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Hampden Senior Center hosts festive St. Patrick's Day luncheon

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The community gathered at the senior center on March 17 for this year's St. Patrick's Day Luncheon.

The festivities included a lunch of corned beef, cabbage and carrots, red bliss potatoes, rye bread and dessert provided by Greater Springfield Senior Services.

Sarah the Fiddler also returned to perform.

Jim Dupuis, who was celebrating his birthday, was joined by his two sisters, Chris and Patti, adding that it was his sister Chris's first time visiting the senior center.

"I wanted to show off the facility and what we have



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

The Irish music was fired up for the crowd during the St. Patrick's Day Luncheon on St. Patrick's Day, aka March 17, in Hampden.

Please see **LUNCHEON**, page 8

School Committee OK's FY27 budgets

Community speaks out, several votes fail before approval

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - After an over five-hour meeting comprising a budget roundtable, many public comments and four failed votes, the School Committee approved its operating and capital budgets on March 17.

The operating budget is \$59,848,182, inclusive of the debt service payment for Minnechaug Regional High School of \$1,910,150 for FY27 to HWRSD. The assessments are as follows: Hampden at \$9,901,966 and Wilbraham at \$33,094,675.

Three MRHS gym teacher positions, the Green Meadows Elementary

School teacher position, the Mile Tree Elementary School teacher position and the Wilbraham Middle School Strings Program—which were listed as proposed potential reductions—were restored to the budget.

The assessment for Hampden also increased by \$569,181 and by \$1,154,472 for Wilbraham.

The four failed votes focused on ways to help fund the deficit for the proposed operating budget, with committee members debating the best course of action before a final approval was decided.

The capital budget, meanwhile, is \$170,000, with assessments as follows: \$34,653 for Hampden and \$135,347 for Wilbraham.

The budget roundtable comprised the School Committee, Superintendent

Please see **BUDGET**, page 10

SB meets new shared public health director

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Selectboard met the new Shared Public Health Director, Ryan Paxton, on March 16.

Paxton began his role in December 2025 and recently worked for the town of Montague. He was also a lead inspector for the state, worked as a health inspector in Holyoke and did contract work.

"So, I've worked in a lot of different communities in Western Mass doing tobacco enforcement and a little bit of food inspections and stuff. So, happy to be here and I think we really hit the ground running kind of getting things back up to speed in the different towns," Paxton said.

Chair John Flynn said the town was happy about the outreach.

"I mean, Lily—she was here obviously, before—and very visible in town and I think her attitude is like 'I inspect, but what can I do to correct,'" Flynn said.

Paxton agreed.

"We like coaching in a lot of ways. We're just trying to get everybody to the best place they can be in from where they're at now and I think we've had various degrees of success, which you guys have supported us on on a few specific cases as time goes on," Paxton said.

Selectboard Member Don Davenport—who serves as Board of Health Chair—shared the public nurse position was eliminated, a role funded during the pandemic.

"So, you're going to be able to pick up the Maven. I guess that's the main thing," Davenport said.

Paxton said yes and added access to this database has already begun.

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'The Wisdom of Eve' is a tale of drama and excitement

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Theatre Guild of Hampden's production of 'The Wisdom of Eve' is a tale of drama, excitement and a lot of scandal.

"The Wisdom of Eve" is adapted from the story by Mary Orr, on which the Oscar-winning film "All About Eve" and the hit musical "Applause" were based.

The cast includes Rick Malone as Tally-Ho Thompson, Nathan Alvarez as Harvey, Allison Reardon as Eve, Amanda Emet as Vera Franklin, Andy Price as Bert Hinkle, Andrea Sto-

lar as Leila, Heath Verrill as Lloyd, Jeannie Wysocki as Margo, Margie Secora as Karen and Phil Godeck as Clement.

The artistic director is Mark Giza and the stage manager is Gail Weber.

This production is dedicated to "a great actor and director," Lyle Pearson, "who gave so much of himself to everyone around him." Attendees will find this dedication to Pearsons in the program book.

The moment the music transports you to 1950s New York, you're watching a true battle of wits, aging and beauty, manipu-

Please see **REVIEW**, page 5



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

The cast of "The Wisdom of Eve" after a successful opening night performance on March 20.

WPL hosts Bedazzling and Henna Workshop on HWRSD Day Off

By Natalie Proulx
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On Wednesday, March 11, the library hosted a combined event of Henna artwork and Bedazzling Books, two of the most popular library workshops.

This is the first time the

library has done a "mashup" of events. With the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District out on that Wednesday, it gave the library the perfect opportunity to hold both the events together for kids to come down to the library on their day off.

This event featured

Wicked Good Henna's Mandy Roberge, a henna artist of almost 20 years. Beginning in 2006, Roberge has used henna as an outlet to express not only her creativity but help other people express theirs.

"My entire life has been about helping people be creative," Roberge said.

Roberge also mentioned her passion project that she does within her business.

"I do free henna crowns for anyone who has lost their hair," Roberge said. "It could be from cancer treatments, it could be from alopecia."

Roberge added a mental health condition called Trichotillomania where an individual may pull their hair out due to stress.

In many cases, "women just opt to shave their heads to make the temptation go away."

Roberge made it her mission to do a free henna crown on any one of those women.

"It's nice to be able to work with people in a way that's meaningful," Roberge said.

She explained that to help others feel more beauti-



Photo courtesy of Rachel Haggood

Teens chat with friends and bedazzle their books.

Please see **BEDAZZLE**, page 4

Knights host Annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On March 14, the Knights of Columbus 10195 held their annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner in the Parish Center of St. Cecilia's Church.

Over 240 people attended the dinner in the Parish. The night started with a welcome from Grand Knight Josh Mitchell, thanking everyone for coming out that night.

The dinner featured a traditional St. Patrick's Day meal of roast beef, cabbage, carrots, and potatoes. There was also musical entertainment provided by George Flanagan, Leo Morrissey, and Todd Rovelli. There was also a plethora of raffle baskets full of prizes for attendees, donated by local businesses, organizations and community members.

Leading the dinner's organizational process was event chairperson Todd Lisowski, who took a moment to recognize that the entire event was a team effort, and appreciates everyone's contributions to the dinner.

"It's just a coordination effort, given that all of our subcommittees have a handle of what needs to be



Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen

Grand Knight Josh Mitchell welcomes everyone to the St. Patrick's Day Dinner.

done and get the dinner going," Lisowski said. "I've met some people through the Knights that honestly are some of the nicest guys I've ever met. From a day to day perspective, how they treat people, their mindset, and stuff like that. It was where I thought I was originally getting into service as a way to volunteer, I found these guys. There's a bunch of guys that are good peo-

Please see **KNIGHTS**, page 9

COMMUNITY

Proposed Wilbraham Village Center renovations receive public hearing

By Ben Hernandez Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - Jeff Smith, Economic Development Committee vice chair and Building Utilization Committee chair, provided an ongoing update to the Select Board regarding an initiative to overhaul the village center on March 9.

The project, named the Village Center Pedestrian Parking and Traffic Safety Plan, envisions a way to increase overall safety and access to the village center while also restructuring access to veteran monuments in Crane Park. This also includes a way to change traffic flow at the intersection of Springfield and Main Street.

The plan provided includes a traffic table, a six-inch elevated platform that is spaced

strategically so that tractors rolling over it won't make noise. The goal of this is to slow traffic around the intersection, which will also involve narrowing the roadway and improving the gradual turn for cars around the area. The restructure will also include an extension to the granite pillar and black chain at the location, stretching it between the Pafumi's on Main restaurant all the way to the end of the driveway entrance by the Village Café.

Smith, who worked extensively with veteran agents, also has plans to reorganize the monuments located in the town square. After extensive consultants, the proposed plan is to re-configure the ancillary monuments in a horseshoe pattern around the Civil War memorials.

"We'd kind of like it if you

moved them," Smith said to the Select Board as he recalled feedback from the veteran representatives. "The accessibility to these isn't necessarily perfect. They're kind of strewn about and they were kind of placed arbitrarily as time went on."

The proposed project also includes lighting that will be added to the memorials, albeit low lighting to ensure no light pollution at night around the surrounding area. The scope also includes an overhaul to parking within the area, as there is a current issue with accessibility to the park itself.

"We really worked closely with them to create a configuration that would work well with the park," Smith said as he discussed the parking plans.

He mentioned that during the initial public feedback

meeting, which took place on the same day prior to his hearing with the Select Board, there was a lot of interest in accessible parking for the aging vets. Smith also indicated that the plans would include several ADA spots, a bike rack, as well as considerations for electric vehicle chargers. There is also a proposed fountain complete with a dog spout as an example for additional amenities.

Smith also cited additional landscaping improvements, with shade trees, benches, and some signage on the history of the park were included as part of the proposed renovations.

The signage would involve an overview of the Crane

Please see HEARING, page 10

Hampden Rabies Clinic for Dogs and Cats

HAMPDEN - A Rabies Clinic will held at the Hampden Veterinary Clinic at 28 Somers Road, on Saturday, April 4, 2026 from 9 a.m. to Noon.

The cost will be \$25 per cat or dog for a one (1) year.

You may have heard rumors of rabies vaccine causing cancer in cats. The Hampden Veterinary Clinic carries the Purevax Rabies vaccination. It is the only nonadjuvanted rabies vaccine available for cats and kittens and is specifically designed for cats. The cost for a three-year vaccine is \$50 and the cost for a one-year vaccine is \$25.

By Massachusetts state law, all cats over six months of age should be vaccinated. A Rabies vaccination is

good for one or three years, depending on the dog's or cat's previous vaccination history.

Make sure you bring your two most recent rabies certificates for the doctor to review.

ALL CATS SHOULD BE IN A CARRIER. ALL DOGS MUST BE ON A LEASH.

Our Town Clerk, Eva Wiseman, will be available to sell dog licenses. The license costs \$10 for male or female dogs and \$5 for neutered or spayed dogs. A rabies certificate is required to obtain a dog license.

For more information, please call the Board of Health office at 566-2151 ext. 102.

Wilbraham Junior Women's Club offers scholarship

WILBRAHAM - The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is pleased to announce the availability of its annual scholarship for graduating seniors at Minnechaug Regional High School.

In keeping with the Club's

mission to strengthen the community through volunteer service and support of others, a \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a student who exemplifies these values and plans to attend a two-year, four-year, or other accredited

institution of higher education.

Scholarship applications are available through the Minnechaug Regional High School Guidance Office. Completed applications must be postmarked by April

1, 2026 and mailed to Katy Reed, Scholarship Committee, 490 Glendale Road, Wilbraham, MA 01095. Students are encouraged to apply and take advantage of this opportunity to support their post-secondary educational goals.

Vegetable Gardening Class at WPL

WILBRAHAM - No experience? No problem! The Wilbraham Public Library will host Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens on Monday, March 30 at 6 p.m. for their presentation, Veggie

Gardening for Beginners. Get some tips from a pro as they discuss how to grow healthy, tasty vegetables from your own backyard.

Registration is appreciated for planning purposes,

but seating is available on a first come, first served basis. This free program is sponsored by the Wilbraham Friends of the Library.



Correction

In our March 12 edition of the Wilbraham-Hampden Times, a playoff win was incorrectly attributed to a youth basketball team. It was Wilbraham 7/8 B team that had won and advanced to the championship game. We apologize for the error.

