familiar with the players on this year’s team. Girls’ lacrosse has grown a lot during the past few years.”

The Lady Falcons finished the 2024 campaign with a 9-11 overall record. They lost a close match at West Springfield in the semifinal game of the Western Mass Class A Tournament. They then lost at Leominster by a goal (12-11) in the round of 32 in the Division 2 state tournament.

The last time that the Lady Falcons captured the Western Mass title was in 2001. They also took home the championship trophy in 1998 and 1999.

“I have high expectations

The Lusitano Club of Ludlow returned to their tradition of giving out awards and scholarships to outstanding soccer players in the region

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—More than 3,400 high school soccer players from throughout Western Massachusetts have been honored at the Lusitano Alumni and Fans (LAF) Awards Banquet during the past 35 years.

Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the soccer banquet has been a lot smaller, but it’s always a very special event.

Six scholarship winners were honored at this year’s LAF banquet, which was held at the Gremio Lusitano Club in Ludlow on March 9.

The six award recipients are Thomas Wadas (Ludlow High School), Gabriella Fialho (Pope Francis/Ludlow), Samantha Lowe (Pathfinder Tech), Kylee Gamache (Franklin County Tech), Kennedy Marino (East Longmeadow High School), and Burke Warchol (Longmeadow High School).

Wadas, who’s ranked seventh in the senior class academically with a 4.5 G.P.A., will be playing college soccer



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

The scholarship winners show off their awards.

at UMass Amherst. He’s also a member of the National Honor Society.

“I’m going to be playing soccer at UMass, which was my top college choice,” Wadas said. “Staying close to home was really important to me.”

A year ago, UMass lost at third-seeded Denver, 3-0, in the Elite 8 of the NCAA Division 1 tournament. The Minutemen finished with a 13-4-5 overall record.

“UMass had an outstanding season last year,” Wadas said. “I’m just going to try my best to make an impact as

a freshman. I’m really looking forward to playing soccer at the next level. The college game is a lot more physical and quicker.”

The UMass men’s soccer coach is Fran O’Leary.

Wadas, who’s planning to study business in college, was a four year starter for the Ludlow boys’ varsity soccer team, which is coached by Greg Kolodziey.

“Coach Kolodziey made a big impact on my life both on and off the field,” Wadas said. “I’m going to do everything that he has taught me at UMass. I’m also going to miss

playing soccer for him a lot.”

Wadas, who was a team captain last fall, was selected to the All-State soccer team twice.

The Lions won three out of the past four Western Mass. Class A titles. They also advanced to the Elite 8 of the Division 1 state tournament each year.

“The new state postseason tournament format allowed us to play a few more teams in the Boston area,” said Wadas, who scored 13 goals and had 12 assists as a senior. “I think

Please see **AWARDS**, page 9

Please see **LACROSSE**, page 10

Worcester Railers wins close matchup against Southerners

WORCESTER — The Railers have not played seven periods of sudden death overtime the last two nights here, it only feels that way.

Less than 24 hours after Worcester took a wild 6-5 decision from the Norfolk Admirals, the Railers beat the Southerners, 2-1, in an equally tense affair Saturday night. The victory kept them two points ahead of Reading in the North Division playoff race, although the Royals do have two games in hand.

Reading also won Saturday night. It beat Trois-Rivieres, 2-1.

As can happen when teams are playing a third game in three days, this was a goaltending duel. The winner was Michael Bullion, who stopped 27 of 28 shots. He beat Thomas Milic, who was spectacular in the third period and made 25 saves on 27 shots.

The game ended appropriately.

The Admirals pulled Milic in favor of an extra skater. They won a faceoff with four seconds left in the third period and got the puck to Graham Sward at the left point. He delivered a slap shot from about 55 feet and Bullion, following it all the way, smothered the puck in his gut as the green light went on.

“I got a sight line,” Bullion said, “so I was watching it the whole time, and I

stayed high the whole time, then just went down and ate it.”

Had the shot gone in, it probably would have counted. Bullion made sure there was no replay needed and was happy to hear the buzzer.

“Yeah, that was really nice,” he said.

The Railers got goals from Matt DeMelis and Anthony Callin. They had a 2-0 lead going into the third period but gave up a shorthanded goal to Sean Montgomery at 8:28. That left the Admirals with a lot of time to tie it, or worse.

Worcester’s penalty killing was once again a key factor in a victory. The Railers were 4 for 4 while short-handed (all four penalties were for slashing) and are 20 for 20 in the last six games.

“Right now it is getting guys who are comfortable with each other and super aggressive,” coach Nick Tuzzolino said of the killers. “There are certain penalty kill details you have to follow — good sticks, lots of shot blocks — and your goalie has to be your best penalty killer and Michael was ours tonight.”

DeMelis scored at 9:56 of the first period with a high shot from between the circles. He was set up nicely by Tyler Kobryn, who fed him from the right boards. Callin’s goal came a lot later, at

15:49 of the second period, and from a similar spot in the slot but at the other end of the rink.

Matthew Kopperud made the pass.

Montgomery stole the puck at the right point and had a long breakaway. He put a 25-footer over Bullion’s blocker.

The Railers had three fabulous chances to get a third goal in that third period but Milic made memorable saves on Loughran at 2:00, Jordan Kaplan at 5:30 and Anthony Repaci at 10:10.

The Admirals goalie kept them in the game, but he could not win it for them.

The Railers have 11 regular season games left. Their playoff push resumes Friday night in Maine versus the Mariners, who are longshots in the post-season picture but always troublesome. The first-place Trois-Rivieres Lions are at the DCU Center Saturday and Sunday.

“This group, no matter what happens with them, they are battle tested,” Tuzzolino said. “They have a good foundation. They know how to play with a lead in the third period, and if and when we hopefully make it to that mark and that push, it’s gonna echo in the in the post-season if we get there.

“Because they’ve been playing in the post-season for the last month.”

Providence gets by T-Birds at ‘sensory-friendly’ Sunday

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (30-23-2-4) could not keep the newest Bruin quiet as Providence (33-19-4-3) skated away with a 4-1 win on Sunday afternoon in front of another sellout crowd at the MassMutual Center on CHD Sensory-Friendly Sunday.

