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VFW Day of Service

Page 4

SPORTS

Boys volleyball in action

Page 11

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JUNE 4, 2026

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ABOVE: Vic Musante speaks at Hampden's Memorial Day observance.

Turley photos by Patricia Sullivan

AT LEFT: VFW members line up in the fire station.



Update on the FinCom notices

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Times has more information since the recent announcement of several resignations from the Finance Committee.

As reported last week, Select Board Chair Marc Ducey announced during the May 18 Select Board meeting that three people had resigned from the Finance Committee. They were Todd Schneider—who served as chair—Kevin Corridan and Xiomara Albán DeLobato.

Since then, the Times heard back from Schneider, who confirmed that a fourth member, Patrick Kiernan, also resigned.

Per the June 1 Select Board agenda, Corridan's resignation was effective May 14, Schneider's resignation was effective May 17, DeLobato's resignation was effective May 19 and Kiernan's resignation is effective June 30, the end of his current term.

Schneider added that the order of resignation announcements was Kiernan,

Please see **FINCOM**, page 10

HAMPDEN HONORS THE MILITARY

By Patricia Sullivan
Correspondent

HAMPDEN - Vietnam War Veteran Vic Musante, a holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross given for extraordinary heroism, spoke at this year's Memorial Day observance in Hampden.

Due to rain, the May 25 event was moved indoors to

the North Road Fire Station and Hampden's traditional Memorial Day parade was canceled.

David Demers, Commander of Hampden's VFW Post 9397, introduced Musante and related how he heroically flew his helicopter into enemy fire to attempt to determine the fate of a downed crew.

"Too bad about the internet," remarked Musante. "I wouldn't have mentioned that, but you found out quite a bit about me."

Musante served more than 30 years in the Army National Guard as a helicopter pilot. He currently volunteers in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as a researcher and field analyst for the

nonprofit Tours of Duty. The group looks for the remains of missing in action members of the military so that they may have a proper burial.

"We're looking to bring them home," Musante said.

There are 3,554 Massachusetts MIA men and women who served in conflicts from World War II through Vietnam.

"The Gold Star families want us to keep trying to find them," Musante said. "These people want closure and they like what we do. The families still wait—there are no graves for them to put flowers on and no tombstones to be flagged."

Please see **HAMPDEN HONORS**, page 13

Wilbraham remembers heroes in Memorial Day ceremony

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - Members of the Wilbraham community came together to honor those who have served in the military in commemoration of Memorial Day at the

Wilbraham Senior Center on May 24.

Due to the weather, this year's ceremony—normally held at Crane Park Veteran Memorial—was moved indoors.

The service started with a welcome from Patrick Ren-

na, the Director of Veterans Services, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Scout Colin Page from Boy Scout Troop 359, and Girl Scouts from Wilbraham and Hampden. The Minnechaug

Please see **HEROES**, page 13



Photo courtesy of Lorna Lawrence
From the left, Local Historian David Bourcier, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Franklin Ludwig, Wilbraham's 2025 Veteran of the Year, State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow), State Rep. Angelo J. Puppolo Jr. (D-Springfield) and Select Board Chair Marc Ducey salute or place a hand over their heart alongside Wilbraham Scout Troop 359.

HILL CLIMB 2026

brings community together

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The community gathered in droves despite the weather to enjoy classic cars, vendors and more during the 2026 Hill Climb on May 9.

The annual event featured vintage race cars, vintage motorcycles, show cars for the car show, demo race cars, on-site restaurant, breweries and food trucks and various vendors, giveaways and craft sales.

The museums included



Photo courtesy of Joshua Sweeney

Families were all smiles at this year's event.

Heritage Museums & Gardens, Owls Head Transportation Museum, Audrain Auto Museum, Seal Cove Auto Museum and the New England Racing Museum.

Also, engineers from MIT, Boston University,

UMass Amherst and Western New England University bringing their prototype cars.

Also, special guests Wayne Carini, the TV host

Please see **HILL CLIMB**, page 15

VFW Post 9397 hosts 64TH ANNUAL KIDS FISHING DERBY

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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HAMPDEN - The VFW Post 9397 hosted its 64th Annual Kids Fishing Derby on May 9 to great fanfare.

Throughout the event, families gathered along the Scantic River to cast a line and fish, with prizes given out for the smallest fish, largest fish caught for boys and girls and the first fish caught.

This year's winners were Jackson Moriarty, who caught the smallest fish measuring two inches, Brantley Therrien, who caught the first fish, which measured 14 inches,

Brady McCarthy for boys with a fish measuring 17 inches and Aria Behnk for girls who caught a fish measuring 13 inches.

Police Chief Dan Bruno served as this year's celebrity judge, Giancarlo Crivelli, founder/executive director of Fishing Friends Inc., also stopped by to meet with attendees and Michael "Bax" Baxendale from Rock 102 was this year's special guest announcer.

The event was made possible through support from VFW Post 9397, the Women's Auxiliary from Post 9397 who set up the hot chocolate and coffee and the follow-

ing sponsors and supporters: Monson Savings Bank, CJ's Towing, Hampden Septic, JP McCarthy, John McCarthy Monson Terminal, Ivey Industries, Body Works Unlimited, Rediker Software, Koffee Tyme, The Grog Shoppe, Red's Corner, Crazy Jake's, Village Food Mart who donated hot dogs, Rice Fruit Farm who donated donuts, Mass Wildlife and Granby Bait Shoppe who donated the worms.

Please see **DERBY**, page 5

Turley photo by Kristin Rivers
Brady McCarthy with one of his fish he caught during the event.



VOLUNTEERS PLACE FLAGS ON VETERANS GRAVES



A group shot of the volunteers who worked on placing flags at veterans graves on May 22.



"Taps" is played in a moment of silence ahead of flagging the graves.



Volunteers were spread out throughout Adams Cemetery to flag the veterans graves.

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Volunteers gathered together on the Friday before Memorial Day to place flags on veterans graves. Patrick Renna, director of Veterans Services, was joined by his predecessor, Jered Sasen—who also serves as quartermaster in Hampden—Graves Officer Shelley Mutti and members of the Minnechaug Military Community Club on May 22 for the pre-Memorial Day Grave Flagging. The group placed American flags on the graves of veterans at Adams Cemetery, Glendale Cemetery and East Wilbraham Cemetery, hon-

oring those who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect this country. In this photo spread, readers will see photos of the group replacing old American flags with new ones at each grave and paying their respects to our fallen heroes. This intergenerational tradition provides an opportunity for reflection, community service and bringing generations together to give back to those who gave all. This was also one of two opportunities volunteers got to give back as the next day, May 23, a group gathered at the VFW Post 9397 for their Annual Day of Service. Readers can check out that story in this week's edition.



By flagging a veteran's grave, they are remembered.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
Teens worked together to flag the veterans' graves.



Volunteers take a moment to reflect before they begin.

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ACT	233 Cedar Swamp Rd., Monson	10 room, 3 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$430,000	
ACT	96 Stafford Hollow Rd., Monson	6 room, 4 bed, 3f, 0h bath Ranch	\$639,900	
ACT	115 Pasadena St., Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Bungalow	\$274,900	
ACT	147 Belvidere St., Springfield	7 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$319,900	
ACT	51 Hartford Ter., Springfield	7 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$379,900	
ACT	7 Brewster Rd., West Springfield	8 room, 4 bed, 2f, 0h bath Cape	\$600,000	
CTG	24 Speight Arden, East Longmeadow	7 room, 4 bed, 2f, 0h bath Cape	\$415,000	
CTG	161 Raymond Dr, Hampden	7 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Ranch	\$349,900	
CTG	19 Overlook Dr, Wilbraham	9 room, 4 bed, 3f, 1h bath Colonial	\$637,900	
UAG	140 Chestnut St., East Longmeadow	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Ranch	\$314,900	
UAG	24 Dewey Ave., East Longmeadow	7 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$362,000	
UAG	68 Baldwin Dr., Hampden	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Ranch	\$309,900	
UAG	185 N Monson Rd, Hampden	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Cape	\$359,900	
UAG	205 Bel Air Dr., Longmeadow	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 1h bath Raised Ranch	\$432,000	
UAG	69 Cherry Ln., Longmeadow	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath Ranch	\$599,000	
UAG	77 Fresno St, Springfield	6 room, 3 bed, 1f, 1h bath Victorian	\$324,900	
UAG	25 Piper Cross Rd., West Springfield	5 room, 2 bed, 1f, 1h bath Ranch	\$321,000	
SLD	85 Baldwin Dr., Hampden	5 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath Ranch	\$225,000	\$240,000
SLD	325 Allen St., Hampden	6 room, 3 bed, 2f, 0h bath	\$369,000	\$378,000
SLD	Lot 602 Grandview Ave., Ludlow	8 room, 4 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$650,000	\$625,000
SLD	83 Grandview Ave., Ludlow	7 room, 4 bed, 2f, 1h bath Colonial	\$675,000	\$680,000
SLD	11 Thornfell St., Springfield	7 room, 3 bed, 1f, 0h bath	\$219,900	\$220,000
SLD	7 Ashbrook St., Springfield	10 room, 4 bed, 1f, 1h bath Colonial	\$379,900	\$368,000
CONDOMINIUM LISTINGS				
ACT	140 Chestnut St., U:207, Springfield	3 room, 1 bed, 1f, 0h bath Mid-Rise	\$74,900	
CTG	235 State St., U:313, Springfield	4 room, 2 bed, 1f, 0h bath Garden	\$249,900	
SLD	140 Chestnut St., U:816, Springfield	3 room, 1 bed, 1f, 0h bath Mid-Rise	\$84,900	\$84,000
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Voters approve CPA project articles

By Reese Magee
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - At the Annual Town Meeting on May 11, residents voted on a wide range of articles for Community Preservation Act Projects.