Advertisement for The Local Table-n-Tap restaurant. It features a grid of four promotional cards: Monday (\$15 Smash Burger with fries and 16oz Stella or Bud Light), Tuesday (\$20 Steak Night: 10 oz strip served with mashed and veg), Wednesday (All Pastas \$20! Try one in our House Made Bread Bowls), and Thursday (Prime Rib Night served with potato, veg). Each card includes an image of the featured dish.

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GROUP 3: High school swimmers & approved middle schoolers.



SPRING SEASON APRIL 27TH

STROKE AND TURN APRIL 6-17TH

COMMUNITY

April teen programs at HPL

April Teen Programs at the Hampden Library
Saturday, April 4 at Noon Teen Book Bedazzling

We have a variety of bedazzling materials, just bring a book to jazz up and make unique.

Saturday, April 11 at Noon Teen Silent Book Club

Bring your own book, audiobook, graphic novel, etc., or borrow one of ours! We will read quietly for the first 45 minutes and then talk about our books.

Saturday, April 18 at Noon Teen Stitch and Sip

Do you like to crochet, knit, or embroider? Bring your project to work on while you enjoy a tasty mocktail! All skill levels welcome.

All programs are for grades 5-12. To see our upcoming programs, visit hampden-library.org/events.

Garden Club meets April 2

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Garden Club will hold its monthly meeting at 12 noon on April 2, 2026, at the Saint Cecilia Parish Center. "Saving Nature, Ourselves in Our Own Back Yards" will be presented by Master Gardener Sharon Farmer.

Ms. Farmer will show us how to make inexpensive modifications to our outdoor spaces to support pollinators and reduce our carbon footprint.

A light lunch will be provided prior to the speaker. Members are welcome to join us and there will be a \$5 fee for guests. Please contact Anna Howell at (413) 537-5788 with questions or to reserve your spot.

Holy Week Schedule

HAMPDEN - The Federated Community Church of Hampden has shared its Holy Week schedule for church services.

March 29, 10 a.m. Palm Sunday Service

April 2, 5 p.m., Maundy Thursday Candlelight Service

April 5, 6 a.m., Sunrise Service at Old Cemetery

April 5, 6:30 a.m., Pancake Breakfast

April 5, 10 a.m., Easter Service

Select Board considers hiring four new firefighters/paramedics

By Ben Hernandez
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - "The fire department provides great service. They certainly seem to have decades of experience with them being challenged by the amount of service they can provide. I'm really kind of on the fence on this," Clerk Susan Bunnell said as the Select Board members opened a hearing on hiring four additional firefighters / paramedics for fiscal year '27.

The decision, presented on March 9, comes at a time where the town budget is experiencing tremendous contention. Marc Ducey, the Select Board's vice chair, shared his conflicting reservations about the proposal to add new members to the workforce.

"It's a public safety issue," Ducey said. "It goes at a higher level for me, so more important."

The board members agreed that the issue wasn't about whether or not the town needed additional firefighters, but whether the budget would be able to account for four new hires within the next fiscal year.

Ducey stated that the hiring process was contingent upon where the budget fell for the year.

It was during discussion that the members identified that they could use the existing ambulance fund to aid in funding the needed additional staff. The fund, which would hypothetically cover about 75% of the hiring cost, could serve as a way to bolster the budget in addition to the grant request filed by fire department Chief Michael Andrews.

"I think we need to move forward with two and then the

other two," Ducey said.

He made the argument that the two new hires should instead be brought on in the middle of next year with the last two being hired at the end of next year with the intent of being on-boarded in the beginning of 2028.

Michael Squindo, the Select Board's chair, asked if his proposal was influenced by next year's potential budget, which Ducey confirmed yes.

"I think that the way I would approach it is first, what's our recommendation?" Squindo said.

He concluded his initial thoughts by explaining that the current understanding of the budget wasn't sufficient enough to make an informed decision, but that the need was nevertheless there.

Squindo stressed that the members needed to have a wider discussion on the budget at large in order to understand the resources available.

That aside, he supported the idea of hiring new people next year with the caveat that the proposed hiring was contingent upon available funds.

He added that the process could be town meeting dependent and could involve the Finance Committee.

"I just think that four individuals is a significant amount of money," Ducey said as he proposed the motion to bring on two firefighters and to then re-address the rest during the next budget cycle.

Bunnell asked if his opinion would change should the ambulance fund be available to cover the expense.

Ducey replied that the proposed funds would make a difference, however, also stating that he wasn't sure how much of the spread the alloca-

tion would contribute.

Bunnell mentioned that the board did specifically ask the chief if the grant would necessitate the requirement to hire all four employees at once, to which it was revealed that this would not be the case. Despite the potential grant's requirement to hire four workers, there was no mandatory timeline for the hiring process.

Squindo estimated that the budget for these hires to be about \$2.3 million, which is about \$300,000 more than the initial proposal, and 25% of the cost would be to the town itself should the ambulance fund be available.

Ideally the ambulance fund would cover 75% of the cost for the new hires. The issue would then be determining when the hires should be brought on. A July hiring period would raise the bill by another \$100,000 compared to a January hiring period.

Both prospective periods should have the ambulance funds available to cover the majority cost.

"The question is, can the budget support them?" Ducey said

For now, the motion to budget two firefighters for FY27 passed 2-1, with Chief Andrews being advised to continue seeking grant assistance for the additional hires.

"When you hire a person, that's probably the most expensive thing you can do," Ducey said. "It doesn't go away the next year or the third year or the fourth year. I am a little worried where the next budget cycle is going to kick in and how it's going to impact that budget cycle."

The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club to hold Annual Bunny Breakfast

WILBRAHAM - The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is ready to welcome spring with its much-loved Annual Bunny Breakfast on Saturday, March 28 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at St Cecilia's Church Parish Center located at 41 Main Street in Wilbraham.

Families are invited to start their day with a "Bunnylicious" Breakfast of freshly prepared pancakes, sausage, fresh fruits and their choice of orange or apple juice, coffee, tea, milk or water.

The Easter Bunny will be hopping by to visit and take photos with the kids. Guests can enjoy Free Face painting, Temporary Tattoos and

a variety of seasonal of Arts and Crafts activities! Raffle tickets will be available for purchase for a chance to win beautifully themed baskets for both children and adults.

The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club would like to thank our sponsors The Joseph and Anna C. Dias Jr Family Foundation and Luso Federal Credit Union. Luso's representatives will be distributing Easter-themed items to all of the children!

The Bunny Breakfast is a long standing, cherished community event. Be sure to Hop on over! Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for children 1-12 and those under 1 are free. Tickets can be pur-



chased at the door via cash, check or Venmo or online at www.Wilbrahamjuniorwomens.org via PayPal or Venmo. For more information, please contact Michele Mariani at Shellsteno@charter.net or (413) 531-1621.

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COMMUNITY

'Complete Works of William Shakespeare' a bout of belly laughs, fun and entertainment

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On March 20, the Wilbraham United Players opened their spring production of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged, Revised, Again).

The play features three actors: Craig Duda, Kevin Bechard and Joe Lessard. All of which work together fantastically.

Duda, who introduces the audience into the world of Shakespeare, starts the charge to drive the audience into not just learning more about Shakespeare's plays, but also showcases and informs the crowd into Shakespeare's other works.

Bechard continues to fuel

that charge with his own original takes on Shakespeare's works: providing an extravagant amount of comedic levels to the production.

Lastly, Lessard takes this production to another level with his impeccable timing, and also his unpredictable stage presence. You never know what Lessard has up his sleeve, or what character he is always willing to portray next.

All of them come together on the stage to deliver one of the funniest performances to ever grace Fellowship Hall. It is a production that will always keep the audience guessing what kinds of tricks the actors have up their sleeves. All the while working together to perform over 30 plays written by Shake-

speare before their two hours are up.

The play was directed by Deb Trimble, who under her leadership, showed once again that theater is strong in Wilbraham. The Players have been around for 70 years telling so many stories and putting them on the stage, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged, Revised, Again)" show the Western Massachusetts theater community that they are strong and will not be slowing down anytime soon.

The Wilbraham United Players are back again with another show that will leave audience members talking about it as much as they can when the show is over. This show is one that shows that theater in Wilbraham is some-

thing to be proud of and celebrated. With its quick wit and audience participation, audience members are certainly in for a treat.

"The Complete Works of William Shakespeare" runs for another week of shows, from March 27 and 28 at 7:30 p.m., and March 29 at 2:30 p.m. For tickets, visit wilbrahamunitedplayers.org.

The Wilbraham United Players are also highly anticipating their next productions rounding off the year in 2026: They are anticipating auditions for their Young United Player's production of "Shrek JR," with auditions being held April 29, May 2 and May 6. Along with auditions for "H.M.S. Pinafore", with auditions being held later in the spring.

Ortega sentenced to prison for shooting WPD officer

SPRINGFIELD - Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni announced that Michael Ortega, 55, of Wilbraham, has been sentenced in Hampden Superior Court after pleading guilty to multiple charges stemming from a January 2024 incident in Wilbraham in which he opened fire on responding police officers, seriously injuring one officer.

On the evening of January 20, 2024, at approximately 8:20 p.m., Wilbraham Police received a 911 text message from a 15-year-old girl who reported that she and her mother were hiding from the defendant, her father and also a resident of the home, in a bedroom on Old Carriage Road. Officers were immediately dispatched to the residence.

Responding officers included Officer Cameron Proserpi, Officer Brittani Tassone, Officer Jack Alberici, and Sgt. Charles Moore of the Wilbraham Police Department. Officers Proserpi, Tassone, and Alberici approached the rear of the residence while Sgt. Moore approached the front.

At approximately 8:33 p.m., shortly after officers arrived, the defendant approached the rear glass door of the home where the officers were positioned and began firing at them. Officers returned fire during the exchange.

During the gunfire, Officer Proserpi was struck twice by the defendant's bullets. Officer Proserpi sustained significant injuries, despite wearing a ballistic vest, and was transported by police cruiser to the hospital. Medical professionals later credited the rapid transport from the scene as instrumental in saving his life.

As a result of the shooting, Officer Proserpi lost a kidney, his spleen, and portions of his colon, and was at substantial risk of death.

The defendant was also struck during the exchange and was transported to the hospital for treatment.

Investigators later recovered the firearm used in the shooting along with four magazines loaded with a total of 45 rounds of ammunition, including large-capacity magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds. Authorities determined that the defendant was not properly licensed to possess the firearm.

The investigation included review of police cruiser footage and interior footage from the residence, documenting the defendant's conduct prior to the shooting and the moments leading up to the gunfire. Officers reported giving commands directing the defendant to show his hands before the defendant began firing.

On March 16, 2026, the defendant pleaded guilty in Hampden Superior Court. The Commonwealth requested a lead sentence of not less than 15 years and not more than 20 years in state prison, followed by probation with conditions including a mental health evaluation and treatment for alcohol abuse and anger management. The court ultimately imposed a sentence of 12 to 16 years in state prison, with additional concurrent sentences on related counts, as well as two years of probation from and after the committed sentence.

"When police officers respond to calls for help, they do so not knowing what they will face," said Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni. "That night, Officer Cameron Proserpi and his colleagues were met with gunfire. While all the officers were left with emotional wounds that will never completely go away, Officer Proserpi suffered very serious physical injuries, as well. The courage shown by the men and women that evening is a powerful reminder of the risks law enforcement officers take every day to protect our communities. I commend all the officers involved and the Wilbraham Police Department for their heroism and selfless service to their town."