The day began with fireworks as Kale Kessy and Joey Abate got both benches on their feet with a fight just two seconds into the action. As a scoreless first progressed, a late post-whistle penalty to the T-Birds set the Bruins up for the game’s first power play. Providence made Springfield pay, as newest Bruin acquisition Fraser Minten chipped a shot over Vadim Zherenko at close range to give the Bruins a 1-0 lead at 15:20 of the first, a score that held into the intermission.

Minten was far from finished in his first career game against the T-Birds, adding a second goal at 2:29 of the second as he parked himself in the paint and guided a Billy Sweezy shot behind a helpless Zherenko. The rookie then completed a natural hat trick at 9:55 with some crafty hands at the side of the net to chip a puck into the top shelf over an outstretched Zherenko.

The T-Birds finally got a bounce to go their way, literally, at 12:46 when a Dalibor Dvorsky one-timer went off Bruins netminder Michael DiPietro, followed by the end glass. With everyone looking for the falling puck, it eventually careened off DiPietro’s back and over the goal line, giving the T-Birds’ 19-year-old his 19th goal of the season and making it a 3-1 game.

However, Springfield could not build upon their good fortune, as Minten fired another shot that Riley Duran tipped past Zherenko at 18:14 to polish off the rookie’s four-point game and send the game into the third at a 4-1 score.

DiPietro proved too tough to crack in the final period, as each of Springfield’s nine third-period attempts got swallowed up by the AHL’s leading victor in net. DiPietro picked up his 22nd win with 24 stops, while Zherenko was saddled with the defeat following a 25-save afternoon.

The T-Birds continue their four-game homestand on Wednesday as the Hershey Bears make their final trip to the Thunderdome this season. Puck drop is set for 7:05 p.m. at the MassMutual Center.

Valley Wheel tryouts set for next month on April 6

REGION—Players looking to join the Valley Wheel Over-28 Baseball League can attend the tryouts beginning Sunday April 6. The time and location of the tryout is to be determined.

The league, which plays its games in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut, makes sure that everyone gets a fair share of the action. Everyone plays a minimum of 4 innings in the field, and everyone bats. The league follows MLB rules with some modified rules adapted with safety in mind.

The Valley Wheel stands apart from other leagues across the country for this reason:

Their league charter and one of their main goals, is to work toward having a league with teams of equal strength.

The league is now seeking new players to fill open roster slots. Enjoy the competition and camaraderie with a great

group of guys who enjoy the game as much as you do. Stay in shape and make new friends. Be part of something that happens once a year, and with luck, win a championship that might be once in a lifetime. Grab your glove and cleats and join a team for a great adventure. It’s not too late don’t miss out; opening day is just around the corner. For more information, contact Jim Nason at 413-433-4308 or visit the website www.ValleyWheelBaseball.org



Gabiella Fialho, a Pope Francis student from Ludlow, won a scholarship.



Samantha Lowe presented Pathfinder Tech at this year's event.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

The winners pose with members of the Lusitano Club board.

AWARDS from page 9

we did very well against them. We beat Newton South, who was the number one team in the state in last year’s state tournament.”

Fialho has been a high honors student at Pope Francis since she was a freshman, and also has 4.5 G.P.A..

During Fialho’s varsity soccer career, Pope Francis has captured the Western Mass Class title three times.

Last fall, Pope moved up to Class A for the first time and posted a 1-0 victory against Longmeadow in the championship match. They also celebrated 1-0 victories against West Springfield in the quarterfinals and Minnechaug Regional in the semifinals, which was decided in penalty kicks.

Just like Wadas, Fialho also will be playing college soccer close to home.

“I’ll be playing college

soccer at Springfield College next year,” Fialho said. “I’m very happy that I’ll be attending a college and playing soccer close to home.”

The Springfield College women’s soccer team is currently looking for a new head coach.

Kristin Cannon will be stepping down from her coaching duties for personal reasons on June 30. Fialho is hoping that the current assistant coach Brendon Boates is named as the new head coach.

“I was recruited by coach Boates,” Fialho said. “He has a passion for the sport of soccer, and he has a lot of energy.”

Prior to her freshman year, Fialho decided to attend Pope Francis instead of going to Ludlow High School.

“All of my friends wanted me to go with them to Lud-

low High School,” she said. “It was a very difficult decision for me to make, but I’m glad that I decided to go to Pope. It’s a great school both academically and athletically.”

Lowe, who lives in Ware, played soccer at Pathfinder Tech for four years and she was a team captain the past two seasons.

“I’m really excited to receive the scholarship award,” said Lowe, who’s not planning to play college soccer. “I’m proud of my accomplishments during my high school soccer career. The girls’ soccer team has improved a lot since I joined the team.”

Lowe is planning to pursue a degree in culinary arts at a local community college.

“When I was growing up, I was always in the kitchen with my mom and we’ve

grown a lot of our own food,” she said. “I was also able to get into the culinary arts program at Pathfinder.”

Lowe is currently working at Farmer Matt in New Braintree

“I’ve been working there for two years on April 1,” Lowe said. “They have a store, and we also make homemade soups. Working in a kitchen is just as fun as being on the soccer field. I’m learning something new every day.”

The LAF President is Joseph Jorge Sr., who received a 30 year service award. Jeri Humphries is the Vice President, Luis Vitorino is the Treasurer, and Steven DaSilva is the Secretary. The four board members are Joseph Jorge Jr., Richard Oliveria, Teri Myette, and Stephen Scott.

LACROSSE from page 9

for this year’s team,” Jenne said. “I’m hoping that we can contend for a Western Mass. title. The Western Mass. tournament might be a little bit different now, but it still matters to the girls.”

There is a big difference between a boy’s lacrosse game and a girl’s game.

“A boys lacrosse game is a lot more physical,” Jenne said. “There is also a lot more finesse in a girl’s game. The girls also has one more player on the field than the boys do.”

The Lady Falcons varsity lacrosse program started in 1995 and they’re celebrating its 30th anniversary this season. They’re planning to have an alumni game on May 10 at Spec Pond.