Several proposals sparked especially strong discussion among voters and town officials.

Article 29 was a Community Preservation Act (CPA) project to improve the McLaughlin softball field at Spec Pond, with the addition of dugouts and outfield fencing by transferring \$60,500 from the FY27 Community Preservation Undesignated Fund Balance. The Finance Committee's recommended approval was 6-3.

Karen Perkins, the previous president of the Softball Committee, had brought this proposal forward.

"Softball is the only sport in town that doesn't have a dugout. Baseball is awesome and I love baseball, but we have dugouts all over town for baseball and don't for softball. So, my ending act as president was I'm going to get us dugouts for the field," Perkins said. "I think it's bogus that you voted six to three on this one...so, if you could vote this one through for our little girls so that they feel just as equal to everybody else that would be awesome."

Article 29 passed by majority.

Another article that generated discussion was Article 30. This article is another CPA project for perimeter fencing around Soule Road Elementary School playspaces including the baseball fields, with \$50,000 to be transferred from the FY27 Community Preservation Undesignated Fund Balance. The Finance Committee did not recommend approval 6-3.

Karen Romano questioned the Finance Committee's recommended approval vote.

"If we want to talk about bogus, let's talk about a 6-3 no vote on school fencing. So, I would love to hear from the Finance Committee why it is that you think that Soule Road School should not have a fence around their playground," Romano said.

Finance Committee Member Patrick Kiernan shared it was three things.

"It's not whether there should be a fence there or not.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
Karen Romano shares her thoughts on one of the articles.

If you look at the distance between the road to the playground and the time that the building has been there without a fence, it's pretty substantial period of time. So, do we want to use the money for that or do we want to use the money for other things? That was the reason for why I voted no," Kiernan said.

Romano replied this. "I think the concept of we haven't had an issue yet is very short-sighted. I will say that as the parent of a child with complex special needs who will be at Soule Road School next year and is an eloper, without a fence around that playground, he literally will have to be held the entire time he is outside at recess in order to be able to manage that playground area," Romano said.

Romano said how "also, it is the only elementary school playground where there is direct access from the playground to the road."

"The rest of the elementary schools' playgrounds are fenced and they are actually interior to their campuses and adjacent to the parking lot as opposed to a public street. So, in addition, I believe that a fence around that playground and the ball fields—which is being asked for—in addition to all of those safety issues, it will also be a deterrent and will stop people from being able to access that school campus during the school day and it will protect community members who make use of that playground after school hours to play with their kids and make use of that open space."

Romano ended her comments saying it will also "give them some protection of having that fence around that playground as well."

"So, I think it is an area



Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Dr. Douglas Slaughter also spoke during the Annual Town Meeting.

heavily used by the community. It is a school which requires the safety of a fence and I think that the idea that this is not appropriate use of CPA Funds is simply wrong," Romano said.

Lana Fortin spoke about her concerns for her child.

"I can only speak for myself as a parent of a child who thinks fast but moves faster than the distance from that playground and the road is not as far as you think," Fortin said. "If we're going to spend money on a truck for children's safety, I think we can spend money on a fence that will help keep those children that are there now that do have complex special needs and need somebody to support them from getting to that road or from somebody getting from the road to the fence. So, I would highly recommend voting for."

Soule Road Elementary School Teacher Isabella Adkins spoke that "we would be in a very different situation if we were talking about a major catastrophe that happened if a car drove right into our playground."

"It's unsafe as it is, the fencing needs to be there. We already cut positions based on the school budget, so we now have less educators who can watch the students that are outside, so if there's a fence there it would be a safer environment," Adkins said.

After Alex Millis asked how many students have gone on the road in the past two years, Romano said, "I'm not on the committee, but I will tell you that I did have conversation with the principal from Soule Road prior to this meeting tonight and they had five eloping issues so far this year."



Soule Road Elementary School Teacher Isabella Adkins was also amongst the speakers.

After Tracey Plantier, chair of the Community Preservation Committee, clarified the playspace perimeter fencing, Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Dr. Douglas Slaughter provided additional information.

"It would start from the building—if you think about the Soule Road side of the building—it starts at the edge of the building, goes around the playspace, goes to the edge of the property, then follows around the edge of the property and around the ball fields and back around to the parking lot side. So, it's a fairly large area," Slaughter said. "It's the primary spaces that are used for recreation and play on the ball fields."

Slaughter added there would be gates there as well for access for students and emergency vehicles.

When the discussion concluded, Article 30 passed by majority.

The next article that was voted on was Article 31, a CPA project to remove existing playground equipment and acquire and install new playground equipment at Soule Road Elementary School, with a transfer of \$120,550 from the FY27 Community Preservation Undesignated Fund Balance.

Finance Committee's recommended approval was 8-1.

There was no discussion on this article and it passed by majority.

As a result, children in Wilbraham will have access to new softball dugouts, a fence around Soule Road school playspaces, and new playground equipment thanks to approval of the CPA-funded projects, allowing for a fun and safer environment in Wilbraham.

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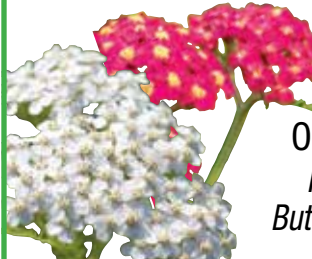
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Wilbraham Lions Club to hold Food Drive on June 6

WILBRAHAM - Just days after purchasing, preparing, cooking and serving a roast pork and vegetable noon day meal to the disadvantaged at the Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen in Springfield, the Lions are once again working

to help alleviate hunger in this area.

On Saturday, June 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Wilbraham Lions Club will be collecting non-perishable foods at Wilbraham Big Y.

Our hope is to collect

enough food to help replenish the food pantry at the Community Survival Center in Indian Orchard. The Survival Center serves the towns of Wilbraham, Hampden and Ludlow as well as other communities in the area.

Let's join together to make sure that no child goes to bed hungry tonight or any other night in this area!

The Wilbraham Lion's Club extends its sincere thanks for any and all monetary and/or food donations.

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A group photo of the volunteers who lent their support on the VFW Day of Service in Hampden, holding American flags.



A group photo of the volunteers outside the VFW Post 9397 in Hampden.

Turley photos by Reese Magee

Community gathers for VFW Day of Service

By Reese Magee
Correspondent

HAMPDEN - Veterans and volunteers met at the VFW Post 9397 in Hampden to clean up the parade route ahead of Memorial Day on May 23.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), is a major non-profit veterans service organization in the United States. The organization is made up of veterans who have served overseas and continue to support their local communities through service projects even after they have served.

Around 12 to 15 veterans gathered at the VFW location in Hampden prior to the Memorial Day festivities for the Fifth Annual Day of Service. Their goal was to walk along the parade route and pick up trash so that the tree line would be clean for spectators during the parade.

Veterans could be seen walking along Main Street in Hampden carrying trash bags, litter pickers and gloves as they picked up trash along the side of the road.

The VFW Day of Service is a worldwide initiative where veterans, service members and community partners come together to help improve their neighborhoods through volunteer service. It was launched by the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 2022 and highlights the many ways veterans continue to serve their community long after their military service has ended.

One of the veterans present during the cleanup was David Demers, commander of the Hampden VFW Post 9397.

"We're cleaning up the road for the parade tomorrow

because we're doing our day of service. One day a year, the VFW gives back to the community in some way, shape or form," Demers said. "It's important to us to clean the roadway so when the kids are coming out, they're not picking up bottles or trash on the side of the road. It's one way we give back."