Wilbraham Police Chief Edward Lennon praised the officers' distinguished heroism, stating that their actions exemplified the highest traditions of law enforcement service and brought great honor to both themselves and their department.

The case was investigated by the Hampden District Attorney's Office's State Police Detective Unit and the Wilbraham Police Department.

The Commonwealth was represented by Assistant District Attorneys Paul Caccaviello and Kelsey Baran, and Victim Witness Advocate Kristin Welch.

WPL holding contest for a new logo

WILBRAHAM - Wilbraham Public Library is looking for a new logo! The library is hosting, with sponsorship from the Wilbraham Friends of the Library, a new logo design contest. To enter, the artist must be a resident of Wilbraham, Massachusetts from high school age and up.

Entries must be original artwork, of scannable quality, and on 8x11.5" paper. The logo entry must include an animal, or animals, reading a book or books. It must also display the words "Wilbraham Public Library."

"We are excited to open up this opportunity to artists in Wilbraham! The library is a community center, and as such, it is fitting that our new logo come from a resident. What a great way to celebrate how important our library is to Wilbraham!" - Melissa Harter, Library Director.

Submissions will be accepted at the Library Service Desk until April 15. The design chosen will win a prize of \$250. The winner will be announced on April 25, 2026.



BEDAZZLE from page 1

ful and adorned in confidence makes her feel good about what she does.

Roberge has been working with libraries and doing other craft workshops aside from henna for about 10 years on and off. From helping with gingerbread programs and cookie decorating, to sewing, she's done a great variety of events within the library.

This is all possible because of the Friends of the Library and its sponsorship.

One attendee, who attended last year's henna workshop, mentioned how getting a henna tattoo usually costs about \$25 at a faire or festival, but it was wonderful to get that same experience for free at the library.

The purchasing of supplies for bedazzling books was also made possible by the sponsorship.

Rachel Hapgood, the teen services and young adult librarian, mentioned how in terms of bedazzling materials, there almost wasn't enough because of the amount of teens who attended the event.

"Last time everyone came with a book," Hapgood said. "This time there wasn't enough."

Considering it was a day off for HWRSD and the weather was wonderful, more people came to the library with their friends than a typical teen night event.

"You can't plan everything out," Hapgood said while describing that sometimes you just need to let things happen the way that they happen.

Another difference in



Photo courtesy of Rachel Hapgood

Teens show off their henna tattoos.

planning that Hapgood mentioned was how the event was formatted compared to the two event's previous organization. Normally for the henna event, it would have been in timed slots but considering it was a mashup of a more relaxed activity, teens were able to do their own thing, bedazzling alongside the henna art.

Hapgood mentioned how great it was for the teens to have the library as a space they can gather aside from school or home.

"The event offered a fun and relaxing activity for the teens on their day off of school," Hapgood said.

Hapgood also stated that many attendees mentioned

that they were heading out to the Village Cafe or Rice Fruit Farm after the henna and bedazzling event.

"It made me happy to know that the public library was their first activity with friends on their day off," Hapgood said.

One teen mentioned that the library event on a day off was perfect because if she wasn't there, she would most likely be home watching television and not doing much.

Living near the library, her and her sister were able to walk and get outside, enjoying the freedom of the day off from school and the sunny weather.

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Adele Lapointe has made many transformations this last year, some pleasant and some not so much. The most heartbreaking change was losing her husband Frank a year ago in January. Within four months she made some life altering choices; downsizing her home, her son and his family moving into her home and she moving to an independent/assisted living community. This change immediately felt comfortable, like the close-knit neighborhood she'd moved from.

Adele has lived a very full life from not just being the wife of a State Rep and the responsibilities that came with that, but many of her own accomplishments as well.

Being the only girl with six brothers she was not only



By Barb Turcotte

protected but learned how to stick up for herself. She and Frank met the year after she graduated from high school when he'd become a teacher at that high school. Frank then acquired a one-year fellowship in physics at UCLA, so they traveled cross country for their honeymoon. While in CA, they were members of a church that had a group that did Random Acts of Kindness. Adele loved it! After their year was done, they moved back to the area to be closer to family and start their own. That's when Frank decided to run for the Massachusetts legislature as

a State Rep. He won and held that position for ten years.

This made huge changes in Adele's life as a stay-at-home mom. Since there were no cell phones or answering machines in those days, she spent a lot of time answering phones and listening to issues. Frank was the face people saw, but Adele was the behind-the-scenes organizer. Instead of her quiet family weekends, she was expected to accompany her husband to all the social gatherings held in Holyoke and Chicopee. Many of these gatherings being formal they required formal attire, so with her sewing ability she made herself over twenty gowns.

Adele didn't just use her sewing talents on herself and her daughter, once making them matching Easter outfits, but voluntarily made cur-

tains for the Chicopee Mayor's office. They still hang there with his assistant telling Adele she was very impressed as she thought they were professionally made.

In their neighborhood they had a Community Center and she'd made drapes for there too. Frank and she also served on the Executive Board for the Center. Adele additionally worked Bingo each week and then became the cook. While Frank voluntarily wrote a monthly newsletter, Adele would design and print them. Then when he did movie reviews for local TV stations, Adele created the website for that endeavor.

Their volunteering didn't end with the Center, but also encompassed their neighborhood. Adele would listen to a neighbor with Alzheimer's repeat the same stories over and over, while Frank and some others would help their elderly and disabled neighbors with various tasks. He

was also instrumental in securing federal funds to help some of them obtain home improvements such as new steps and siding.

Their home has really gone full circle with their son and his family buying his childhood home and now having neighbors that he grew up with surrounding them.

Once again Adele's life changed when Frank was no longer a State Rep. With the kids now older she found her own niche. She said for many years she'd just been known as, "Frank's wife", but that was about to change. She sold real estate for several years, becoming the office manager and agent for the real estate company. She went on to do public relations for the Springfield Board of Realtors. She was then asked to help with a challenging job, helping start a mortgage company. The opportunity to start a new real estate company came her way and she

mastered that as well. She ended her career as a Financial Social Worker with Medicaid helping people when moving into nursing homes.

Together she and Frank enjoyed many traveling adventures seeing about 3/4th of the US states, including Alaska and Hawaii. They also relished their voyages to the Carrabian, Mexico, Italy, London, Paris and Australia. Her favorites being Hawaii and Australia.

Adele and her husband have two children and have been fortunate to have four grandchildren. A boy from her daughter and husband and triplets from her son and his wife. As she described the various personalities of her children and grandchildren, it's obvious that they've all learned the importance of giving back by doing their own Random Acts of Kindness.

Please see **RANDOM**, page 15

REVIEW from page 1

lution, obsession and even a nice helping of revenge, all mixed together in a scandalous, but exciting cautionary tale against the backdrop of Broadway.

Wysocki's Margo is a true diva: captivating, sympathetic and truly human every time she comes out on stage. She channels the aging star with a touch of grace, fear and power, as the power struggle between her and Reardon's Eve is a driving force in the production. She, also, shines when arguing with the men and holding her own to get her way, which brings juicy drama.

Reardon's performance of Eve is a tour de force in every scene she's in, especially when she's up against Secora's Karen, channeling the deepest, most cunning and

quite mortifying traits to get what she wants and thrive in her career. They say if you hate a character, then you know the person playing said character has made it their own and one to remember. It's psychological in nature, but also, quite fascinating.

As for our leading men in Verrill's Lloyd and Godeck's Clement. They remind me of puppets driven by the women, and their actions or consequences up the ante of what's at stake. A true battle of egos especially comes with Verrill's Lloyd, who hungers in power and whose passion as a playwright, unwittingly, brings the trouble that unfolds with the leading ladies through his choices.

Godeck's Clement is truly the most moral of the bunch and just wants his wife to be happy, seeing what is to come

before everyone else does. His ignored warnings definitely paint that cautionary tale early on, and from there, the audience watches the consequences unfold while he tries to keep things stable, even when his hands are tied.

Secora's Karen also has quite a character arc, which I will not spoil here. She beautifully performs the flaws and good sides of Karen with a ton of comedic timing and supportive best friend tropes, revealing desperation and the emergence of a dark side. Her monologues as narrator looking back in time are also a standout, as we are reminded that this is, in fact, a cautionary story.

We also cannot forget the rest of the cast.

Alvarez's Harvey reminds me of the unwitting pawn in a game of chess, moved about

to help Eve get where she needs to be, with lust and seduction making him the fool. He does have a touch of morality, but only comes when he gets his wits about him. Also, his scene readings with Eve offer hilarity and light-hearted moments.

Stolar's Leila steals the show in her brief appearances throughout the production, playing the part of a fly on the wall as the action unfolds. She serves as a sort of guardian angel to Margo when it's needed most, not easily fooled by the goings-on. One should never underestimate the secondary characters, as they know more than the others.

Malone's Tally-Ho Thompson provides an unexpected touch of hilarity for myself and my correspondent, Noelle Hisgen,

representing the uglier side of media through tabloid fodder and rumors, manipulation and twisting words around to drive a narrative. That only added fuel to the fire of a tinderbox about to explode. I'm glad we don't specialize in that, and we're thankful we don't.

As for Price's Bert Hinkle? Well, no surprise there in power moves as the agent, who takes pleasure in being a witting pawn for Eve, especially when it brings in the money. Hinkle's appearance is brief, but all so memorable for highlighting greed, which drives Eve's ambitions even further.

Lastly, Emet's Vera Franklin serves as a bookend to the power struggle of aging, beauty and idealism, becoming the next generation of stardom to enter the fold. Her

naivete, starry eyes and innocence provide a nice spectrum of the celebrity career. Her as the beginning, Eve in the middle on the rise and Margo at the end in her prime and peak, trying to preserve what she has left. This creates a storybook touch to the continuous struggle all women face, especially on Broadway and later in Hollywood.

If you're looking for a true escape into a world of mistakes, gossip and the dark sides of power, ambition and the human condition, have the popcorn ready. You'll need it for this one, and it will be quite appetizing.

Make sure to catch this show before it wraps up by getting your tickets at the door or online at theatre-guildofhampden.org.

Happy community theater season!

Holy Week

CHURCH SERVICES

March 29 - April 5

Palm Sunday
March 29th
8:30 a.m. Spoken Worship
10:00 a.m. Festival Worship*

Maundy Thursday
April 2nd
6:00 p.m. Supper
7:00 p.m. Worship*

Good Friday
April 3rd
12:00 noon Stations of the Cross
7:00 p.m. Worship*

Easter Sunday
April 5th
8:30 a.m. Spoken Worship
10:00 a.m. Festival Worship*

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*Services available on livestream.

HOLY WEEK

You are invited to Holy Week and Easter Sunday Worship at Hampden Federated Community Church

- **Maundy Thursday** - April 2 - 5 p.m. (Candlelight Service)
- **Sunday Sunrise Service** - April 5 - 6 a.m. (at Old Cemetery)
- **Sunday Easter Service** - April 5 - 10 a.m.

For more information, please contact Church Office at 413-566-3711

590 Main Street, PO Box 246
Hampden, MA 01036 • (413) 566-3711
hampdenfederated@gmail.com
www.hampdenfederatedchurch.org

FEDERATED COMMUNITY CHURCH

Wilbraham United Church

Holy Week Schedule

March 29 - Palm Sunday Worship 10 a.m.
April 2 - Maundy Thursday Worship 7 p.m.
April 3 - Good Friday Worship 12 noon
April 5 - Easter Worship 10 a.m.