“My varsity players will also be conducting a youth lacrosse clinic for players in grades K-8 on May 10,” Jenne said. “We’re hoping that the youth players will stay and watch our first alumni game. Any former Minnechaug girls’ lacrosse player can play in the alumni game. We’re hoping it’s a fun day for everybody.”

Jenne recently held a meeting with the returning Lady Falcons lacrosse players. He had them select the captains for this season.

“I wanted to challenge the players,” he said. “I had them tell me who they would choose as captains. The players voted for four captains. Three of them are seniors and the other is a junior.”

The Lady Falcons captains are senior Izzy Manning, senior Ella Sarno, senior Nora Kennedy, and junior Aubrey Stachowicz.

A total of 35 girls signed up to play lacrosse, so Jenne wasn’t planning on making any cuts at try-outs, which took place during the first three days of practice.

“I think we’ll have enough players to field two strong teams this year,” Jenne said. “We’ll have a few girls who’ll be playing for both teams. We also have a large senior class.”

Jenne would like his players to continue playing the sport at the college level.

“I think we have some athletes that can pursue a collegiate career,” Jenne said. “The girls have worked very hard during the offseason, and I like to see them have that opportunity.”

The Lady Falcons are schedule to make the short trip down Main St to Wilbraham & Monson Academy for a preseason scrimmage on March 26.

“I don’t think the Minnechaug girls’ lacrosse team has scrimmaged W.M.A. in a long time,” Jenne said. “Their head coach is Annie Kandel, who’s considered to be one of the better lacrosse coaches in our area. She’s an even better person than she is a coach. I’m really looking forward to scrimmaging her team.”

Minnechaug will be opening the regular season at Mount Greylock on April 1 before hosting Northampton in the home opener on April 4.

The Lady Falcons will be playing ten other home games this spring.

“I’m hoping people will come watch our home games just like they do on Friday night’s during the football season. Those games are always a lot of fun,” Jenne said. “There is no reason why our boys’ and girls’ lacrosse teams can’t generate the same type of atmosphere. I’m really looking forward to the season.”

Dennis Donahue will be the assistant varsity coach and Michelle Normand returns as the junior varsity coach.

NOTICE

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

SENIORS

Monthly Highlights for March at the Hampden Senior Center

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

Thank you to Monson Savings Bank and to all who voted for the

Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens.

This year the Monson Savings Bank Community Giving Initiative is donating \$3,000 to 10 non-profit organizations and we are one of them!

Thank you, Thank You, THANK YOU!!!!

Benefits of Reiki and Demonstration

Friday, March 21 at 12:30 p.m.

Come and see a demonstration and learn about the benefits that Reiki can provide for you.

Please call 566-5588 to register.

What is Reiki?

Reiki (ray-key) is a Japanese technique that promotes stress reduction, relaxation, and healing.

Reiki treats the whole person, creating many beneficial effects that include feelings of peace, security, and well-being.

Lisa Zizza is a Level 3 certified Reiki Master in the Usui Tradition, and she will be here on the first Friday of every month. Scheduling appointments for Friday, March 7th.

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

Lisa is offering \$10 off your first session.

Please call Lisa directly at 413-455-6990 to schedule your appointment.

Common Threads Led by Joan Tompkins, PhD

Mondays from 11 a.m. to Noon – Newcomers will meet at 12:30 p.m.

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.

Making Music with Sue – New Students Welcome!

The new 12-week session that was announced in the March newsletter has been postponed and will begin April 7th and go through June 30th.

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

Mondays, 1:15 p.m. 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 for drop-ins. New students must call ahead for placement.

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

Please call 566-5588 to reserve your spot.

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”

The current session is through March 28. Drop-ins welcome!

Fridays, 2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. New 14-week session begins April 4 through July 25. (No class on 4/18, 5/2, and 7/4)

Cost is \$80 for the 14-week session if paid in full and receive two free classes, or \$7 per class.

Please call 566-5588 to reserve your spot.

Elms College Nursing Students will be here Thursdays, in March, from 9:15 a.m. to Noon

Western New England Mad Science Presents Science Behind Superhero’s

Tuesday, April 8 at 10 a.m. The Hampden Senior Center is excited to once again provide an intergenerational opportunity for the Senior Center Community and our friends at Green Valley Preschool.

Educators from Western New England Mad Science will help you discover the real science behind some of the most popular superhero powers! We will explore the science of flight, how science can make things turn invisible, and how Spiderman

This truck event is an opportunity to drop off all your larger bags or boxed items for Spring Cleanup. The Senior Center will earn a small percentage from Hartsprings based on the total weight of items received to help their cause. There is no charge to drop off these items, however, all monetary donations will be accepted and appreciated. All proceeds from this event will benefit the needs of the Hampden Senior Center.

The purple bin in our parking lot is for your convenience to drop donations off anytime. The bin’s opening is limited to fitting the size of a tall kitchen-size bag. Please only use tall kitchen-size or smaller bags to avoid jamming the door. If the bin is full, please bring your donations to our front office and we will arrange to have it picked up. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ITEMS OUTSIDE OF THE BIN. Thank you!

The Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens announce their 2025 meeting schedule on April 8 (Annual Meeting), July 15, Oct. 14, and Dec. 9. All are welcome to attend.

Have you ever wondered what the Friends group does? Have you considered getting more involved with fundraising for the senior center? Do you pay your annual dues and wonder what that means or where that money goes?

Learn about the Friends and how their fundraising efforts support the senior center throughout the year. Hear about current openings on the Friends Board and find out if becoming a board member is a good fit for you. If interested, contact Claudia Kapinos,

president at 413-478-5462.

“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 Dish Soap!

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

Did you know we have... Gift Cards are Available.

Anyone is welcome to take advantage of these services.

Please call 566-5588 to schedule your appointments.

Chair Massage with Mindy

Tuesdays, March 11 & 25. \$10 for 10 minutes.

Facials with Diane Neill

2nd Thursday of every month. March 13 by appointment.

Foot Care with Deborah

1st Thursday of every month. Thursday, March 6.