The event focused on honoring veterans while also improving the appearance of the town before the Memorial Day Parade.

The VFW also hosts a Kids Fishing Derby as another way to give back to the community. During the event, the organization provides free food and prizes for participants.



Volunteers smile for a photo as they work on flagging veterans graves.



Members of the Minnechaug Regional High School Military Community Club were also on hand to lend their support.



Volunteers work together to place an American flag on this veteran's grave.

The VFW has hosted the event for the past 64 years, allowing the younger generation to learn about the organization and the impact its service has had on the community.

"We have people that are

50 to 60 years old and now they're bringing their grandchildren down here for them to participate in the fishing derby and turkey shoot for the first time. It teaches them what we do and how we give back to the community," Demers said.



A volunteer gets ready to place an American Flag on a grave in Hampden.

The VFW did not just clean up the parade route, but also combined efforts with the Minnechaug Military Community Club to replace flags at the graves of deceased veterans at Old Hampden Cemetery.

The club is run by Michael Hill, a history teacher at Minnechaug Regional High School. Hill also served as a Marine in the United States Military. At the Old Hampden Cemetery, four Minnechaug

Students from the Military Community Club also helped replace worn flags at veterans graves prior to Memorial Day.

Students, Veterans and parents walked through the cemetery in small groups replacing old flags with new ones. The atmosphere was respectful and sincere as community members honored veterans who served overseas and in the United States Military.

This act of service from The VFW and Minnechaug Military Community Club shows how local volunteers continue to honor fallen veterans for their service and sacrifice.

The cleanup and flag replacement efforts serve as a reminder of the importance of honoring veterans for their service. Through projects like these, the VFW continues to give back to the community and recognize the impact of those who have served.

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64TH ANNUAL KIDS FISHING DERBY

DERBY from page 1

Radcliffe Kenison and Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism Inc also donated this year's raffle prize.

Commander David Demers was excited that, despite the weather, families came out to fish.

"The number of participants vary from year to year. Early days, we had like 25 kids, but it's grown significantly over the years. We're up to about 80, 90 kids. Over the course of the 64 years, we've had over 3,700 kids that participated," Demers said. "Number of volunteers, we have members working on the event over the course of the year. We start planning, obviously, the day after the event for the following year, but it really kicks off in January. It takes three to four months to get a liberation permit—can't put fish in the water without this permit—which is given by the Mass Wildlife out of Boston. This year, we have 400 fish that we bought and Mass Wildlife actually came by yesterday and dropped off 200 fish that we put directly into the water."

Demers shared the VFW Post, like many other organizations with military roots, "is steeped in tradition." "The Fishing Derby, as well as the Turkey Shoots, pay homage to our roots as a New England farming community and our love of nature. We feel very fortunate that our Post is located in such a beautiful setting that we have the opportunity to do this on the Scantic River," Demers said.

He added the event is an opportunity to get families—especially the kids—out in nature and whatever money is raised, it's given back to the community and kids, crediting the citizens, local businesses and the Post and Women's Auxiliary for their continued support.

"Most of their parents fished down here when they were kids and so it's bringing it up through the community. It gives the family a no-cost opportunity to spend time outdoors and away from technology, distractions," Demers said. "Watching the kids as they go from helping release



From the left, Hampden Police Chie Dan Bruno, Aria Behnk, who won largest fish caught for girls, and VFW Post 9397 Commander David Demers. Her fish measured 13 inches.

the fish into the pen, running back to bait their hooks, drop a line and try to land a fish and take it to the judging table, it puts a smile on their face."

Buddy Green participated in the first derby ever held in 1954—where it originally took place at the Recreation Field—and shared that it was later moved to the VFW Post in 1959.

"One year I caught six—I caught the most—and one year I caught the biggest one. They were all trout," Green said. "They put 100 in and they caught 37 the first year and then after that—after it was over—then you could fish and you caught a lot of fish after that."

Green said he came to the event to watch the kids fish and think back on the times he did it as a kid. Also, he still fishes, enjoying the pastime.

"We fish for salmon up in New York, it was a lot of them. We had a big boat—a 25-foot boat—we would go out on Lake Ontario," Green said.

Bruno was having a blast measuring the fish and said, "The fish are biting."

"What a great event for the community and a lot of thanks to the VFW here, again, for doing this. This is what this town is about. Community events and this is a small event, but it's one of the great ones in town just like

our parade. This is something that these kids look forward to every year. We got a lot of fish in the river," Bruno said. "So thanks to the VFW, I appreciate being here celebrity judging."

What he enjoyed most was the community gathering together, encouraging everyone to continue supporting each other and all the local events in town.

"I get to see all of these townsfolk out here. It's just a great community event; this is what we do. I'm in the public service business and that's what this is. This is a great community event and public service, that's my favorite part. I get to see all these people and all these kids in town having a great time," Bruno said.

Also, the police department's relationship with the VFW.

"Anything we can do to build community support and trust within the community, this is a great event for that," Bruno said. "Love it!"

Demers' message was this.

"The kids are out here having a great time and we look forward to doing it next year and the year after as long as we can possibly do it. Thanks to the support from the community and our local businesses that help us out," Demers said.



Quartermaster Jered Sasen joins his buddy, Buddy Green, for a photo.



Brantley Therrien caught the first fish, which measured 14 inches.



Brady McCarthy also won the raffle prize donated by Radcliffe Kenison and the nonprofit Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism Inc.



Jackson Moriarty shows off his fish. He later would win for smallest fish caught at the event, measuring two inches.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers Jackson Moriarty with his prizes with VFW Posy 9397 Commander David Demers.



Brady McCarthy caught the largest fish at the event, which measured 17 inches! The fish was caught right when the event was about to conclude, a real-life buzzer beater moment.

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VIEWPOINTS

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

Help, SSA says I'm not eligible for benefits

Dear Rusty:

Help, the Social Security Administration says I didn't pay enough into my Social Security account, despite being a business owner and paying taxes.

What can I do?

Signed: Self-employed American

Dear Self-employed:

For all potential SS beneficiaries, it is very important to know how Social Security determines if you are eligible for retirement benefits: Everyone including the self-employed must have earned at least 40 "quarter credits" contributing to the SS program, which is usually about 10 years' worth of earnings.

You can earn up to four "quarter credits" per year, depending on your earnings including your net earnings from self-employment. For example, this year (2026) you will get one "quarter credit" for each \$1,890 of earnings, up to four credits maximum for the year.

As a self-employed business owner, only your net earnings are counted, e.g., after all your reported business deductions are taken. The SSA gets your earnings information from the IRS, so SSA goes by whatever information you submitted in the self-employment income tax returns you submitted to the IRS over the years.

If you don't have at least 40 "quarter credits" over your lifetime, you won't be eligible for Social Security retirement benefits.

The best way to further investigate this is to create your personal "my Social Security" online account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. When you have done that, you will be able to see how many quarter credits you currently have

(apparently less than 40) and determine how much more you must earn to be eligible for SS retirement benefits.

For example, if you have 36 or more credits now, you could likely work just another year or part of a year, to be eligible for SS benefits next year. Knowing how many "credits" you now have will tell you how much more in annual net earnings from self-employment you must have to become eligible for SS benefits.

When you create your online SS account, you will also be able to see your entire lifetime record of your earnings reported to Social Security and you should review that record to make sure that your lifetime earnings have been correctly reported to Social Security.

If there are any discrepancies in your lifetime earnings record, they can be corrected by using form SSA-7008. You can find additional guidance on this at the following SSA web link: www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10081.pdf.

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 ssadviser@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

Letters to the Editor

Thank You from Assessor Candidate

To The Editor:

Dear Neighbors, I am deeply grateful for your support in voting to re-elect me to the Board of Assessors. It is a privilege to hold the position and I am committed to the swearing-in oath stating that "I will truly and impartially ... assess and apportion all such taxes ... and neither

overvalue or undervalue any property subject to taxation". I am enthusiastic about continued participation from the community, as engaging with local government by attending town meetings and voting on town budget spending impacts resident tax bills.

I thank all the candidates who ran for positions in our town election. I would also

like to commend Dan Fernandes for his interest in the assessor position. I look forward to working fairly and equitably with all the town residents to help make Wilbraham a great place to live. Thank you again for voting and continuing to be active members of our community.

Sincerely,

John Wesolowski



Thank you for supporting Bunny Breakfast

To the Editor:

RE: Annual Wilbraham Junior Women's Club Bunny Breakfast, held March 28, 2026 at St. Cecilia's Church, Wilbraham, MA.