All are welcome!
All are invited!

Wilbraham United Church
500 Main St., Wilbraham, MA
(413) 596-2511
www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org

VIEWPOINTS

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters
By Russell Gloor

When will I get full credit for delaying my SS retirement?

Dear Rusty:

The time is nearing that I want to move from my current Social Security survivor benefit to my own SS retirement benefit at 70 years of age.

I have been looking more deeply into the application of Delayed Retirement Credits and I have read that DRCs accumulated in the year that I turn 70, September 2026, will not be effective when I actually turn 70. Rather, those DRCs won't be paid until the following year. Can you verify that this is correct? I presume that if the DRC's are not applied at age 70, that they will be applied sometime after the first of the year and any increase will be paid retroactively.

Signed: Retiring Soon

Dear Retiring Soon:

The Delayed Retirement Credits you speak of have accumulated at the rate of 8% per year (.667% per month) since you reached your SS Full Retirement Age, which means that at age 70 your monthly SS benefit will be about 129% of the amount you were entitled to at your FRA of 66 years plus 4 months.

However, your understanding of how DRCs will work for you at age 70 is not correct. If you claim for your Social Security retirement benefits to begin in September 2026 (the month you turn 70) you will receive all DRCs, you have accumulated up to that point in time. In other words, you will get your full age 70 benefit amount immediately, including all DRCs earned until then, effective with your first SS retirement payment, which you will get in October 2026. What you have likely read about

is that DRCs work a bit differently for those who claim SS after their full retirement age, but before their 70th birthday month.

For those who claim mid-year but before age 70, only DRCs earned through the end of the preceding year are initially applied and DRCs earned during the current year are not paid until the following January. This results in a loss of some SS benefit between the time benefits start and the following January, because only the amount earned as of the end of the previous year are first paid, and the full number of DRCs earned during the current year are applied in January.

But, as is the case for you, when benefits are claimed to start in the month you reach 70 years of age, all DRCs earned up to the month of your 70th birthday are immediately applied. Congratulations on selecting a strategy which will maximize your monthly Social Security benefit.

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.

in my BACKYARD
By Ellenor Downer

As a resident I saw a yellow-bellied sapsucker also known as yellow-bellied woodpecker at her suet feeder earlier this month.



Male yellow-bellied sapsucker

They have a long pointed bill and the typical black and white feather pattern of the downy and hairy woodpeckers. Sapsuckers are larger than downy woodpeckers and smaller than hairy woodpeckers. The yellow feathers are muted and not that visible as the resident noted. They also have vertical, white wing patches. Both adult males and females have a red forehead. However the male has a red throat and the female, a white throat. Their young have brownish coloration, but they do have the white wing patches

drill holes, row after row, to get at the sap found in many native species of trees such as aspen, birch (paper and yellow), elm, eastern hemlock, sugar maple, etc. in springtime. Other birds such as ruby-throated hummingbirds, bats and insects also drink from these "sap taps."

People who burn wood most likely have seen the neat rows of holes drilled by the sapsucker in some of the wood from their pile.

Please see **BACKYARD**, page 15

Letters to the Editor

No more budget overrides

This is in response to the letter to the editor "HWEA asks for support to schools" from the Hampden Wilbraham Education Association.

In the first three paragraphs they strongly imply they want to push through yet another Proposition 2 1/2 override. I couldn't disagree more. I have to question this need when according to The Reminder, the Superintendent of Schools Mr. John Provost said enrollment has declined over 21% in the last 18 years. To say the least, the optics of trying to burden the taxpayers with an override at a time when enrollment has dropped so steeply is beyond poor.

I am not a person who opposes tax increases just because it is a tax increase. However, this is the same school department who IM-

MEDIATELY after giving us not one, not two, but three overrides votes would not even initially close Thornton Burgess School to save money. It was this middle finger to the taxpayers that made me determined not to support any tax increase or 2 1/2 override from this school department under any circumstances whatsoever.

And when two of these overrides failed, they still managed to repair the roof at Wilbraham Middle School and address the issues at Soule Road Elementary School. It is my opinion that they didn't even try to find alternate sources of funding before trying to stick it to the taxpayers.

We need to send a strong message to this School Committee that we will no longer

tolerate this blatant disregard towards their responsibilities to the taxpayers, and their blatant disregard towards the meaning of the word 'budget'. They also need to learn that the taxpayers are not their personal ATM to use whenever they please.

Have they ever considered selling one of the closed down schools? It would generate money plus eliminate maintenance costs for that building. Memorial School would be a good candidate, which has been closed since 2010, and according to a google search has "high maintenance costs and deterioration".

NO MORE OVERRIDES!

Al Levinson
Wilbraham

On the look out for a nice lawn

I'll be the first to admit that I don't have an especially nice lawn. Looking out the window further proves it.

It is early in the year and all, so the shades of brown I see are pretty common, but there are some lawns that are greening up nicely while mine is definitely not.

My mind always goes to thoughts of green as we approach St. Patrick's Day. I wonder if that's why my Irish dad enjoyed caring for his lawn so much?

One of his spring rituals was to rake it. I remember him out there working his way across the yard a little at a time, making pile after pile of dead grass, leaves and small sticks.

This was the just the first job in a season's worth of work aimed at growing good turf. Chances are that once the ground dries a bit you'll be out there too, clearing the lawn of winter debris and enjoying some long awaited sun on your back.

Find out what else you can do (and I should too) to achieve an attractive greenscape with a minimal commitment.

Don't mow so low, or as often. Mowing at a height of about three inches will encourage a healthy lawn. Why? Taller grass shades out developing weed seedlings.

It also makes large, established weeds more susceptible to mower damage (the more surface area of the weed that is removed, the more weakened it becomes.)

High mowing also fosters deep root growth. Deep roots sustain the lawn during periods of drought.

Keep mower blades sharp-

ened for the cleanest possible cut.

Water efficiently and effectively. If you set up sprinklers each season to water the lawn for you, take some time early in the season to position them so that water isn't wasted on sidewalks or driveways.

were to apply one thing to my lawn each season it should be lime. Grass can't grow well, or fight off diseases or bugs for that matter, if it isn't getting the nutrients it needs.

Many nutrients are bound up until the pH is corrected. Get a soil test and specify on the order form that you wish to grow grass, as results for flower or veggie gardening may differ.

Based on the results of your test, recommendations will be made as to the type of lime to use and at what application rate. For more information contact the UMass Extension or www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest. Here are some interesting grass facts: Did you know that according to a poll (sponsored by Briggs and Stratton) 64% of homeowners wish they had a better lawn? Or that 63 million households own at least one lawn mower?

The Professional Lawn Care Association estimates that a well-maintained lawn can increase the value of a home by up to 20%.

This was probably of little concern to Presidents Washington and Jefferson...they were the first to have lawns as we know them today but they were maintained by sheep!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 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.



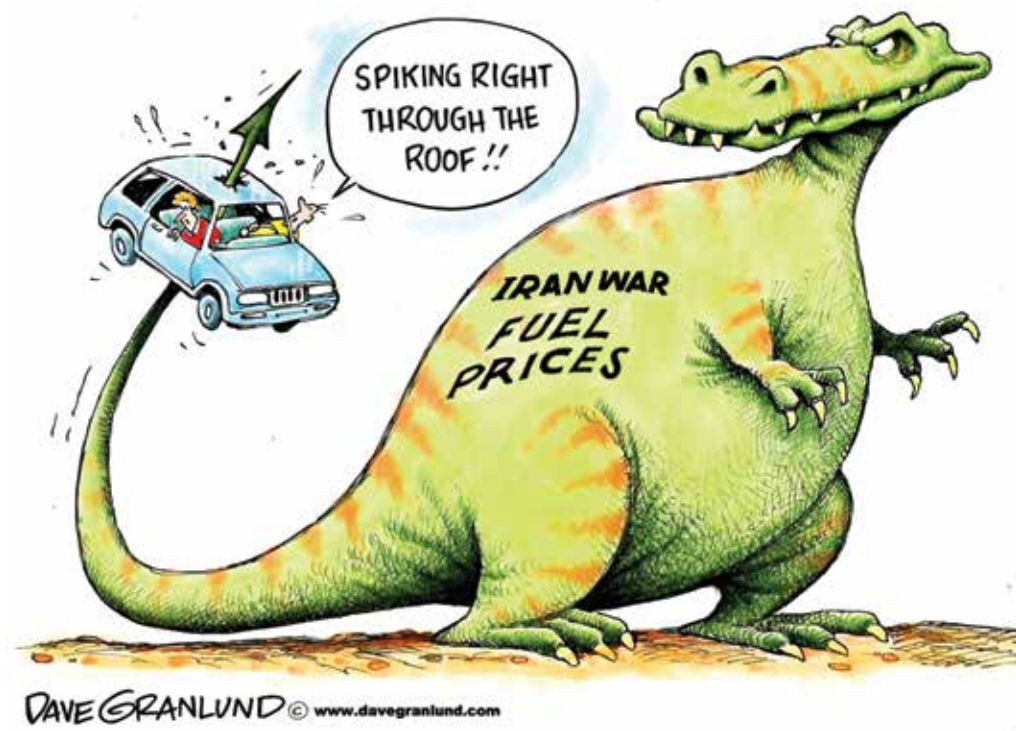
Mark the location and set up will be a no-brainer each time.

To grow best, grass requires an inch of moisture each week, more if your soil is sandy. Do the tea cup test to determine how much water your sprinklers emit and at what rate. Simply place a tea cup or other container on the lawn and turn on the sprinkler, check every five minutes or so until water reaches the inch mark.

Now you can set a timer, or turn off the sprinklers manually knowing your lawn has gotten its weekly drink. Most people know that early morning is the best time to water the lawn. By watering early in the day less moisture is lost to evaporation.

Grass is also less prone to fungal diseases because it has a chance to dry before nightfall.

Know your soil. A friend of mine who knew a lot about turf once told me that if I



The Wilbraham-Hampden TIMES TEAM

EDITOR
Kristin Rivers
krivers@turley.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Jocelyn Walker
jwalker@turley.com

SPORTS EDITOR
Greg Scibelli
sports@turley.com

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Correction Policy

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

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

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

Motor vehicle crash in Hampden leads to discovery of illegal firearm

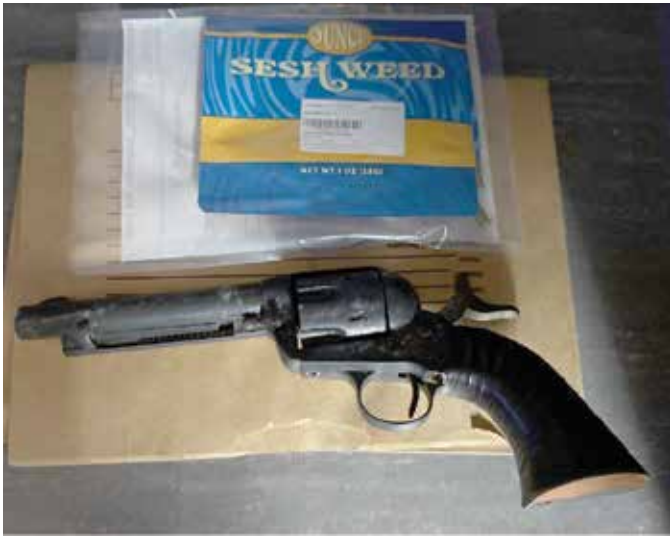


Photo and caption courtesy of Hampden Police Department

On March 15, officers responded to Somers Road for a motor vehicle crash. When officers arrived on scene they located a single motor vehicle off the roadway with heavy damage. After speaking to the operator, he exhibited signs of intoxication and became uncooperative with police. He refused to remove his hands from his pockets and after a brief struggle with officers, a loaded firearm was located hidden in his pocket. This firearm was not registered, and he did not have a firearms license.