\$40 for a 30-minute appointment

Manicures with Cat

Please call Cat directly at 413-335-7422 for an appointment and pricing.

Upcoming HSC Trips

HAMPDEN - The following trips are being arranged at the Hampden Sr Ctr, 104 Allen St, Hampden; prices include the driver’s tip.

Tues. April 29 - The Aqua Turf Club , ”The Ozark Jubilee” from Branson, MO - coffee on arrival, delicious family-style lunch, classic country show - \$127pp.

Wed. May 14 - The Log Cabin for “The Jersey Tenors” - delicious family-style Italian lunch, Powerhouse Vocals - \$93pp (self-drive).

Mon. July 14 - The Newport Playhouse, “It’s Your Funeral” a traditional comical farce, All you can eat buffet, Show and Cabaret - \$132pp.

Tues. Sept 30 - Lakeside Turkey Train (Lake Winnepesaukee) Harts Turkey Dinner on board, Country Farm Store stop (on own) & NH Liquor Store - \$140pp.

Mon. Dec 8 - The Aqua Turf Club “Rock This Town Orchestra” - Coffee on arrival, delicious family-style lunch, Swinging ‘50s and ‘60s tunes - \$127pp.

Flyers are available at the Senior Center or via email. Full Payment Deadlines are approximately two weeks before the event.

Questions/comments, please call Bobbi at 413-566-8271 or email bobbij2@charter.net.

Immaculate Conception Polish plate dinner coming up on March 22

INDIAN ORCHARD – A Polish Plate Dinner—four Pierogi, one Golabek, Kielbasa, Kapusta and Rye Bread—will be held on Saturday, March 22, 2025 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Immaculate Conception Church Hall, 25 Parker St. Indian Orchard, MA.

Eat In or Take Out. Tickets at \$20 per plate are available by calling: Maria Kowalski at 413-222-6229,

Irena Wurszt at 413-427-5846 or the Parish Office Monday through Wednesday, 3 to 6 p.m. at 413-543-3627

There are also options for the following:

- Frozen Polish Food Sale (Golabki (3) \$12, Kapusta (Large) \$10.
- Pierogi (Cabbage & Potato & Cheese) \$14, (Sweet Cheese, Blueberry) \$15.

Judge Michael Ponsor hosting author talk at Hampden Public Library

HAMPDEN - The Friends of The Hampden Free Public Library are proud to announce an Author Talk on Saturday, March 22 at Noon in the Auditorium of the Hampden Town Hall 625 Main Street Hampden, MA.

Judge Michael Ponsor currently serves as a district judge in The United States District Court, Western region in Springfield. He is the Author of “The Hanging Judge,” “The One Eyed Judge” and “Point of Order.”

Judge Ponsor writes from some real-life experiences which are some real-life thrillers. Judge Ponsor is a graduate of Harvard University, Oxford, University and Yale Law School

and was a Rhodes Scholar.

Come and listen to The Judge talk about his writing process and answer any questions you may have about our judicial system. This event is free and open to the public.

No registration is required.

Judge Ponsor will be bringing his books to sell for \$15.00 each. Only cash or check can be accepted at this event.

Refreshments will be served by The Friends of The Library. We hope to see you all there.

If any questions, please contact Joan Shea at 413-566-8224.



By Barb Turcotte

Do you ever ponder what brings people to the professions they’ve chosen? I do. Was it something that was convenient and so they just took a job or was there something that inspired them for their future occupation. Well for Kaitlin Pelletier, she discovered as a seventeen-year old high school student exactly where she wanted her career path to take her. She’d always been drawn to the health-care field but her choice was cemented when they had a Health Fair at her school and a Radiation Therapist spoke about this opportunity and how rewarding it was.

Radiation Therapy is not something thought of that often since it’s very specialized plus only used as a cancer treatment, so unless you’re personally or know someone going through this, it most likely wouldn’t be on your radar. Kaitlin is passionate about her vocation and finds her job at the D’Amour Center for Cancer Care very gratifying knowing she is helping someone to get through the very grueling time of enduring treatments. She did admit it can be challenging at times as well, such as seeing a patient at the beginning of their treatments be vibrant and then temporarily decline by the end of them. She also mentioned that it’s hard not having the opportunity to see them after recovering from treatments and returning to their energetic selves. Kaitlin reflected how it’s especially difficult to care for the person she knows radiation won’t cure but instead only offer them a little more time. At her young age she is very empathetic and just such a compassionate soul, she’s definitely in the right profession!

Kaitlin met her husband Kevin when they worked for the

same wholesale business and each supported the other as they took turns getting their degrees. Kevin is a Physician Assistant at Pioneer Valley Urology and is also passionate about his career choice. He loves knowing he is helping people and also loves that unlike Kaitlin, he’s able to see his patents in six months to rejoice in their progress. Something I wasn’t aware of is that once you are a certified PA, you can work in any part of the medical field whether generalized medicine or a specialized area such as Kevin has done.

This year Kevin started teaching a course at Westfield High School about health care and asked Kaitlin to be a guest speaker for his class. They are hoping to inspire young people to become as passionate as they are regarding healthcare. I’ve not met Kevin, but Kaitlin says he’s brilliant and well, after meeting Kaitlin I know she would only pick one of the best to be her life’s partner.

Kaitlin and Kevin have been together for ten years and enjoy being the parents of a two-year old who is giving them a run for their money with potty-training. Sure wish them luck with that as they are expecting an addition, a son in two months! Congratulations!

I asked Kaitlin about some Random Acts of Kindness in her own life and she quickly told me how when on a plane her daughter was having a cranky period. Kaitlin remembered how kind the flight attendant had been and telling her to sit in the back where it was quieter for her daughter and take as much time as she needed. She said that was a major stress reliever in that situation.

She went onto to share about

their eighty-four-year-old neighbor; every week he brings in their trash barrels for them while they’re at work. She also described how he just loves their daughter and on her birthday brought her a special birthday card with a monetary gift inside. Kaitlin beamed as she reiterated those Random Acts of Kindness from him.