The Wilbraham Junior Women's Club would like

to thank the community for coming out to support us at our Annual Bunny Breakfast held on Saturday, March 28, 2026. A special thank you goes out to the Joseph and Anna C. Dias Junior Family Foundation for their generous support of our longstanding community event, and

Luso Federal Credit Union and Celia Fernandes for their support and sponsorship, as well. Thank you to all who came out to support us. It was a wonderful event.

Michele Mariani,
Chair of the WJWC
Bunny Breakfast 2026

Response to comments on MCAS results

To The Editor:

In the comments attributed to Gary Weiner in your reporting on the Hampden Annual Town Meeting, he cited MCAS results claiming that a majority of students in our district are reading below grade level and that student performance was stronger in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These statements are not supported by evidence or representative of the achievements of our students and their elementary educators.

The English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS is not a reading test, but a comprehensive assessment of English Language Arts skills including reading, writing, and language skills. The standards, grades tested, and the assessment itself have changed dramatically over time. The most

dramatic shift came in 2017 when the state adopted the current "Next Gen MCAS," a more rigorous version of the test emphasizing deeper analytical skills, application of knowledge, and making connections between reading and writing.

Across more than three decades of testing the requirement that students take an ELA assessment in grade four has remained constant. When the first version of the exam was administered in 1998, 28% of fourth graders in the HWRSD achieved the minimum passing score, as compared to 51% of students in 2025. The Science of Reading has progressed tremendously in the past thirty years. We are actively implementing these evidence-based teaching methods across all elementary grades, and I believe these

improvements have much to do with the progress we have seen. Nevertheless, there are students for whom reading is a real struggle, and we are committed to supporting them, knowing that it might take them longer to achieve reading mastery.

Our students can read and understand challenging texts. The best way to know how our students are doing is to see it with your own eyes and hear it with your own ears. Ask a student to read to you or volunteer to spend some time in one of our classrooms. I know you'll be as impressed as I am. Our educators are focused; our students are growing.

John A. Provost, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

The fragrant five

I have fond memories of the patterned herb garden I created at my old house. Gone are the days of having an entire garden devoted to "useful plants."

Now I tuck them in here and there among the veggies in my raised beds. While I harvest some herbs for culinary purposes, most are grown for the olfactory experience.

Here are my favorite fragrant five.

Lemon Balm is a member of the mint family (Labiatae). Look closely at the plant and you will see the characteristic four-sided stems.

Although many mints possess the bad reputation of running rampant in the garden, lemon balm does not; it increases in girth but manages to stay where planted. It is easy to grow, and like most herbs, it will thrive in a well-drained sunny spot.

Many gardeners think lemon balm looks weedy and unkempt by midseason. I tend to agree, but this negative feature can easily be remedied with a hair cut, nearly

to the ground, after flowering. Not long afterwards it will rebound and once again look respectable in the border.



Speaking of flowering, bees love the white, tubular flowers that appear in early summer. Botanists of old must have recognized this centuries ago, since its genus name "Melissa" actually means bee!

Lemon balm's claim to fame is not its appearance, or its flowers, but its scent—best described as lemony with a hint of mint. Crush a leaf between your fingertips to get full effect.

Another favorite fragrant herb is Anise Hyssop, again a well-behaved member of the mint family. This plant can grow quite tall, upwards of three-four feet, and has lilac-purple flowers from mid-



summer on.

The individual flowers are borne in whorls that can grow as long as six inches if left to mature on the plant. Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds all love them!

For years I carefully picked the young flower heads and dried them for use in everlasting wreaths and arrangements, now I simply enjoy rubbing the foliage between my fingers for an amazing rush of licorice scent.

If you have ever grown Anise Hyssop you will likely agree that this herb is showy enough for the flower garden. It self-sows a bit, but never becomes a pest. Simply pull up unwanted seedlings.

What would an article on fragrant herbs be without mentioning Lavender? Its early summer flowers are a claim to fame, but honestly, the foliage smells great too.

Probably the biggest drawback to this plant is how it looks (dead!) after the winter has run its course. Don't expect the gray foliage to show signs of new growth until mid-May or even later, and you may have to cut deep within the plant to find it.

An application of fertilizer and lime as well as some extra water for a time will result in spry plants once more. And in the event you are wondering, Lavender is also technically a mint, but it differs from the others in that it is more shrub-like and generally does not die completely to the ground over the winter.

The last two herbs I will mention are annuals. The first is Sweet Marjoram.

I have a hard time explaining what this low growing, small leaved plant smells like. A fine cologne? A pizza topping? A nice smelling bug spray?

As the Latin name of Origanum Majorana, suggests, oregano is a close relative, so pizza topping may be a good guess, but it also has undertones of balsam and spice...Hmmm.

The Wilbraham-Hampden
TIMES

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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

Wilbraham Troop 359

Mother's Day Plant Sale

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

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Wilbraham Scout Troop 359 held their annual Mother's Day Plant Sale event in the parking lot of St. Cecilia's Church on May 9.

Wilbraham Troop 359 Troop Committee Member Lorna Lawrence shared the event was another success and sold out of plants!

Many people stopped by to buy plants, which goes to support troop activities and events. Among the visitors too was Father James Nolte from St. Cecilia Church, who stopped by with Padre, his sweet pup.

The troop also had members and troop leaders at the Wilbraham Hill Climb which was occurring the same day.

The troop also thanks the community for their continued support.



Submitted photos Lorna Lawrence



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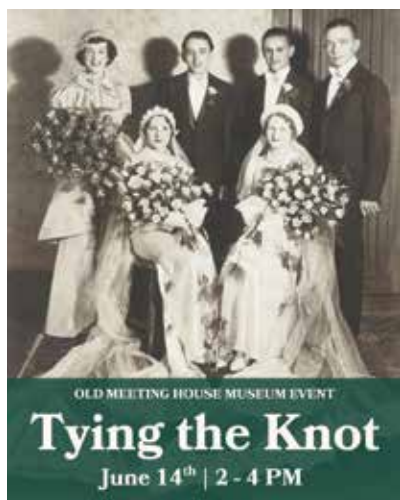
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Come celebrate 'Tying the Knot' at Old Meeting House

WILBRAHAM - The Old Meeting House Museum cordially invites the community to celebrate love and tradition at "Tying the Knot: Wedding Traditions Through Time" on Sunday, June 14, from 2 to 4 p.m.



Old Meeting House Museum Event "Tying the Knot: Wedding Traditions Through Time" Celebrate love and tradition with a special display of wedding garments, make-your own floral bouquets, and refreshments at the Old Meeting House Museum.

This special afternoon event will explore the history of New England weddings through a curated display of wedding garments and accessories from the museum's collection. Guests will also have the opportunity to create their own floral bouquets in the museum gardens while enjoying cake and sparkling cider in a charming historic setting.

ments to floral bouquets in the gardens, Tying the Knot is designed to be a fun and interactive afternoon at the museum," said Lindsey Bourcier, Director of Marketing. "The event is part of the museum's 2026 season of free programming focused on local history, culture, and bringing the community together." More information is available at: www.theomh.org.

Event Details: Sunday, June 14 | 2 to 4 p.m. | 450 Main Street, Wilbraham
• Free & family-friendly
• Wedding garments and accessories on display
• Create your own floral bouquet in the museum gardens
• Cake & sparkling cider served
"From historical gar-

Dine Out Day at Krazy Jakes set for June 17

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham-Hampden Rotary Club will hold Dine Out Day at Krazy Jake's, 2537 Boston Road on Wednesday, June 17 all day according to Rotary Vice President Peter Salerno.

Krazy Jakes will donate 10 percent of their customers' meal check to the Rotary Club to support community services. The Dine Out event runs from morning to night," said Salerno.

Diners must present a special coupon that they will receive upon entering the restaurant.

All proceeds from the Dine Out will go for community services that benefit everyone from school children to senior citizens.

All proceeds from the Dine Out will be used for community services; for school children to senior citizens. Some of the programs the club offers are the Dictionary Project where each third

grader in Wilbraham and Hampden is given their own copy of a dictionary, amounting to 165 dictionaries this year.

On May 6th, the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden presented \$2,000 scholarships to nine outstanding seniors from Wilbraham and Hampden. Students, parents and guests gathered for dinner at the Country Club of Wilbraham where scholarship recipients from Minnechaug Regional High School, LPVEC's Career and Technical Education Center, Wilbraham & Monson Academy and Pope Francis Prep were recognized for their academic achievement and exemplary commitment in service to their schools and community.