Cody Xavier of Monson was charged with the following:

- OUI Liquor .08%
- Open Container of Alcohol in Vehicle
- License Not in Possession
- Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle
- Marked Lanes Violation
- Carrying a Loaded Firearm Without a License
- Possessing Ammunition Without FID Card
- Minor in Possession of Liquor



Photo and caption courtesy of Hampden Police Department

HPD responds to accident

On March 12, drivers were advised to avoid Mill Road except for local traffic due to a crash and the road was closed. It later reopened.

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Happy 8th Birthday

PARKER!

We love you so much!

Love, Mom, Dad & Peyton

A visit from Choo-Choo Charlie



Submitted photos Melissa Harter

Thank you Choo-Choo Charlie for a super fun visit! He even stopped by our Service Desk for some reference help! Check out our calendar for future opportunities to visit with him!



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St. Patrick's Day Luncheon



Jim Dupuis, the birthday boy, with his sisters Chris and Patti.



Claudia Kapinos serves the festive cake to attendees.

LUNCHEON from page 1

going on here, and having a great time," Dupuis said. "It's special because the way that things are going with this country and everything in this world nowadays, something like this where you get out for an hour, a couple hours, everybody just has a great time. Everybody chills and just gets along together. It feels like family, that's what it feels like. Like one big, giant family, especially when they all sang Happy Birthday to me."

Dupuis has celebrated his birthday at the luncheon before and it is also a good time because he volunteers at the senior center.

"Most of these folks are like my best friends. When I come here, it's like 'Hey, Jim's here!' Like with Cheers when you used to walk in the bar. When I walk in here, it's just like that," Dupuis said.

He hopes the senior center can do more themed events like this.

"Maybe in the future, we'll start doing more things," Dupuis said.

Executive Director Rebecca Moriarty shared this event sells out fast every year, elated with the turnout.

"This is always a very popular event here in Hampden and we know that as soon as we open phone lines for people to reserve their seats, it won't take long before we are completely full. It was no exception this year as 120 people signed up for and attended the luncheon," Moriarty said. "We are always happy to have a full house for events and we are glad when so many people are able to get together, enjoy each other's company, good food, great music and fun afternoon."

Moriarty said the staff and volunteers love to "celebrate holidays and events that are important to people," with St. Patrick's Day one of the big ones.

"We are always pleased at the end of the day when we've had a sold-out, wonderful event. It takes the entire team of staff and volunteers together to make events like this happen. When people go home at the end of the day and tell us what a great time they had, we know it was a



Lil Fedora, Claudia Kapinos and Caryn Greco, the faithful volunteers, decked out in St. Patrick's Day garb.

success," Moriarty said.

As for what's coming up in April, Moriarty said April is "packed with great things" to come.

"April is National Pet Month, Pickleball Month and April 22 is Earth Day and we have programs to celebrate. Bright Spot Therapy Dogs (and our therapy dog Tripp) will be here on April 7. We are bringing breakfast back

The community of Hampden brought out the St. Patrick's Day garb to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



A close-up shot of the St. Patrick's Day Luncheon meal. Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

on April 8. Green Valley Preschool is coming for an Intergenerational Program on

April 15, Pickleball Lunch and Learn on April 17, TJO Animals Foundation on April 28 and Second Chance An-



Receptionists Joi Giuggio and Sharon Woodin greeted attendees in the festive spirit.

ing" to perform for everyone.

"What a wonderful audience to perform for. It seems as though everybody has the spirit of the Irish in them today," Michel DaSilva said. "Because it falls right on St. Patrick's Day. We are very fortunate to be here and to celebrate and, I'll tell you, walking in that room and smelling all of that corn beef and cabbage. Yeah, it certainly smells like St. Patrick's Day. It's a wonderful thing."

Michel DaSilva shared that a new album was recently put together at the oldest drum factory in Granville, MA, called Noble and Cooley, to celebrate America's 250th birthday this year.

"It's kind of an interesting connection because my family's in the lumber business and my family would give Noble and Cooley wood to make drums, and when I found that out, I decided to have my family cut some trees from Chesterfield, and Noble and Cooley made some drums out of trees off of my grandpa's land, and that's how the connection was made," Michel DaSilva said. "We discovered that they had a sound recording studio, so we went in and recorded this album. We were just so in-

spired walking into that facility. They still make drums the old-fashioned way, which is steaming and bending it. It's a process that can take up to 10 to 12 months just to make one drum. It's really neat though. That's how they used to do it and they used to make drums for the Civil War. So, the Civil War album kind of came out of that."

As for favorite songs she enjoys performing, they include "Danny Boy" and "America the Beautiful."

"That's what being a fiddler to me is about. It's bringing us all together. It doesn't matter your ethnicity or your culture, your heritage. American music brings us together," Michel DaSilva said.

Moriarty's message was this.

"We are so happy that everyone enjoyed the St. Patrick's Day Luncheon and we thank Sarah the Fiddler and her team for being here and providing such great musical entertainment. We encourage everyone to pick up a copy of the April Scribe to see all the great things we have coming over the next month and into May when we will celebrate Older Americans Month," Moriarty said.

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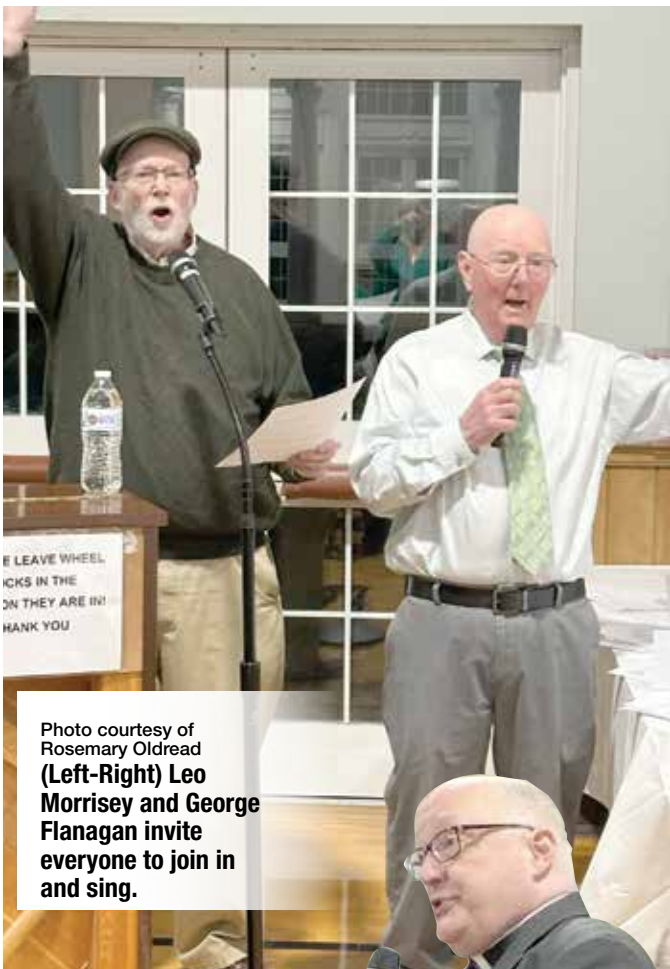


Photo courtesy of Rosemary Oldread (Left-Right) Leo Morrissey and George Flanagan invite everyone to join in and sing.

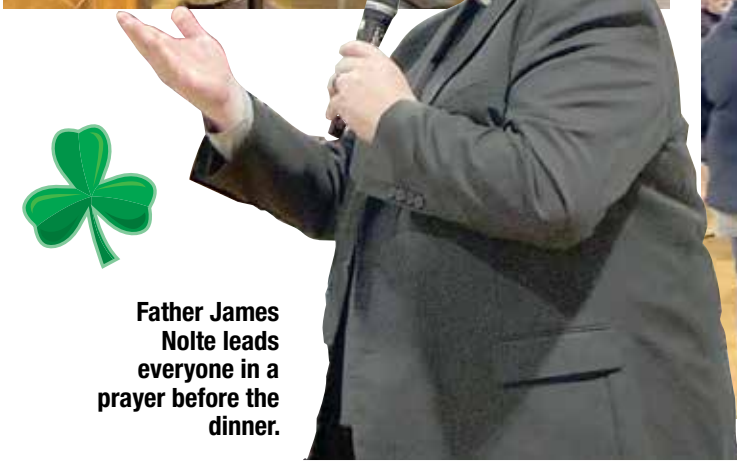
KNIGHTS from page 1
ple that kind of get the same mindset as it gets to me.”
In attendance was Grand Knight Josh Mitchell, who was warmly welcoming people into the dinner, while also taking photos for the Knight’s social media pages.
“It’s a great community event for our parish as a whole,” Mitchell said. “Upmost 240 people are here today, which is just outstanding. Coming from the COVID times where it was kind of depleted, and I got resurgent folks wanting to just have a good meal, have a good chat, have a beer, do some raffles. So, it’s good to have that camaraderie back once again.”
Also in attendance was Knight Dr. Thomas Wadzinski, who was out volun-

teering at the dinner.
“It’s certainly a great event to bring people together in the community,” Wadzinski said. “Having something that just brings people together, spring is kind of around the corner, it gets people out doing something. It’s nice, and certainly for the Knights, we fundraise a lot through this event which helps us support local charities.”
It was a wonderful night to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with family and friends alike, enjoying good food and singing fun songs together. All the while supporting a great local organization in Wilbraham.
For more information about the Wilbraham Knights of Columbus 10195, check out kofcwilbraham.com.



Volunteers warmly serve food to attendees.

Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen



Father James Nolte leads everyone in a prayer before the dinner.



The Parish center is packed with attendees here to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day.



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Shred Day Fundraiser set for April 24

HAMPDEN - SAVE THE DATE: Friday, April 24, from Noon to 2 p.m., Pro Shred will be at the Hampden Senior Center Parking Lot, located at 104 Allen Street in Hampden.



Once again, The Friends of The Hampden Senior Citizens will hold this fundraiser to assist you in disposing of your documents that need to be shredded. This notice will allow you time to gather all those important papers and place in a box or bag.

We can allow only five boxes (paper copier size) per car or five kitchen size trash bags. Limit is total of five per car. Pro Shred is not charging for this event but the Friends of The Hampden Seniors will appreciate any monetary donation that you would like to donate. We look forward to seeing you all there.

HEARING from page 2

family, who donated the land to the town "way back when things were measured in furlongs and oak trees," which Smith identified as a way to "pay homage to that family."

Regarding the change to pedestrian access to the village center, Smith stated that the project representatives were working with the town engineer to ensure the plan complies with federal and state standards, as well as making sure that the measures are aligned with best practices for managing traffic at a small New England town scale.