We discussed how kindnesses are really all around us, we just need to be more aware of the niceties that people do. We parted ways and very soon after while Kaitlin continued doing errands I received a text from her reading, “Now that I’m on the lookout for these Random Acts of Kindness, a nice man walking by just pointed out a parking spot for me.” Just one person being nice to another.

To me that text was so rewarding because she may not have even recognized that as a Random Act of Kindness, yet was now more conscience of these gestures. This just confirms what a small kind action can do in making the world a better place. Make it part of your everyday life to do just one kindness a day as it will improve your day as well. No matter how insignificant it may feel, if it’s something positive you’re making a difference, spreading positivity and making the world more enjoyable for everyone.

If you’d like to share a Random Act of Kindness story or if this one has touched you, please contact me at bdi514@aol.com or 413-575-9385. Who knows, you might see your story, ‘Just ‘Cause’ you witnessed, you did or maybe received something nice being done for you. See you soon with another Random Act of Kindness! ~ Barb

subscribe today

SCHOOLS

Minnechaug Regional High School Honor Roll

WILBRAHAM – Minnechaug Regional High School recently named the second term Honor and High Honor Roll.

Grade 9 Honors:
Peter Appleby, Tommy Appleby, Rama Awkal, Addison Baldyga, Cole Balog, Taylor Bartosz, Aidan Bean, Bryce Beckel, Andrew Boilard, Ellianna Brodeur, Nicholas Capen, Annalecia Carlo, Bartosz Checiek, Thomas Chitiva Ortiz, Gavyn Clark, Irelyn Coffey, Joseph Comes, Kailey Crespo, Leah Croteau, Masen Cruz, Nathaniel David, Anna Dennis, Kaelyn Dionne, Oksana Dobronski, Ryan Donovan, Ava Eggsware, Chase Folli, Colin Foulis, Jackson Gagner, Mario Garcia, Corrine Gates, Mya Gierlich, Brennan Gliesman, Hayden Gloss, Mallory Grono, Madison Guertin, Parker Hoey, Demetrius Holmes, Mason Howard, Brielle Hunter, Emilia Imbriglio, Drew Jennings, Alexis Joseph, June Keeler, Isabella Kupis, Ashlyn Landry, Brayden Lane, William Lapalm, Landon Laskiewicz, Savannah Lee, Dylan Lesure, Cameron Lowe, Jacob Luttrell, Yman Ly, Ellie McRobbie, Marabella Melluzzo, Juliana Mooney, Ryan Mullen, Dylan Niznik, Nicholas Nordstrom, Killian Nutting, Tristan Oliveira, Patrick O'Toole, Kirk Pagoaga, Joshua Pardave, Madeline Pastore, Ava Peck, Owen Petit, Kendall Placzek, Alexis Powers, Noah Ramos, Domenic Roach, Jillian Rumprik, Benjamin Salvador, Hailley Scliopou, Ryan Semanie, Zachary Senecal, Alysandra Serju, Sofia Shores, Demetri Smith, Gabriel Solowinski, Mya Suarez, Joseph Sullivan, Michael Sullivan, Elliot

Sylvester, Jillian True, Amelia Tucker, Camren Valle, Ormandy Velazquez, Juliana Washington, Alexander Wawrzonek, Adelle Williams
Grade 9 High Honors:
Owen Antaya, Madeline Bleau, Caroline Euber, Emmett Fitzpatrick, Nora Fletcher, Emmy Foisy, Nicholas Gencarelli, Eliza Gloss, Ashley Griguoli, Danika Haygood, Kelsey Jennings, Brooke Johnson, David Kim, Peyton Lee, Adriana Lopez, Dominic Mascaro, Olivia Mascerati, Elijah Mathias, Isadora Maurice, Daizy McDonald, Clare McMahon, Mylie Mittler, Wilhe Morales Casillas, Tess Morrow, Gianna Nowicki, Liam O'Brien, Youngsun Oh, Benjamin Patterson, Averie Picard, Brenan Rost, Ava Secor, Riley Senecal, Lillian Sergienko, Tanvi Sharma, Audriana Stasio, William Szpakowski, Grayson Tanguay, Anna Taylor, James Wadzinski, Calvin Webster, Joseph Woytowicz, Olivia Zheng

Grade 10 Honors:
Gana Abuata, Lilianna Bennett, Nathan Bosworth, Adrianna Brandoli, Katherine Britti, Darby Burgmyer, Philip Castellano, Eli Childers, Ivy Christensen, Annabella Cianflone, Kiera Connors, Emma Dalessio, Katie DeGray, Jonaiky DeJesus, Addison Derosia, Tucker Derosia, Ava Disa, Angelina Dunn, Saniah Evans, Brielle Foisy, Carter Fortin, Alyssa Fortune, Ella Gagliarducci, Nicholas Garib, Jasmine Gaspariano, Olivia Gencarelli, Kaden Gralia, Gavin Grimley, Richard Hale, Jacob Hall, Liam Harrigan, Caitlin Hebert, Anne Hicklen, Ainsley Holden, Paige Holt, Kadence Illig, Kalhan

Kar, Ava Keegan, Abyaan Khan, Ryan Knox-Nelli, Isabella Lafield, Hana Le, Leah Lomascolo, Caelan Luszc, Molly Lynch, Nola Malmborg, Olivia Martowska, Cameron Maziarz, Liam Metzger, Molly Michels, Mason Mish, John Morley, Jameson Murray, Athena Nguyen, Selena Nguyen, Madilyn Ortiz, Shiv Patel, Jack Paterno, Natalie Petit, Mackenzie Picard, Anthony Powers, Haley Powers, Samuel Przybyl, Jaison Richard, Brooklyn Rosas, Jillian Rubner, Makenna Sacco, Quinn Salerno, Cameron Salvador, Dillon Shaughnessey, Savannah Sheerin, Gracie Smith, Norah Smith, Andrew Stark, Benjamin Stebbins, Grayson Sweet, Logan Thomas, Connor Tillberry, Grace Trombly, Hope Trombly, Brayden Tugie, Sarah Rose Walsh, Azary Wheeler Montanez, Kei Williams, Jade Wong-Vallejo