Other projects include the annual Christmas Tree Lighting and food donations and personal care items for the Community Survival Center. The Rotary Club's motto



At a previous Dine Out, Rotary Vice President Peter Salerno and Krazy Jake's staffer Nichole Spaulding look over the menu in preparation for the Rotary Club's Dine Out fundraiser on Wednesday, Jun 17. (Times file photo)

is "Service Above Self". For more information about the Dine Out Day call club Peter Salerno at 203-214-7954 or email PSalerno1@aol.com.

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Wilbraham United Church Craft Fair

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham United Church will be holding an outdoor Craft Fair on Saturday June 6 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the front lawn of the church.

Included will be over 30 vendors with a variety of craft items. The church will also have a Bake Sale featuring homemade baked items for sale.

In addition, there will be a cafe selling hamburgers, hot dogs and various snacks and cold drinks throughout the day. The church is located at 500 Main Street in Wilbraham.

Parking is available in front of the church as well as in the lot at the rear of the building.

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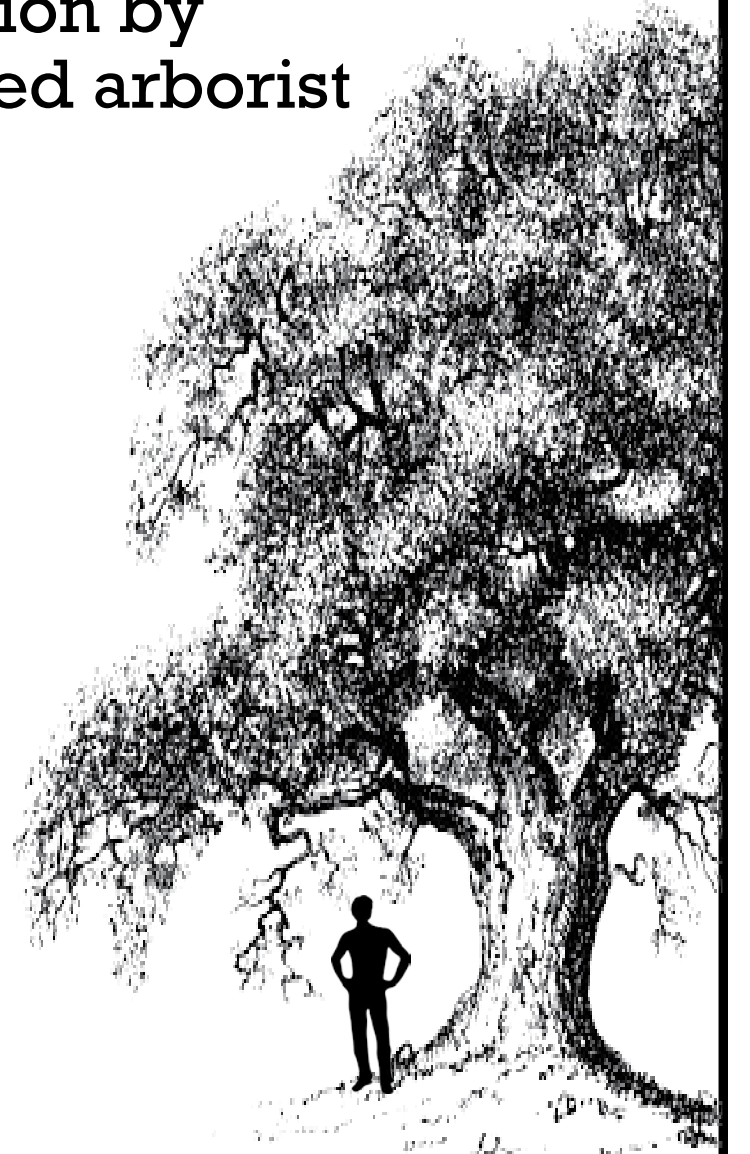


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FINCOM from page 1

Corridan, himself and DeLobato.

On May 28, Schneider shared the following statement with the Times on the resignations.

"I would like to say it was a pleasure being appointed by the Select Board to FinCom. I believe the work the committee has done in the past, keeping the town fiscally responsible, while maintaining spending under the levy limit, was difficult at times. Finance and other appointed committees provide services, programs and capital to make Wilbraham one of the best local communities," Schneider said. "Each year, the Finance Committee will lose members for a variety of reasons. Each member of the Finance Com-

mittee brings intelligence and unique perspectives while challenging others with professional respect. Since Town Meeting, there have already been four resignations to the Finance Committee, including myself. Although, abnormally high number of vacancies, I am sure the Select Board will find quality replacements. Over the next few years, there will be many challenges in budgets, capital and education. The Town needs people to volunteer and I encourage anyone that is interested to contact Town Hall."

Ducey explained how for official meetings and votes to be conducted by FinCom, a quorum of five members is needed per the town's bylaws, also providing an update on his hopes of having a joint

meeting with the committee after the recent announcement.

"As the budget season concluded, I felt it was important for the Select Board and Finance Committee to meet jointly to review the past budget cycle and discuss opportunities for continued coordination and communication. At this point, a date for a joint meeting has not yet been set. With summer schedules approaching, we are working to coordinate availability for both the Select Board and Finance Committee," Ducey said.

Ducey expressed hope about new members coming on board.

"Any time experienced Town volunteers step away, there is naturally a period of transition. Finance Com-

mittee members contribute significant time, knowledge and perspective to the budget process, and their contributions are valued and appreciated," Ducey said. "At the same time, we have a wealth of talent and experience throughout our town to draw from. I am confident that the new members will bring new ideas. I look forward to their thoughts and perspective."

Having previously served on the Finance Committee before moving to the Select Board, Ducey also shared what skills would be most desired in future members.

"The Finance Committee benefits from members with a range of backgrounds and experiences. Skills that are particularly valuable include the ability to review budgets and financial information careful-

ly, ask thoughtful questions, communicate respectfully and work collaboratively with others. A willingness to dedicate time to meetings and preparation is also important," Ducey said.

Also, the process for the Select Board when they select members.

"Residents interested in serving on the Finance Committee can learn more about the role and submit a volunteer application through the Town website or by contacting the Select Board's Office at 596-2800. Once applications are received, the Finance Committee Chair or their appointee often has a conversation with the applicant to discuss the role and the time commitment involved," Ducey said. "The final step is for candidates to meet with the Select

Board at one of our meetings, after which an appointment may be made. We encourage interested residents to apply."

His message to Schneider, Corridan, DeLobato and Kierman was this.

"First and foremost, I want to thank current and previous Finance Committee members for their dedication and service to our Town. Serving on the Finance Committee requires a significant time commitment and a willingness to take on difficult and important work on behalf of our community. I appreciate the contributions each member made during their time on the Committee, encourage them to stay involved, and wish them well," Ducey said.

PET PAGE



PET OF THE MONTH Meet Mckinley!



She is a 10-year-old rescue miniature Schnauzer/Chinese Crested mix owned by David Maiga and Elizabeth Tavares. She loves long rides in the car, outdoor time by the pool and cuddling on the couch with human family and pet siblings.

ATTENTION READERS!

Send in your pet picture for our "Pet of the Month" and receive a FREE weekend get-away or spa package for your pet courtesy of Porter Road Pet Care.

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We Teach You How to Train Your Dog!

Your Dog's Barks, Whines and Growls and What They Mean

Dogs make a lot of sounds. From howling and growling to whining and crying. Some dogs tend to be more talkative than others. Some breeds also tend to have certain distinctive sounds, Rottweilers "purr," Siberian Huskies "talk," Shiba Inus "scream" and Basenjis "yodel" instead of barking. But in general, there are a handful of sounds most dogs make to communicate with other dogs and with people.

Barking - Dogs have different barks depending on the circumstances. Your dog could be alerting you

to danger or just showing you how happy he is that you're home. A bark can indicate joy or fear, anger or awareness, frustration or need. The key to understanding the bark is context and knowing your dog. A dog with separation anxiety might have a high-pitched, repetitive bark that gets higher as the dog gets more anxious and upset. Boredom barking is more monotone and repetitive. An alert bark is usually sharp and staccato, while an alarm bark is similar but with more intensity. When your dog wants something from you, her

barks are sharp and continuous. Suspicious barking is typically slow and low. Fearful barking is also low, but it's usually faster. And playful barking just sounds playful.

Growling - Growling is usually a warning sign. It's telling another dog or a person to back off, that if you don't stop touching the dog's food, toys, body, or get out of his space, then he might become aggressive. Take a growl seriously and make your dog comfortable. And remember, never punish a dog for growling. If you do, you're punishing him for

giving a warning. The next time he won't warn you first. If the growl is more of a low grumble and you are playing tug of war at the time, then it's a play growl and things are fine.