"We are not unique in having this type of town and experiencing growth and more traffic," Smith said as he described the research and legwork that goes into a plan like this. "A lot of these things have been done before in other areas and there's some bench-marking for that."

The next project steps will include the plans being posted on the town website

as well as a plan history and the reasons for the renovations. An additional meeting, which is proposed to take place on April 1 at the Wilbraham Senior Center, is scheduled to address any public concerns and solicit further community feedback.

"We didn't want to submit something half-baked to the public," Smith said when explaining why he also created a second abutters letter. The updated document mentions that the targeted area has increased from 300 feet to 600 feet, doubling the initial projected affected radius. This information will also be posted on the town website to provide full transparency.

"This is a concept," Smith said. "This is an idea. This has not been funded. It took us like three years to get this piece of paper in front of you (referring to the Select Board) right now and if there's any concerns about shovels being put into the ground any time soon, I can guarantee that that ain't gonna happen."

BUDGET from page 1

Dr. John Provost, Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Dr. Douglas Slaughter, Josh Dixon, director of Student Services, Lisa Curtin, director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning, members of the Hampden Selectboard and Wilbraham Select Board, Town Administrator Nick Breault, Advisory Committee Chair Doug Boyd, Advisory Committee Member John Matthews, Finance Committee Chair Todd Schneider, State Rep. Angelo Puppolo, Jr. (D-Springfield), State Rep. Brian Ashe (D-Longmeadow) and State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow).

Provost said the only word he heard with respect to the budget—after Slaughter presented an overview—was reductions.

"We're not talking about adding anything. We're not talking about making education better. We're talking about making devastating cuts to our schools. I see a sign out there that says 'Strong schools, stronger communities.' This is not a budget for a stronger school or a stronger community," Provost said.

He added that the strategies done to close the budget gap were about \$800,000 in fiscal strategies, including about \$373,000 in programmatic cuts.

On Chapter 70 State Aid, there is anticipation that minimum aid will go up to \$150 per pupil, as it was the year before.

"As you know, that's not where it's at right now, but if it doesn't get there, we have to make more cuts, and even with that, we're talking about potentially more than 10 staff being reduced," Provost said.

After discussing the impacts of health insurance increases—another factor impacting school budgets—

Oliveira noted HWRSD saw an 8.65% increase in Chapter 70 State Aid. For cities like Springfield and Chicopee, for example, their increases were 35% and 38%, respectively, over the last five years.

"They need it desperately, but so does Hampden-Wilbraham," Oliveira said. "We fought very hard to change the Chapter 70 funding formula and we were able to pass the Student Opportunity Act, which was a seven-year plan for the Commonwealth to right and fix that funding formula for our neediest of school districts. Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke out in our area. That's why they're seeing these greater increases over time. But, we also understand that this funding formula is broken for school districts like Hampden-Wilbraham. It's broken for my hometown, where I sat on the School Committee in Ludlow for 12 years, which by the way, Ludlow saw a 6% increase in the Chapter 70 aid, even lower than Hampden-Wilbraham over the last five years."

He added FY27 is the final year of the seven-year plan for the Student Opportunity Act implementation and how "funding formulas matter," emphasizing many communities now fall under the minimum state aid category, including HWRSD.

"My number one ask in this year's budget, given the funding constraints that we have, is to crack open the funding formula so we can have benefits for all school districts in Massachusetts, not just our gateway cities," Oliveira said.

Hampden Selectboard Chair John Flynn wanted more money back to the schools.

"You have responsibilities as state legislators. We have responsibilities to the parents, teachers and children of this town. We can't keep going back to them and saying, 'Well, the percentage you have to pay has to go up because you sent the money to Boston. They're using it for something else.' We need that money back here so we can take care of what we have here, and then do a reasonable job of everybody balancing what they need," Flynn said.

Flynn then cited the school

district buildings and how the staff give 110% and care.

"They can't do it forever with nothing, and we need that money back," Flynn said.

Hampden-Wilbraham Education Association Vice President Christine Goonan, who is also a teacher at Stony Hill Elementary School, said that "teachers are at a breaking point" with mediation nearing 300 days on current contract negotiations and there's "a monsoon happening in Wilbraham and Hampden."

"Both towns, Hampden and Wilbraham, have to look at their budgets in town and make education a priority. Level-funded, not a cut budget. We need a level-funded budget," Goonan said. "If we want this public education system to be viable for the future and not get sucked up or disappear like South Hadley or have immense overrides because of healthcare craziness, we need to start fully funding it and advocating our state officials and federal officials to start giving us what we need to educate our kids."

The WMS Strings Program was another potential reduction, leading to many community members speaking out against this, including WMS Band Director Richard Cuoco.

Cuoco got emotional sharing how his school's music program impacted his life and career, also becoming an advocate for school music programs.

"I never imagined that after eight years in this district, I would be advocating for the retention of a program within my own school district. After last year's proposed cuts, many of us believed the community had made its feelings clear. Yet, here we are again," Cuoco said.

He also clarified that the cut wasn't just about middle school strings, but also middle school chorus. If strings was cut, the position would be reduced to half-time and negatively impact chorus as well.

"I urge you, if and when cuts must be made, please do not touch the music program. The work that teachers are doing here is not just for the students we have today, but for the long-term strength of a program that has a profound impact on our students and

the entire community," Cuoco said.

Karen Romano emphasized how "everybody cares" and no one, including the School Committee, wants to cut the music program or underfund teacher salaries.

"Nobody wants any of those things, but there is a reality to the life that we currently live because you and your household as you're looking at what you make and what you do with your money, have to make hard decisions. You have to decide on a day-to-day basis what you spend your money on and what you don't," Romano said. "The district has to do the same thing. The towns have to do the same thing. So does the state and so does the federal government."

Romano said she does not believe "that there is anyone sitting in this room or anyone that has a decision-making capacity that is looking at this problem and going, 'Oh, just get rid of that. That'll be fine.'"

"We all care and what's important is that we recognize that and that we come at each other from a cooperative standpoint of saying how do we approach this problem in a way that makes it better for everybody, and not in a way that says, 'You're trying to harm me' or 'You're trying to get something for me that I don't have,'" Romano said. "And so, when we're looking at the budget, yet there's going to have to be cuts and nobody's going to like it, no matter where they come from. But, unless we find a way to get more money, unless there is a way to somehow get more money available, then something has to give."

After reflecting on how parents are also feeling the impacts and she would do everything to support her kids, Romano ended her comments with this.

"Every community member, I promise you, feels that same way. The problem is that the overall rhetoric gets negative when we start to look at 'I'm asking for this' and 'I need to give this.' Instead, it needs to be we are a team. We are all a team. The parents, the district, the representatives, we all have to function as a team or else none of this works," Romano said.

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CLUES ACROSS

- "Bird of Paradise" constellation
- Red Sox WS winner Bronson
- Whirl
- The State Dept. has a notable one
- Energy, style and enthusiasm
- Part of the mind
- Mountainous country
- Type of beverage
- Atomic #109
- Opposite of falsities
- Female sheep
- Rocky peak
- Sensitive information sharing environment
- Ethnic group of Thailand
- Patron saint of Rome Philip
- Psychedelics
- Japanese pine

- Have an impact on
- Violent disorder
- A French river
- Early Mesoamerican civilization
- Messenger
- ribonucleic acid
- Musician Clapton
- Ancient Greek sophist
- Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
- Valley
- A way to unwind
- Atomic #93
- Recommending
- Indigo bush
- Larry and Curly's pal
- Off-Broadway theater award
- Fencers
- Small Eurasian deer (pl.)
- Relating to songbirds
- A way to assign

CLUES DOWN

- Some are "secret"
- Intestinal openings
- Distant planet
- Assembly possessing high legislative powers
- Genus of typical owls
- One with distinctively colored hair
- Red cross
- An alternative
- Abominable snowmen
- About ear
- The opening letters
- Feeling of regret
- Atomic #39
- Luteinizing hormone
- Atomic #55
- Carries a debt
- Albanian monetary unit
- Semitic abjad letter
- Yes
- Negative
- Earn a perfect score
- Connecticut

- Partner to cheese
- Snack nuts
- Quadruped's body part
- Locate
- Pitching statistic
- "___, myself and I"
- Utah city northwest of Provo
- Football players in the trenches
- One who runs the show
- Wood
- Performing artists
- Slang for a cut
- More breathable
- Most crafty
- Provokes into action
- University of Dayton
- Sodium
- Large fish of the mackerel family
- Not one
- ___ and behold
- Sports highlight show
- "The Great Lakes State"

SPORTS

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Trio of Falcons take part in Senior All-Star game

Kai Ly celebrated for wrestling accomplishments

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

SPRINGFIELD—While serving as the boys' varsity basketball coach at Palmer High School, Ryan Minns coached a boys' team three times in the Senior All-Star Basketball Game, which is held each March on the Jerry Colangelo Court of Dreams located inside the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield.

Minns, who's currently the girls' varsity coach at Minnechaug Regional High School, had the chance to coach a girls' team at the prestigious event, for the first time this year.

Three talented basketball players from Minnechaug were also selected to play for the White All-Star team, which was coached by Minns. The trio of Kelly Cronin, Cailin O'Brien, and Elizabeth Woytowicz helped the White team post a 67-52 victory over the Black team on March 20.

"This is my fourth time coaching in this All-Star game, but it's my first time coaching a girls' team," Minns said. "It was also a lot of fun to be able to coach Kelly, Cailin, and Elizabeth for the final time."

Woytowicz led her teammates with 12 points in the All-Star game. O'Brien also reached double digits with 10 points and Cronin added three points.



Turley photo by Gregory A. Scibelli
Minnechaug's Cailin O'Brien, Kelly Cronin, and Elizabeth Woytowicz at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame for the Senior All-Star Game last Friday night.

Please see **TRIO**, page 12

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM – Minnechaug Regional wrestling coach Joe Griffin may have coached senior Kai Ly for just one season at the varsity level, but it proved to be an unforgettable experience for him.

"Kai is a dream wrestler for a wrestling coach," Griffin said. "His work ethic is amazing, his commitment is impressive and his attitude is great. For a high school student Kai is mature beyond years. He understands that in life and especially in wrestling you get out of it what you put into it, and his accolades speak to that. What the accolades don't speak to though is the type of person he is. Kai is a young adult with amazing character, good morales, is caring and would help a friend or teammate anyway he could."

Griffin is the third Falcons wrestling coach during the past four years.

"I've had a couple of coaches during my high school wrestling career" said Ly during a recent interview. "I learned a lot of different things from each of them."

Ly, who competed at the 138-pound weight class as a senior, compiled a 51-2 record this past season.

"This was my final season wrestling for the high

school team, so I really wanted to enjoy every match and every practice," said Ly during a recent interview. "It was a lot of fun."

Ly, who's a three time Division 2 state champion, advanced to the finals of the All-State championships, which were held at the MassMutal Center in Springfield.

"I wrestled a kid from Andover in the finals, who defeated me at the Lowell Holiday Tournament at the Tsongas Center in December," Ly said. "He only had one or two losses this season. I was able to defeat him by a score of 10-4 decision in the All-Star finals."

Ly has progressed up the ladder at the All-State championships throughout his high school career.

As a freshman, he finished in fifth place. He moved up a spot as a sophomore and came in third place as a junior before taking home the championship trophy this year.

Ly capped off his outstanding high school wrestling career at the New England Championships, which took place at the Providence Career and Technical Academy in Providence, Rhode Island at the beginning of March.