Grade 10 High Honors:
Angelina Bontempi, Abigail Camire, Samantha Catellier, O'brien Chen, Catherine Dickson, Barba Dos Santos Costa, Jonathan Dyer, Nehir Elcin, Elizabeth Espinal, Isabella Esteves, Marion Fil, Brooke Germain, Naomi Griffin, Eliana Gunn, Lucy Haile, Madelyn Hoskinson, Amelia Kellogg, Isabella Kirtan, Gabriel Kishinevski, Teagan Lawor, Abigail Lee, Reese Magee, Caroline Maloni, Chelsea Ortega, Riddhi Patel, Ainsley Patterson, Colin Purcell, Lauren Roberts, Karolina Robles-Maurer, Jack Rumprik, Yara Saleh, Ava Scatolini, Alison Souza, Tyler Supczak, Kaleb Sweetman, Faith Trombly, Isabella Usher, Luis Vega, Drew Weinberg, Thomas Wurm

Grade 11 Honors:
Lucas Akers, Ali Awkal, Daniela Baez, Kelly Balog, Maxwell Baroni, Colleen Basch, Emily Benoit, Gabriella Bermudez, Alec Boilard, Mia Bolduc, Bella Brault, Lila Britton, Eclipse Buckert, Hayden Carlotto, Alexis Carreira, Lilianna Catellier, Cameron Cayo, Desyree Charles, Irene Chen, Nicholas Cianflone, Natalia Clarke, Caleigh Conboy, Alexander Danio, Allison Demetri, Madeline Dos Santos, Samuel Eaton, Cody Erskine, Jacob Fahey, Dominic Fiorentino, Margaret Fulton, Lucas Fyntilakis, Yong Ming Gao, Mateo Garcia, Andrew Grasso, Izabella Gusev, Colin Haines, Brody Harrison, Zeirra Hernandez, Laya Ibrahim, Lana Johnson, Maeghan Joyce, Ava Kearney, Molly Kinsman, Zachariah Kozub, Kaitlyn Lopez Pham, Benjamin Lopez, Jack Lucarelle, Avery Lucas, Hannah Luff, Ava Luszc, Natalie Madison, Ava Manning, Michael Mazzaferro, Nolah McConnell, Riley McLeod, Jacob Moore, Ava Moretti, Emily Moriarty, Danielle Muir, Lyric Nelson, Hao-nam Nguyen, Vinh Nguyen, Cambria Norval, Cailin O'Brien, Luke O'Connor, Michael O'Connor, Cora Pace, Alexander Parent, Zoe Pinnock, Grayson Placzek, Katelynn Pronovost, Natalie Proulx, Kameah Goulet, McKenna Hale, Ian Horne, Ryan Ice, Alita Johnson, Kalli Joyce, Lila Keegan, Skylar Knybel-Grant, Olivia Lefsyk, Wyatt Lewis, Matthew MacPhail, Isabelle Manning, Jeremiah Martin, Mackenzie McEwan, Ryan Oldread, Nathan Pace, Abby Peyman, Nicole Pollard, Mallory Poulin, Claire Pouliot, Kamaria Pryce, Ciara Reilly,

Grade 11 High Honors:
Callan Blanchard, Luke Bruno, Kennedy Burgmyer, Trinity Burgmyer, Anthony Cianflone, Kelly Cronin, Ava Croteau, Maliha Daubon, Aidan Dzierwinski, Noemi Fraga, Carina Gonnello, Tyler Jaslanek, Aidan Lee, Nylie Maldonado, Jaymiel Martinez, Sean McSwain, Alina Narvaez, Alyssa Nogueira, Anna O'Toole, Mia Peck, David Preston, Hannah Przechocki, Aezlin Rost, Annabella Rostek, Mostaffa Saleh, Connor Seymour, Linda Stanco, Gabriel Talaia, Elizabeth Woytowicz, Nicholas Zayas

Grade 12 Honors:
Alexsa Abeid, Kyle Atkin, Arash Balwa, William Bao, Bryce Barlow, Jayden Beck, Mason Belcamino, Hunter Bennett, Nicholas Benninger, Evan Bowler, Noah Brathwaite, Robert Bustamante, Margaret Capuano, Gia Caputo, Luca Colon, Logan Conboy, Kayla Coolbeth, Julia Crooks, Kali Crosby, Benjamin Daniels, Zoe Dansereau, Jason DeGray, Elizabeth Dickson, Paul Diehl, Jorden Dietz, Brandon Djavi, Nicholas Dufresne, Maxyne Evon, Nicholas Fopp, Aaron Foy, Wen Xi Gao, Deacon Gardner, Aaron Gasteyer, Kendall Gates, Jaidyn Gaudreau, Noelle Giombetti, Renee Goulet, McKenna Hale, Ian Horne, Ryan Ice, Alita Johnson, Kalli Joyce, Lila Keegan, Skylar Knybel-Grant, Olivia Lefsyk, Wyatt Lewis, Matthew MacPhail, Isabelle Manning, Jeremiah Martin, Mackenzie McEwan, Ryan Oldread, Nathan Pace, Abby Peyman, Nicole Pollard, Mallory Poulin, Claire Pouliot, Kamaria Pryce, Ciara Reilly,

Hayden Richard, Liam Richard, Sean Rooney, Matthew Ryan, Geeta Sharma, Chloe Sullivan, Quinn Symington, Thomas Tetrault, Aidan Thompson, Angela Verdon, Skylar Weinberg, Caeli Whitcomb, Alexander Wietecha