Howling - Not all dogs howl. Often triggered by high-pitched noises, howling seems to be contagious among dogs. When an ambulance races through an area, listen to the sounds of the neighborhood dogs. Some researchers believe howling is a way that dogs communicate among pack members. A dog that howls when left alone may be try-

ing to talk to their owners who left them behind.

Whining - Dogs often whine when they want something. Your dog might whine when she needs to go outside, wants a treat, wants to go for a walk, or just wants your attention. But whining can also be a sign of fear or anxiety. A dog that's afraid of going to the vet may whine when you get there. A dog with separation anxiety may whine when he's left alone.

Yelping and whimpering - When your dog cries, whimpers or yelps, it's typically a sign that he's in pain.

A dog might yelp when playing if another dog bites too hard. These sounds are how dogs communicate distress to the rest of the pack or to their humans.

Sighing & Groaning - When your dog lets out a hearty groan or a deep sigh, is he showing either extreme contentment or severe disappointment. If you've just had a great walk or a fun romp in the yard, a sigh is likely a sign of happy satisfaction. However, if your pup has brought you the ball five times and you won't throw it, the sigh is likely one of bummed-out frustration.

SPORTS

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Falcons lose final regular season matchup



Jacob Gilmartin sets up a play.



Kevin Cordova sends a spike away.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Jonathan Correa goes for a spike.



Darren Duah gets hit past his opponent.



Brennan Rost leaps for a set.

WILBRAHAM – On Wednesday, May 20, the Minnechaug Regional High School boys volleyball team was in nonplayoff action, hosting Pioneer Valley Christian Academy. Unfortunately, PVCA escaped with a 3-2 win. Minnechaug would win the first two sets, but PVCA would win 29-27 in the third set to extend the match and then went on to win the fourth and fifth sets. Minnechaug moved into the state tournament last week with a local draw, traveling to West Springfield. Highlights from that matchup will be in next week's edition.



Kursten Shade looks to shoot in traffic.



Chicopee's Sam Breton clears the ball away.



Nadia Cassmajor sends a pass away.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Mutiny battles Hartford to scoreless draw

LUDLOW – On Friday, May 22, the New England Mutiny battled the Hartford Athletic to a scoreless tie. The Mutiny is now 1-1-1 on the season. They previously defeated the Worcester Wanderers and had a defeat against the Hudson Valley Crusaders. More on the Mutiny and their new challenges in next week's edition.



Se-Hanna Mars fights for the ball.



Kendall Bodak, of Monson, sends a free kick away.



Kayleigh Lukasik sends a pass away.

WMass Pioneers fall to NEFC

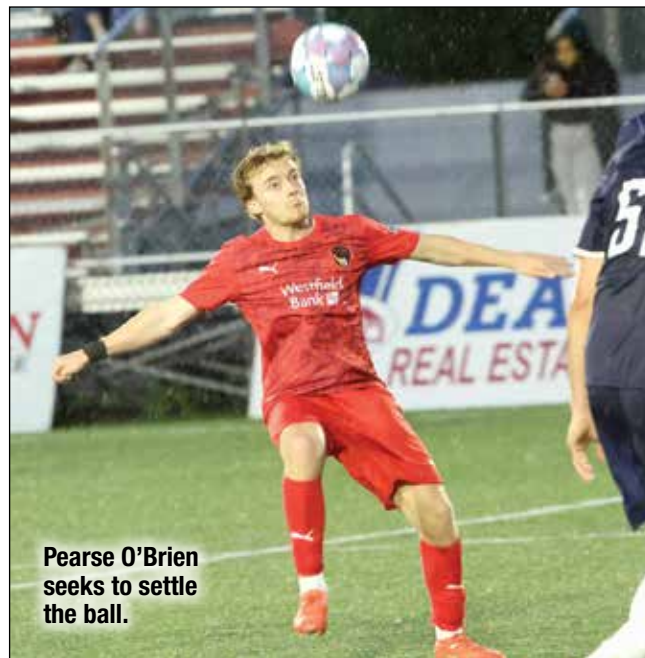
LUDLOW – On a very short regular season. The Pioneers had another home game scheduled during the weekend, and were in action on the road against Black Rock FC. The Pioneers are on a lengthy road trip and are not playing at home until Friday, June 19.



Michael Gouvin sends a pass away.

SEE MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 12

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Pearse O'Brien seeks to settle the ball.

SPORTS

Valley Blue Sox ready for the 2026 season

HOLYOKE – The Valley Blue Sox return for the 2026 season after finishing last season at 20-22 record. Despite narrowly missing out on the playoffs, The Blue Sox ended the season on a high note with a dominant 23-1 win against the Upper Valley Nighthawks in July. The Blue Sox will open up their season June 4 against the Newport Gulls at home.

The Gulls are coming out of the gates as Regular Season Divisional Champions, after posting a 29-15 record in 2025. The teams last met on a rainy July day in Rhode Island, where The Blue Sox pulled off a 6-5 comeback win in extra innings.

“Regardless of who we have out there ... [it’s] just creating that kind of sense of urgency from the beginning .. and you want to certainly make a good first impression,” head coach John Raiola said. “Play hard and compete, that’s really what I ask every day, no matter what ... [and] that starts on June 4.”

Raiola returns as head coach of the Blue Sox after five seasons in the front office as the team’s director of baseball operations. Following the departure of former head coach Endy Morales in pursuit of the Banana Ball League, Raiola returns to a team that he coached to back to back NECBL championships in 2017 and 2018.

Returning to the same coaching job he first stepped into 11 years ago, one of Raiola’s top priorities is to put a team on the field that is ready to compete.

“It’s not just summer ball,” Raiola said. “It’s an opportunity for you to put your best foot forward and show that you, in basically an all-star league, can compete against the best throughout all over the country, and show up and do it every single day.”

The Blue Sox offense ranked in the top of the NECBL last season but the pitching staff struggled, finishing with a team ERA of 4.93, the eighth best in the league. Raiola, who served as a pitching coach at Western New England University and in the Cape Cod Baseball League with the Yarmouth-Dennis Red Sox, seeks to heighten the threat of Valley’s arms.

“One thing that’s really important for us, and that I tell [the players] ... is that they leave better than they came,” Raiola said. “... You should have something that you know that you need to do and that you don’t do particularly well and we should be working towards solving



... so that when you leave, you leave better than we found you.”

Raiola spent the 2015-2019 seasons as head coach of the Blue Sox, and has been the head coach of the Elms College baseball team since 2020, where he’s posted a 94-120 record.

Raiola is no stranger to NECBL titles. Prior to his time in Holyoke, Raiola won a championship as a part of the Newport Gulls coaching staff in 2009, another with the Keene Swampbats in 2011, and made a championship appearance with the Sanford Mainers in 2014.

Raiola has exciting names to work with this summer from all over the country.

Returning for the Blue Sox is infielder Michael Elko. Elko suited up for Valley in 39 games last season, tallying 165 plate appearances. The Texas native earned 30 runs with 34 hits and finished the season off with a 0.252 batting average. A senior at the University of Richmond, Elko’s college season ended with 52 starts and was named the Atlantic 10 Baseball Player of the Week back in March.

Incoming Blue Sox short-

stop Anthony Grabau has made headlines in his junior season at Fordham University. In 2026, he hit for a .303 batting average across 218 at bats, posting a .911 OPS, a promising left-handed bat. Grabau finished with nine home runs and 38 RBI and earned a spot on Baseball America’s College Team of the Week on April 21 at shortstop after an 11-for-21 week where he hit for the cycle. Grabau has been a defensive anchor at shortstop, starting all 55 games in the position and posting a .946 fielding percentage.

Behind the dish, junior Jacob Dille has had a monster year at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. In 50 games, Dille has hit for a .325 batting average, recorded a .960 OPS, left the yard for 10 home runs and recorded 38 RBI. Dille has spent less time behind the plate in 2026 but has moved around the field for UNCG, making appearances in the outfield and first base in addition to his catching duties.

Junior Gavin Degnan brings a solid bat to the Valley outfield from the University of Pennsylvania. Degnan drove in 41 over 42 games which led his team, and had a .306 batting average and a .898 OPS to go with it. Degnan went deep for seven home runs and at times was a threat on the basepaths,

swiping 14 bags.

Raiola has also assembled a diverse bullpen with a wide range of arms. Coming from UMass Lowell, Jake LeFrancis posted a 2.03 ERA on a little over 11 innings pitched for the Riverhawks, emerging with potential to be a reliable arm for the Blue Sox. Right-handed pitcher Dylan Reid brings some more experience on the mound, logging nearly 60 innings pitched with a 3.77 ERA for Brown University. Averaging 4.9 innings pitched per game for the Bears in 2026, Reid profiles as a durable arm and can compete deep into outings.