"I had a lot of fun competing at the New England's for the final time," Ly added.

Please see **LY**, page 12

Perfect day for a road race

Holyoke runs 49th holiday 10K

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – A warm and hot day is not ideal for running long distances, but give a harrier a 40-50-degree day, and it's the perfect environment make great time.

Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, experienced that as he completed a sub-30-minute 10K in the 49th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race last Saturday afternoon. Serafini completed the hilly course throughout downtown Holyoke in 29:45. He had a great pace going, averaging 4:47 a mile with thousands of people cheering him on as he completed the course 50 seconds ahead of the runner-up.

Yankarlos Diaz was the second-place finisher. He comes from Manchester, CT. He completed the 6.3-mile course in just 30:35.

This year's top female finisher was Rachel Schilkowsky. She comes from Providence, RI and placed 12th overall. She completed the course at 34:03, winning the race for the very first time.

Among local finisher, Monson's Matt Provost came in at 34:15. He had a pace of about 5:30 per mile.

According to the results provided by Presidential Timing, which took over the timing of the race last year,



Reese Laviolette heads for the finish line.

nearly 4,900 runners, male, female, and many children and teenagers, completed the 10K race.

In addition to the ideal temperature for running, the day was sun-splashed and beautiful, making for a great setting for the running of the race, which had more than 6,200 runners signed up.

The race included multiple waves of competitors, and also included a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem

Please see **RACE**, page 12



The runners are off in the 49th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Mackenzie Sinnott, of Wilbraham, hustles toward the end.



Eileen Heney is nearing the finish.



Wilbraham's Scott Dunbar, II gets in full stride near the end.

SPORTS

Registration continues for players in QVBL

SOUTH HADLEY – Registration for new players in the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, continues. The league is now headed for its open practices for new players and the new-player draft for players looking to join the league.

There will be open practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for Mar. 29 and Apr. 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on Apr. 4 following that practice. Any players who sign up will be contacted directly for the time and location of the open practice.

For the 2026 season, the

cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season schedule.

During the 2025 season, the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a week-night game to allow players an opportunity to play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will return along with a 16th game with an opponent to be determined as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall

league last year, the league will also have a fall league in September and October this season.

The registration is live at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed.

Aside from the weeknight and Mother's Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother's Day, Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Playoffs will be in August.

This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Cailin O'Brien heads toward the paint.



Rachel Schilkowsky, of Providence, RI, was the top female finisher at 34:15.



Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, won the 10K race at 29:45.



Tim Mullett completes the course.

RACE from page 11

by a member of the Holyoke Grand Colleen Court, Bridie Bowler.

Crews in the city did an excellent job preparing for the race, getting the course prepared despite a lot of snowfall during the past couple of months.

While there were plenty of local runners, race results showed individual participants from all over New England, New York, and New Jersey. There were even some international runners.

Last Saturday's even included a fun run for children and a walk as well that have been traditions in recent years. Prior to the race, there were musical performances and other entertainment downtown.

TRIO from page 11

"The three of them put in a lot of hard work and improved a lot during the past couple of years," Minns said. "I'm so proud of them."

O'Brien was the Lady Falcons second leading scorer this past season with 260 points. She made four field goals and two foul shots during the All-Star game, which featured two 16 minute halves.

"It was a lot of fun playing in tonight's game," O'Brien said. "I really enjoyed playing with two of my teammates from Minnechaug. Although our season did not conclude as we had hoped, we still found it to be a valuable and enjoyable experience."

Woytowicz finished her senior campaign with 179 points.

"I really enjoyed playing with and against some of the best basketball Western Mass players in tonight's game," Woytowicz said. "It was also a lot of fun playing with two of my high school teammates and being coached by coach Minns one final time."

O'Brien and Woytowicz will be playing college basketball in Canton, New York.

"I've known Elizabeth my whole life," O'Brien said. "To be able to go to a college in the same town as her is very special. I never thought it would happen and we're really looking forward to it."

O'Brien is going to be playing at SUNY Canton, while Woytowicz will be playing at St. Lawrence University.

"The two schools are very close," Woytowicz said. "I'm hoping that we do get to play a game or even scrimmage against each other. It's going to be a lot of fun."



Kelly Cronin gets the opening tip.

Cronin, who made a 3-pointer at the beginning of the second half, missed her junior season recovering from an ACL injury.

"Kelly suffered a season-ending knee injury during a preseason practice last year and she came back strong," Minns said. "She didn't have any limitations this season. She had a fantastic senior season and I'm looking forward to watching her play college basketball next year."

Cronin, who finished the season with more than 150 points, is planning to play basketball at Amherst College, which is coached by G.P. Gromacki. The Mammoths won the NCAA Division 3 championship title in 2011, 2017, and 2018.

"I'm really looking forward to continuing my basketball career at Amherst College," Cronin said. "I wasn't sure I would be able to play college basketball, especially

after suffering an ACL injury."

The Lady Falcons finished the 2025-26 campaign with an impressive 20-5 overall record.

After splitting with Valley League rival Springfield Central during the regular season, the Lady Falcons almost defeated the Golden Eagles for a second time in the championship game of the Western Mass. Class A tournament. The Lady Falcons were outscored 7-5 in overtime, which enabled Central to celebrate a 50-48 victory.

Minnechaug began the Division 2 state tournament with wins against Leominster, Mansfield, and Foxborough. Their season came to an end following a 53-32 loss to top-seeded and state champion Medfield High School in the Division 2 semifinals.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Bridie Bowler sings the National Anthem.

LY from page 11

ed. "I advanced to the finals and wound up finishing in second place."

Ly won his first three matches at the New England's by a decision.

"Obviously, you're always hoping for a pin in every match," Ly said. "I find it a lot more fun to win a match by a decision."

He pulled out a slim 16-13 win in the round of 16 match.

"I wrestled a kid from New Hampshire in the open-

ing match and he was very tough," Ly said. "I had to work very hard to earn the decision. I just kept going after that."

After having about an hour to rest between matches, Ly posted a major decision (17-9) in the quarterfinals.

A major decision occurs when a wrestler wins a match by eight or more points.

Ly finished the first day of competition at the New England's with a 2-0 record.

The following day, he won the semifinal match, 21-5, by

a technical decision (15 or more points) against a wrestler from Massachusetts.

I felt very good after winning the semifinals by a tech decision," Ly said. "I then lost in the finals, but it was still a very enjoyable experience. It was also a little bittersweet because it was the final match of my high school career."

Lukas Boxley, who attends Ledyard (Conn) High School defeated Ly, 14-2, in the championship match.

While it was the fourth time that Ly competed at the New England Championships, it was the first time that he advanced into the finals. He was the only member of the Minnechaug wrestling team to qualify for New England championships this year.

The other seniors listed on the Falcons wrestling roster this past season were Lincoln Stiles, and William Vezina, who couldn't wrestle due to an injury.

"I'm very close with the other two seniors on the wrestling team," Ly said. "We graduated a lot of seniors last

year and we tried to rebuild the program this year."

Ly, who won his 1,000th career match as a junior, began wrestling when he was eleven years old.

"I played several sports when I was younger," he said. "My family encouraged me to try wrestling and it's a sport that I really enjoy a lot."

After he graduates from high school in a couple of months, Ly is planning to continue his wrestling career at Emanuel College in Boston.

"I've known the wrestling coaches at Emanuel College for a long time, and I'm really excited about joining their wrestling team," Ly said. "They also have a nursing program, which I'm interested in. I really enjoy helping other people. I also love Boston."

A current member of the Emanuel College wrestling team is Matt MacPhail, who graduated from Minnechaug Regional last year.

Hopefully, Ly can continue his success on the mat during the next four years.

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DA's office encourages parents to attend Stop the Swerve event with teens

SPRINGFIELD - Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni is encouraging parents and guardians across Hampden County to attend the upcoming Stop the Swerve prevention event alongside their high school, driving-age students.

The free event will take place on Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield. Stop the Swerve is focused on addressing the dangers of drunk, drugged, and distracted driving for our community's teenagers. The initiative brings together students, families, law enforcement, and community partners with one shared goal: preventing tragedies on our roadways before they happen.

A central component of the evening will be a new, locally produced documentary that examines the devastating impact of a real crash in our community.

The documentary centers on the tragic death of Jemylana Vargas, a young Springfield woman who lost her life following a crash on Interstate 91 in Longmeadow in 2023. The incident underscores how quickly a routine drive can turn fatal and the devastating ripple effects these crashes have on families, friends, and the broader community. By sharing her story, with the support of her loved ones, the program aims to put a human face to

the consequences of impaired and distracted driving and reinforce the importance of making safe decisions behind the wheel.

Following the documentary, an Assistant District Attorney who specializes in motor vehicle homicide cases will speak about the legal consequences of impaired and distracted driving, as well as the long-term impact these incidents have on victims, families, and entire communities.

"This event is not just for students, it's for families," said District Attorney Gulluni. "Parents play a critical role in shaping safe driving behaviors. Stop the Swerve is an opportunity to come together, learn from real life events, and have conversations that can ultimately save lives."

In addition to the presentation, students will have the opportunity to participate in interactive safety activities, including driving simulators, impairment-goggle exercises, and a pedal cart challenge designed to demonstrate the effects of impairment and distraction behind the wheel.

While students engage in these activities, parents will have the opportunity to attend a presentation by an assistant district attorney about the risks and liabilities associated with underage drinking and hosting teen gatherings.

The evening will also include the announcement of

winners from the 2026 Stop the Swerve Public Service Announcement (PSA) and Billboard Challenge, recognizing local students who have created impactful messages promoting safe driving.

All attendees of driving age can enter a raffle for free driving school tuition through AAA.

The Stop the Swerve event is free and open to all Hampden County parents and high school students. No registration is required.

More information can be found at <https://hampden-da.com/> or on the Facebook event page: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1L2Nx-FqEPV/>



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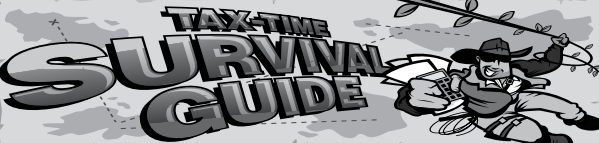
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BACKYARD from page 6

The drumming of the yellow-bellied sapsucker is very distinctive, consisting of a roll with clearly separated taps at the end and sometimes at the beginning "tap-tap trrrrrrrrrrr ta-ta- tat-tat-tat." Both sexes drum. Ritual tapping at the lower rim of the nest hole is a rather common acoustic signal.

The yellow-bellied is the only sapsucker seen in the eastern half of the U.S. and across the northern forests. These sapsuckers are migratory, which is a fairly rare trait for woodpeckers. They live in a variety of habitats from low-lying floodplains to mountainous forests at 10,000

feet. Their breeding range extends from Alaska to Newfoundland and south along the Appalachians. They winter across the East from New Jersey west to Texas and all the way south to Panama.

A common breeding display involves males pointing their bills skyward as they showcase their red throat patch for an interested female. Though both sexes are involved with excavating nesting cavities; males do most of the work. Occasionally, sapsuckers visit bird feeders for suet.

Bald eagle and turkey vultures Early this month, a Worth-

ington resident sent an email. He said he had a "lucky and thrilling sighting of an eagle, white tail obvious, circling on high with three turkey vultures and he called it "intra species cooperation" or more likely, the eagle using the vulture's ability to find carrion.