Grade 12 High Honors:
Hannah Alves, Emmamarie Annear, Lilliana Barkyumb, Mackenzie Barlow, Cayla Bartosz, Matthew Beaudin, Bryan Beckel, Sadie Blair, Joseph Bonavita, Marissa Bontempi, Alani Botas, Joseph Brower, Jake Burnett, Samantha Burnham, Jeremiah Campbell, Noah Caress, Mackenzie DaFonseca, Joshua Disa, Lucie Dones, Lukas Dzierzgowski, Grace Fallon, Nina Gallagher, Victoria Gonzalez, Hunter Gormally, Giana Hall, Jaiana Hall, Gabriella Harding, Noelle Hisgen, Audrey Izzo, Nora Kennedy, Layla King, Arthur Lam, Andrew Lang, Morgan Lape, Myah Larimore, Joshua Lawrence, Gracie Loddo, Alayna Lucas, Alison Mackie, Antonia Mascaro, Andrew McDonald, Catherine McMahon, Collin Meunier, Taylor Meunier, Elizabeth Nguyen, Tiffany Nguyen, Alayah Nogueira, Ava Ofcarcik, Thomas O'Toole, Makenzi Pastreck, Ava Peabody, Laura Pecoy, Summer Pinney, Emma Powell, Gus Przybyl, Sophia Rachele, Marily Remaly, Alexander Rice, Gabriella Robinson, Rafa Rodriguez Alvarez, Madeleine Rooney, Brandon Rosas, Ella Sarno, Gianna Siciliano, Jack Sullivan, Brady Suomala, Leah Tassinari, Aaron Treat, Sofia Villanueva

Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - The Hampden – Wilbraham Regional School District proudly announces the recipients for school year 2024 – 2025.

The awardees were selected by a committee of local administrators and past recipients based on criteria related to excellence in teaching, professional development, contributions beyond the classroom and respect by peers, parents, and students.

AWARD RECIPIENTS
Cara Canedi
Chorus/Band Teacher
Grades 3-5
Green Meadows School

Geraldine Fimognari
Math Teacher
Minnechaug Regional High School

Jill Pzeniczny
Grade 2 Teacher
Stony Hill Elementary School

BEGINNING TEACHER AWARD RECIPIENT
Franchesca Pafumi
Grade 1 Teacher
Mile Tree Elementary School

The Excellence in Teaching Awards program is made possible by the Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation in partnership with MassMutual and the Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation. The Award was created to honor teachers in Western Massachusetts who demonstrate enthusiasm about and excellence in the teaching profession.



Wilb. Garden Club Scholarship

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Garden Club is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for two, \$1,000 scholarships.

We are excited to financially assist graduating seniors, who are residents of Wilbraham or Hampden, as they transition to an institution of higher learning.

All applicants must be planning to major in one of these fields of study:

Botany, Horticulture, Conservation, Environmental Engineering, Environment Science, Earth Systems, Forest Management, Natural Resources, Plant, Soil and Insect Science, Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Horticulture, Food and Farming, Turf Grass Science & Management, Landscape Design & Management Technology, Landscape Architecture, Oceanography, Clean Energy Technology, Floral Design or Land Man-

agement.

Applicants must include a personal essay of 100-200 words, official high school transcript(s), two letters of recommendation, college acceptance letter(s) if available, along with the completed Wilbraham Garden Club Scholarship application.

All required documentation must be received on or before March 31, 2025. Notifications will be made by early May and the recipients will be awarded their scholarships at the annual meeting of the Wilbraham Garden Club on June 5, 2025.

Scholarship applications will be available at the Wilbraham and Hampden Public Libraries, Minnechaug Regional High School and Wilbraham Monson Academy.

Please contact howella413@gmail.com with questions or to receive an application.

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 ac-

credited institution of higher learning.

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

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

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

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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.



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LOCAL TREE SERVICE looking for climber and ground person. Must have driver's license in good standing. Call **413-507-1949**.

The Town of Huntington is seeking a full-time **Highway Truck Driver/Equipment Operator/Laborer**. Applicants must possess a Massachusetts Class B CDL with Air Brake Endorsement and possess or be able to obtain 2B or higher & 4G Hoisting Engineer's licenses within 6 months of hire. \$27.50 to \$28.79 per hour based on qualifications. Application and complete job description are available online at **www.huntingtonma.us** or by emailing **admin@huntingtonma.us**. Position is open until filled. Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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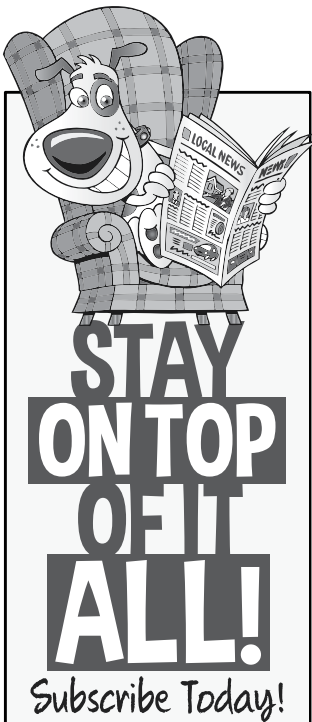
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This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development " HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

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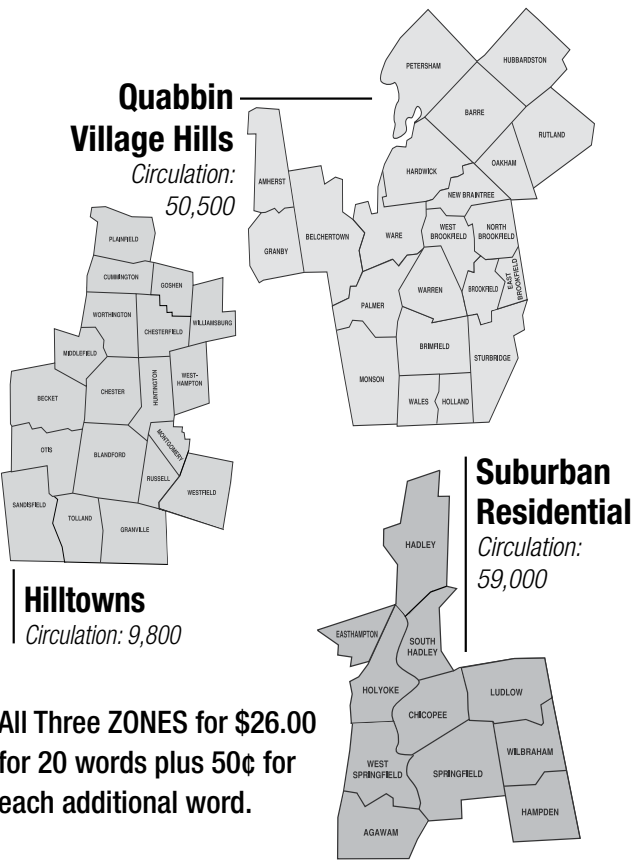
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MAIL TO: Classifieds, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069 DEADLINES: **FRIDAY AT NOON**
or call: 413-283-8393

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GROUP from page 1

March 19 which will cover Artificial Intelligence (AI) and American National Security and will wrap up on March 26, which will cover “American Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead.”