Returning to the mound for Valley is Justin Masteralexis. A Western Massachusetts native, the left-handed pitcher logged over 19 innings for UMass Amherst this past season. Masteralexis struck out 19 batters for the Minutemen and earned Atlantic 10 All-Rookie Team honors back in 2024.

“It’s not just about picking the best players and the stats and all that, it’s about getting the right guys,” Raiola said. “[Seeing] how they mesh together, pull for each other and show up every single day.”

The Blue Sox will kick off their 2026 season on June 4 at Mackenzie Stadium in Holyoke. First pitch is set for 6:30 p.m.

Magical runs ends for T-Birds in Wilkes-Barre

WILKES-BARRE, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds saw their remarkable Calder Cup Playoff journey come to a bitter ending in an 8-1 loss to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins on Saturday night inside Mohegan Arena at Casey Plaza in a deciding Game 5 of the best-of-five series.

After getting shut out by Georgii Romanov and the T-Birds in Game 4 in Springfield two nights earlier, the Penguins came out with renewed purpose, and Tristan Broz’s second goal of the series just 3:56 into Game 5 put Wilkes-Barre/Scranton in front, 1-0.

Harrison Brunicke would follow with a goal of his own on a 2-on-1 at 7:43 to make it 2-0. Broz added his third point of the period with a power play goal at 16:17, and Rafael Harvey-Pinard completed the Penguins’ prolific first period with a rebound finish with just 20 seconds left in the frame to make it 4-0 at intermission.

The T-Birds swapped goalies heading into the second as Vadim Zherenko took over, but the Penguins still managed to find offense when Atley Calvert swatted a loose puck through Zherenko at 17:21.

As the third period began, the Penguins power play found a second connection when Ville Koivunen finished off a passing play at 2:52 to extend the lead to six.

Akil Thomas finally got one back for Springfield at 4:30, but it would prove to only delay the Penguins’ continued attack, as Harvey-Pinard and Koivunen each would add another tally to their night’s work to finish off the victory and the series.

The T-Birds’ storybook season may have come to an end, but the excitement is only building as Springfield prepares to celebrate 100 years of hockey in the city.

Jarvis, Beecher top guns at Monadnock Speedway

WINCHESTER, N.H. – Joey Jarvis survived a slugfest to win his first Modified feature of the summer on May 23 at Monadnock Speedway. The second generation Vermont pilot accomplished the feat by sitting in the best seat in the house, the pole, from where he was immune to the wildness behind him.

Jarvis was one of five first time 2026 winners on the high banks of the fast quarter mile Saturday. Justin Beecher, in house for the night’s special R&R Open Street Stock show, duplicated his victory of the same event a summer ago, and reigning speedway Mini Stock champ John Fultz - in his first run of the summer - picked up where he left off last September.

In the Pure Stocks, red hot rookie Josh Brigham scored the first win of his career. New England Dwarf Car pilot Ryan Carman scored his first career victory on the high banks, and then there was 11-year-old Dylan Stati.

Stati, a quiet fifth grade student at the Old Mill Pond School in his hometown of Palmer, Mass. on weekdays, puts on his super hero personality every Saturday, when he dominates the speedway’s Young Guns division. On this Saturday, he cruised to victory for the fourth time of his rookie campaign.

Jarvis and open-wheel rookie Kyle Kenny sat up front as Saturday night’s All-states Materials Group 604 Modified main event went green. They would run in that order until Ben Byrne blasted into second on lap four, with Nate Wenzel close behind.

Wenzel took third on lap 11 and with the two veterans battling for second, Jarvis was able to open some breathing room at the front. That, though, went out the window when a lap-21 caution brought Byrne back to his side.

Jarvis was again up to the task, holding a perfect line for all 40 laps to score his second career victory on the high banks. And he may not have had the fastest car.

A grinding lap-25 multi-Mod dance out of turn four heavily damaged the Patnode and Martin rides, among others, and brought Nate Wenzel to the front row for the restart. Electrical issues, though, sent Wenzel quickly to the pits, returning now seventh at the green.

Flying back through the field, Wenzel would finish second, three lengths behind the speedy Jarvis. Andrew Brousseau, victorious seven days earlier, gobbled up Tyler Leary in turn three to come home second, Leary was fourth on the night, and Ben Byrne, in the mix all 40, came home fifth.

The R&R Open Street

Stock feature saw three dominant Bay State stars again take center stage, Justin Beecher - who makes a habit of swooping onto the high banks to score victories in these specials - took first from Chris Buffone on lap eight and never looked back.

Top hometracker JD Stockwell, representing his Saturday night home well, got up for second on lap 11 and kept Beecher close until exiting in a cloud of smoke 51 circuits later, leaving Buffone to finish second, a third-lap shy of the high flying Beecher. Former speedway regular Adam Gray completed his hard night’s work in third.

Jon Fultz strutted his championship stuff in the Keene Towing and Recovery Mini Stocks. Taking the lead from Tim Paquette on lap seven, the 2025 speedway king never looked back as he sped off to his first win of the season.

Paquette held strong to come home second, just ahead of week one winner Kevin Clayton. Tim O’Shea was fourth, and early race leader Craig Chaffee was fifth on the night.

Red hot rookie Josh Brigham left no doubt Saturday that his freshman season will be one to remember in the Brattleboro Towing and Recovery Pure Stocks. Coming off a handful of strong early season runs, Brigham

started in row three Saturday, took the lead from Colton Hull on lap 17, and sped off into the night to score his first career victory. And, with the win, move to the top of the points parade.

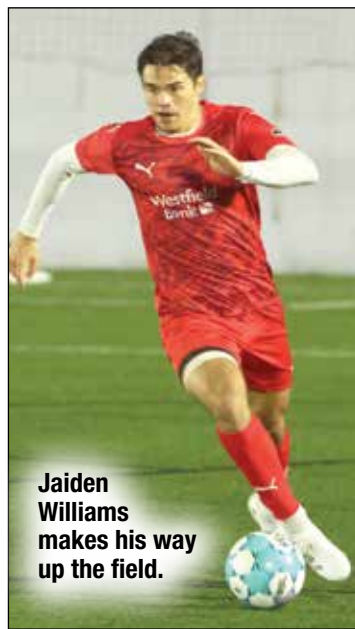
Sophomore speedster Kyle Begos finished at Brigham’s bumper in second, high roller Jimmy Zellman, victorious a week earlier, was third, with Hull and Linsey Wenzel completing Saturday’s top five.

Ryan Carman took the lead on lap seven of Saturday’s Dwarf Car feature and dashed off to win by three lengths over series super star Tom Harwood. It was Carman’s first career win on the

high banks. Andrew Harmon was third on the night, just ahead of Cody Hodgson.

With Dylan Stati again working his magic in the Doug’s Auto Body Young Guns to win his fourth in a row, Maeve Barry continued to get stronger each week, coming home second Saturday.

Monadnock Speedway will return to action next Saturday, May 30, with a Limited Late Model special event atop a full card of NASCAR Local Racing Series competition, including the exciting 604 Modifieds. Post time is 6 p.m.; every Saturday on the high banks of New England’s fastest quarter-mile oval.



Jaiden Williams makes his way up the field.



Ben Alexander gets ready to clear the ball.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Thomas Wadas, of Ludlow, eyes a teammate up the field.

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HAMPDEN HONORS

from page 1

Musante grew tearful as he recalled those who fell in battle.

“The nation’s wars and warriors belong to all of us,” Musante said.

Following Musante’s remarks, members of Hampden’s VFW performed a 21-gun salute in honor of the military.

The annual Hampden Garden Club Plant Sale—a rain or shine event—was held before and after the 11 a.m. remembrance ceremony. Club Member Cheryl Perrault made a memorial wreath presented to the veterans.

The weather didn’t stop dozens of avid gardeners from lining up in front of Memorial Hall as early as 7:15 a.m. to be the first to grab plants when the sale opened at 8 a.m.

Garden Club President Lil Fedora said that business was good despite the showers.

“The rain is angels’ tears, reminding us of everyone who fought for our freedom,” Fedora said.

Mark and Nancy Giza of Hampden have been buying plants from the Garden Club for the 35 years they have lived in town. This year, Nancy picked up shade plants, including hosta and lambs’ ear.

“There is a great selection and I always figure if the plants have done well in other Hampden gardens they will do well in mine,” she said.

Hampden’s Federated Community Church also went forward with its pancake breakfast and craft and bake sale.