I saw three turkey vultures along Route 122 in Barre near Vernon Avenue on March 16. I saw two turkey vultures in Oakham on St. Patrick's Day. Their return is a sign of spring.

Robins

Huge flock of robins. Last week, I saw a huge flock of robins, probably close to 100 birds fly over head along

Route 32 in Gilbertville. Robins overwinter in this area, but large flocks are the returning robins that migrate.

Canada geese

The Canada geese are also returning. I saw quite a few geese in a cornfield in Spencerville last week. I also saw about a dozen or saw fly overhead.

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.



First Prize winner 4-year-old Peyton Lynch with his Snowman

Snowman contest winners announced

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club's Snowman Contest was held through the winter season.

Thanks to lots of snow and some very creative folks in both Wilbraham and Hampden, we received the greatest number of entries ever!

"The goal of the contest is for families to have lots of fun spending quality time together making their Snowmen. We hope everyone who entered the contest looks back on their time spent as worth wild whether they win or not" said Brenda Willard, President of the Wilbraham Junior Women's Club.

The third-place winners who receive \$20 are 10-year-old Mila and 2-year-old Remi Ford of Hampden for their "Snowman Family."

Our Second-place winners who receive \$25 are 2-year-old Jasper and his dad Jake Corbett of Wilbraham for their "Gentleman Snowman" entry and our First-place winner who receives a trophy and \$30 is 4-year-old Peyton Lynch from Wilbraham for his "Snowman with Glasses" entry!

The winners and their families also receive free admission to the Bunny Breakfast on March 28 at S.t Cecelia's Church where they will be presented with their prizes.

DIRECTOR from page 1

"My public health nurse, Annette, who serves the four towns, she's already started following up on some of those cases. So, I'll just let her know that, now, you're the first backstop and that's really the only change, and, likewise, I have access to those cases. So I'm able to kind of, from a supervisory perspective, make sure that Annette's getting the workflows done when she's on vacation or elsewhere. I have training on Maven, so I can jump in and do those," Paxton said.

Paxton said the electronic database focuses on lab testing after a confirmed case of an infectious disease, followed by gathering information and tracking the case or cases. As for the department's responsibilities, it's phone calls to learn more about the symptoms.

The shared health services, he added, are covered through funding from a state grant called the Public Health Excellence Grant.

Davenport next mentioned resident concerns about a manure pile.

"We don't have a bylaw and I'm not so sure where public health is. Although there is some concern from

our stormwater management that some of the outflows tested positive for E.coli and for high nitrogen," Davenport said. "I guess I don't know what the best thing to do is. Should we just approach the owner of the property and talk to him and see...?"

Paxton said that seemed advisable to him and, to his understanding, this is "a relatively large business related to essentially raising horses."

"So, I think that you do have a legitimate usage of the manure and when we're talking about nuisances in the community, those are generally governed by the nuisance law in Massachusetts, which is Mass General Law Chapter 111. Boards of Health have a pretty broad authority to declare something a nuisance and do enforcement against it," Paxton said. "But, I'd be hesitant to start with that as a first step knowing that this is a community partner that might be very likely to make some changes on our request, but also because there's a section of the nuisance law that states that regular manure spreading should not be considered a nuisance."

After Flynn noted the potential conflicts in the state law and more information was needed along with en-

gaging more parties on a solution, Paxton agreed.

"As a health agent, you're typically observing things firsthand and then writing inspection reports and orders based on those firsthand observations," Paxton said. "I've driven by the area quite a bit and I've seen that they are starting to store manure, but I haven't quite experienced the breadth of that issue as we move into the summer months."

Selectboard Member Erik Vanderleeden shared his observations.

"I'm a little bit farther away, but ever since that kind of farming has started, the fly increase, it's legitimate," Vanderleeden said. "At first I was wondering where did these flies come from and then a couple complained and I was like, 'Oh. Yeah, now it makes sense. Yeah, that's where they're coming from.'"

After Paxton shared he'd like to hear more specifics about how the business is using the manure, Flynn agreed and asked about outreach.

Paxton replied that he could do it.

"I'm hopeful we can improve the situation without an enforcement order based on what we kind of talked about with the different legalities,"

Paxton said. "I think that'd be a good first step and then we have other business with them that's regular business, so it'd be a great opportunity to create that relationship as well."

Paxton will set up a time to meet with the business, with Davenport agreeing to join him.

Paxton next explained that thanks to the state grant, the department is all set for FY27, as most staff is typically funded and there aren't many expense line items.

"We have a little bit for training, a few thousand dollars, but more or less we get about \$393,000 a year and that funds 20% of my position. So, 20% full-time equivalent. It funds the entirety of the health inspector, which serves all four towns. It funds the entirety of a shared services coordinator who functions for all of our administrative management, and also, as a grant coordinator," Paxton said.

In the coming year, Paxton said the Finance Committee "did not find a need for any of the towns to contribute in FY27."

"We try not to ask for a lot when we can, and in this particular case, we're happy to say that it'll be all right for FY27," Paxton said.

RANDOM from page 5

Adele said that just being kind with a simple smile can be a Random Act of Kindness and she is so right. It doesn't take a lot to just share a kind gesture. As the saying goes, "You can be anything, so just be kind."

If you'd like to share a

Random Act of Kindness story or if this one has touched you, please contact me at bdt514@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

PUBLIC NOTICES

WILBRAHAM PLANNING BOARD The Wilbraham Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 5:45 PM in the Town Office Building, 240 Springfield Street, on the application of Little Ivy Learning Academy LLC for Site Plan Approval (SPA26-01) under Section 3.4.4.4 of the Wilbraham Zoning Bylaw to allow a licensed child care facility on property owned by Theorod LLC located at 2 Crane Park Drive as shown on plans on file in the Planning Office and posted for public viewing on the Planning Board page of the Town of Wilbraham website at www.wilbraham-ma.gov/123/Planning-Board. This meeting will be conducted in person and virtually (see meeting agenda for details). James Rooney, Chair 03/19, 03/26/2026

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PO Box 543 Wilbraham MA 01095 413-596-4374 03/12, 03/19, 03/26/2026 WILBRAHAM PLANNING BOARD The Wilbraham Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 6:00 PM in the Town Office Building, 240 Springfield Street, on the application of (1) The Towers BTS of Massachusetts d/b/a Vertical Bridge and (2) Celco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless for a Special Per-

mit (SP26-01) as required under Sections 3.4.3.6 and 10.5 of the Wilbraham Zoning By-Law for the construction of a new Wireless Communications Facility on property to be leased from the owner, Town of Wilbraham, located at 540 Stony Hill Road. The proposed facility consists of a single, free-standing, 120 foot tall monopole tower with antenna and associated telecommunications equipment to be located within a 50 foot by 50 foot

fenced compound as shown on plans on file in the Planning Office and posted for public viewing on the Planning Board page of the Town of Wilbraham website at www.wilbraham-ma.gov/123/Planning-Board. This meeting will be conducted in person and virtually (see meeting agenda for details).

The applicant will be conducting a field test to simulate the visual impact of the proposed tower by displaying a balloon

above ground to mark the height of the highest point of the proposed tower. The field test will be performed on Saturday, April 4, 2026 from 8 AM to 4 PM with a rain date of Monday, April 6, 2026 or Tuesday April 7, 2026 from 8 AM to 4 PM. 03/19, 03/26/2026

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SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES This ad is pursuant to MA Gen. Law Ch.255, Sec. 39A as of March 27, 2026 the following motor vehicle will be for sale to satisfy a garage keepers lien: 2012 Jeep Grand Cherokee VIN#: 1C4RJFAG7CC115586 COLOR: Red LKO: Michael Barrett 2027 High St.

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.

Word search grid with letters A, P, U, S, A, R, R, O, Y, O, G, Y, R, E, S, E, C, R, E, T, A, R, Y, E, L, A, N, I, D, T, I, B, E, T, N, O, N, A, L, C, O, H, O, L, I, C, M, T, T, R, U, T, H, S, E, W, E, S, T, O, R, S, I, S, E, S, A, E, K, N, E, R, I, A, C, I, D, S, M, A, T, S, U, A, F, F, E, C, T, M, A, Y, H, E, M, L, O, I, R, E, O, L, M, E, C, M, R, N, A, E, R, I, C, A, B, A, S, O, E, D, G, L, E, N, U, N, C, O, I, L, N, P, C, O, M, M, E, N, D, A, T, O, R, Y, D, A, L, E, A, M, O, O, B, I, E, S, W, O, R, D, S, M, E, N, R, O, E, S, O, S, C, I, N, E, S, O, R, T

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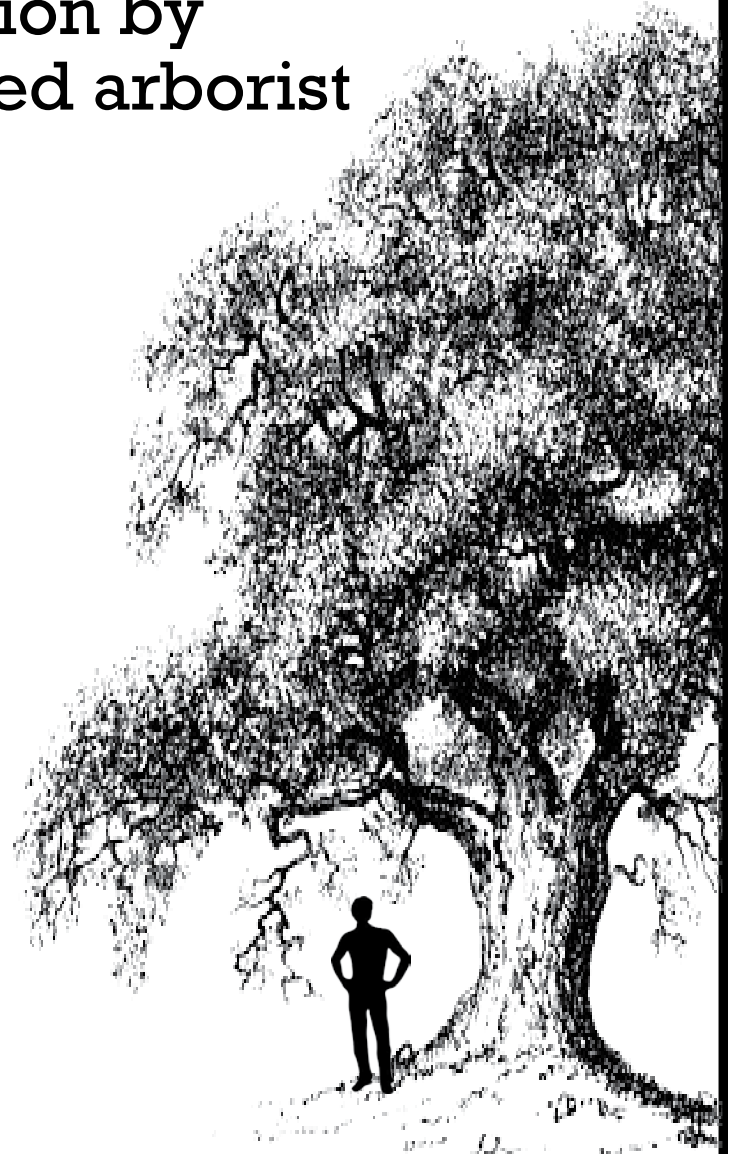


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