The group has been meeting on Wednesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Attendees were encouraged to read the briefing book ahead of time that provides ample background information of each of the subjects that were discussed and that will be talked about. Assistant Adult Services Librarian Emilie Lang spoke about the importance of having an open space for discussion groups and what happens at an event like this.

“The FPA has groups all across the country, so anyone can start their own group, whether it’s at a library or an individual wants to start their own. They’re welcome to do so! Other local libraries offer this program similar to ours; it’s a way for people who are interested in discussing current events and important topics in politics to get together and discuss in a friendly, open-minded format,” Lang

said. “Everyone in the group is very respectful, which is why I think it is successful. Most people don’t share the same opinion but are open-minded and willing to hear all sides of the discussion, which is important in making something like this work.”

Lang added the group has been growing as well.

“There are around 30 to 35 people in this group, it’s been growing every year. Ken First and Bob Kirkwood are the two primary facilitators, but every week there’s a different topic leader,” Lang said.

Assistant Reference Librarian Carolyn Welch was also thrilled with the library having this discussion group.

“It’s a good group, some of these people have been doing the group for a while, it has the support in terms of people coming back,” Welch said. “It’s a good way to just be aware of what’s going on, in terms of what’s pressing for the U.S. and world foreign policies. This group is very informative, it does give you a different perspective.”

When asked why people should consider joining the next FPA meeting, Lang commented on a growing conversation of overconsumption of

information and why trusting your source of information is critical.

“It is an uncertain time for a lot of people, with a lot of information, it can be difficult to tell what information is reliable or reputable. Being in an environment where open conversation is encouraged, I think is reassuring to a lot of people because you can hear different perspectives. People can refute or affirm perspectives, but can come together as a group to have a discussion at the library,” Lang said. Welch ended by saying this.

“Thank you for your support of the library!” Welch said.

Coming up next at the library will be a Boston Marathon History & Stories event with bestselling author Paul Clerici on April 7 at 6 p.m.

Also coming up, the Friends of the Wilbraham Public Library will be hosting their Annual Book Sale on May 7 to 10, with the library accepting donations starting May 2. The sale will take place in the Brooks Room.

To learn more about upcoming events at the library, visit wilbrahamlibrary.org.

GARDEN from page 6

hour, flipping occasionally. Some ketchup as a dip may help reluctant kids to give the “funny orange French fries” a try.

My dad is probably looking down and wishing I did an article on good, old fashioned russets. Sorry, Dad, but Happy St. Patrick’s Day anyway!

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

Polish Junior League 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

Wilb. nomination papers available updated

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

The last day to obtain nomination papers is Wednesday, March 26, 2025.

The positions being voted that day are:

- **Select Board** member for 3-year term
- **Assessor** for 3-year term
- **Regional School Committee member** for 3-year term
- **Cemetery Commissioner** for 3-year term
- **Cemetery Commissioner** for 1 year term
- **Water Commissioner** for 3-year term
- **Water Commissioner** for

- 1 year term
- **Two Library Trustees** for 3-year terms each
- **Library Trustee** for 1 year term
- **Planning Board Member** for 5-year term
- **Wilbraham Housing Authority member** for 5-year term

The deadline for submission to the Registrars for certification is Friday, March 28, 2025 at 5 p.m. and 50 signatures from registered Wilbraham voters are required to have a name listed on the ballot as a candidate. We suggest calling our office to set up an appointment to pick up the papers. Contact the Town Clerk’s Office at 596-2800, ext. 200 if you have any questions. Office hours are Monday thru Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD25P0506EA
Estate of:
Carla Ann Boutin
Date of Death: 04/13/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Daniel R Boutin 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: Daniel R Boutin of Wilbraham, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve With Personal Surety

on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 04/09/2025. 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 administra-

tion 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: March 11, 2025

Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
03/20/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No. HD99P1912CV1
In the matter of:
Hilary P Diebold

Of: Wilbraham, MA
Protected Person/
Disabled Person/Respondent
CITATION GIVING
NOTICE OF
CONSERVATOR’S
ACCOUNT

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, you are hereby notified pursuant to Rule 72 of the Supplemental Rules of the Probate & Family Court, that the first to the third account(s) of Stanley Light of Springfield, MA as Conservator of the property of said Respondent has or have been presented to the Court for allowance.

You have the right to object to the account(s). If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of 03/28/2025. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to object to the account(s). If you fail to file the written appearance and objection by the return date, action may be taken in this mat-

ter without further notice to you, including the allowance of the account(s).

Additionally, within thirty days after said return day (or within such other time as the Court upon motion may order), you must file a written affidavit of objections stating the specific facts and grounds upon which each objection is based and a copy shall be served upon the Conservator pursuant to Rule 3 of the Supplemental Rules of the Probate & Family Court.

You have the right to send to the Conservator, by registered or certified mail, a written request to receive a copy of the Petition and account(s) at no cost to you.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person’s right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named

person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

Witness, Hon. Barbara M. Hyland, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 21, 2025
Rosemary A. Saccomoni
Register of Probate
03/20/2025

SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLE

This ad is pursuant to MA Gen. Law Ch.255, Sec. 39A as of March 28, 2025 the following motor vehicle will be for sale to satisfy a garage keepers lien: Vehicle : 2009 Nissan Frontier VIN#: 1N6AA07C29N317650 COLOR: Gray LKO: Jarrett Kirsche 52 Hilltop Dr Manchester CT 06043

R & S Assoc. Inc
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Wilbraham MA 01095
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03/13, 03/20, 03/27/2025

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