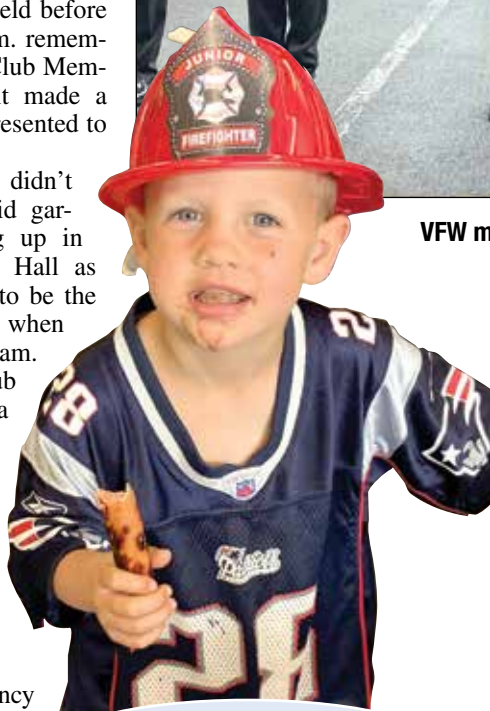
“The rain is showing us that Mother Nature is still in



VFW members perform a Memorial Day salute.



Melanie Gagliarducci with her daughter, Emma, the incoming president of Minnechaug’s Military Community Club.



Cohen, age 3, brandishes a bunless hot dog.



Pastor Eunji Lee of Hampden’s United Federated Church delivers the invocation.



VFW Post Commander David Demers presided over Hampden’s Memorial Day event.



Hazel, age 5, enjoys a free Hoodsie cup.

charge,” Penny Dibble said, chair of the craft sale, as church bells played “America the Beautiful.”

Dibble said she had a lot of help with the event this year. She praised John Fernandez of Wilbraham, who crafted two large American flags out of wood that were raffled off at the church.

Lisa and Mark Jones of Wilbraham stopped by for pancakes and sausage and left with craft fair purchases of

soap and hand cream made from local beeswax.

“Coming here is a great tradition for us,” remarked Lisa, “and the breakfast was delicious.”

Despite the cancellation of the parade, outgoing Select-board Chair John Flynn declared the day a success.

“We’re fortunate we could use the fire station and carry on with this important event,” Flynn said.

HEROES from page 1

Regional High School Choir also performed the National Anthem.

There was also a presentation of the Memorial Day Wreath from the Wilbraham Garden Club which went to U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Franklin Ludwig, the 2025 Veteran of the Year.

The ceremony also featured reflections from Renna, Local Historian and Author David Bourcier, State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow), State Rep. Angelo J. Puppola Jr. (D-Springfield) and Select Board Chair Marc Ducey.

Minnechaug’s Military Community Club also participated in the ceremony with the presentation for prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action.

The ceremony then finished off with a rifle salute from the VFW Post 9397 Honor Guard, as Dave Morris played Taps on the trumpet.

Renna closed off the ceremony with a few remarks thanking everyone for their attendance and involvement in the Memorial Day ceremony, later taking a moment to discuss the importance of



Sisters Dakota (Left) and Alexis (Right) Joseph help with a Buddy Poppy Drive with the Hampden VFW.

Memorial Day.

“Memorial Day is all about honoring people who lost their lives in the service of our country,” Renna said. “It makes me think about how both of my grandfathers served in World War II and their time spent serving. So, it brings back a lot of memories thinking about them. As well as I know a lot of local people as well, that’s kind of the same thing that it brings up for us. So, there’s a personal connection for me in that respect. And I know a lot of the people that participate in these events as well.”

Attending the ceremony was Dakota Joseph, who was helping with the Hampden

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Auxiliary with her sister Alexis giving out Buddy Poppies to attendees.

“For me personally, Memorial Day means a whole lot,” Joseph said. “My dad is a veteran, and he was deployed when I was younger to Iraq for a year. So, coming out to support all of our fallen soldiers really means a lot. I try to stay involved as much as I can.”

At the ceremony was Minnechaug history teacher—former Marine—Michael Hill. Hill was in attendance as the advisor of Minnechaug’s Military Community Club.

“I think it’s important for both ends for the community to see that students at our school take pride in what the military has accomplished and meeting its veterans and service members and also their families, the sacrifices they go through,” Hill said. “And on the other end of that, to allow our students to kind of have a way in which they can help with the community.”

Also speaking about the importance of Memorial Day was David Demers, the commander of VFW Post 9397.

Demers also had 28 years of experience in the military and recently retired two years ago.

“We’re out here to honor the fallen soldiers and the MIA, the people that were missing in action and never found, never brought home, and to honor the community,” Demers said. “It’s collaborating with the community



A group photo of Wilbraham Scout Troop 359 with State Rep. Angelo Puppola Jr. (D-Springfield), Patrick Renna, director of Veterans Services, and State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow) after the ceremony.

and brings everyone together. We love to volunteer. We do whatever we can for the community.”

Lastly, Boy Scout Troop Scoutmaster Michael Thad spoke about the Memorial Day Ceremony and the Scout’s involvement with events such as Memorial Day.

“Memorial Day is a very

important holiday. The Scouts want to recognize the service that people have given their lives for our country,” Thad said.

There are, also, opportunities for veterans to continue connecting with one another and remember their comrades.

For more information

about the VFW Post 9397 in Hampden, veterans can find them on Facebook. You have to be a veteran of a foreign combat zone to join.

There is, also, a Friends of Wilbraham and Hampden Veterans group which meets on the second Wednesday of every month at the senior center at 5 p.m.



Wilbraham Garden Club President Anna Howell presents Franklin Ludwig, the 2025 Veteran of the Year, with a commemorative wreath.



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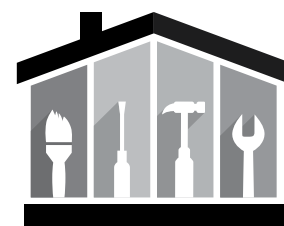


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HILL CLIMB 2026



The cars on display at the car show.



Wayne Carini and his grandson at the wheel.



It's time for the Hill Climb to start!



Showing off the classic cars to the masses.



One of the pop up vendors was this little girl with a lemonade stand.



Photos courtesy of Joshua Sweeney

A shot of one of the cycle karts, a new feature this year.



A wide shot of attendees checking out the festivities.

HILL CLIMB from page 1

of “Chasing Classic Cars,” and Steve Magnante, Barrett-Jackson Host and YouTuber.

This year’s sponsors included Stonewall Insurance Group, Lia Auto Group, LUSO Federal Credit Union, 97.7 FM WARE, Bonhams, Hagerty, Sampson Funeral Homes, the Joseph and Anna C. Dias Foundation and more.

him this year was the smiles on everyone’s faces.

“I love the smiles. I love walking around. I take the middle of the day and I put everything aside—and I start at the starting line—and I walk the entire thing thanking every vendor and talking to them and from the people selling plants to the barber, it’s wonderful to just sit there and watch the laughter in people. I think that’s the great thing,” DeMarey said.

Another was the tribute to George Holman at the start of the race and the National Anthem performance.

“I never really had anything hit me like that. I was at the mic, I was talking about it. The little girl at the bottom of the hill, Katie Lotterer, she sang the National Anthem. Oh my God, knocked it out of the park, I thought it was absolutely unbelievable, and then when we did the moment of silence for George, which was his son taking a car up the hill all by himself while we were silent. We held the mic down by the exhaust and he took off and everything else,” DeMarey said. “I was in tears. It was crazy. I’m going to miss him.”

He also reflected on the Springfield to Boston Education Foundation, which he started several years ago to help kids and adults get involved in cars, hoping to do more in the future.

“It’s not a foundation where you’re going to apply for a scholarship. I don’t want to be the guy that hands out the money. I want to be the foundation that helps the kids and the adults get into the hobby,” DeMarey said. “Nolan Burke, he was just one of the first people that was part of it and it was interesting to introduce him to people and then he then takes off with it and has now—I opened that door—and he can now walk down a pathway. Before I was involved, Nolan had no access to it. His parents are not car people, they’re nothing like that. He loved cars and then I cracked open a door and he kind of walked through it and then I guided him to ‘What do you like? What do you want to do?’”

DeMarey also shared how he supported Pete Zimmerman at Wilbraham Tire, who opened a new business called Jimmy’s with help, support and mentorship.

“I reassured him that the foundation was behind him, we’re going to help him, there’s tons of work out there, and right now he’s busy,” DeMarey said. “I love to get people involved.”

DeMarey said plans for next year’s Hill Climb will begin in the next month or so and he is always looking for volunteers.

To learn more about the foundation, visit springfield-toboston.com.

DeMarey also expressed thanks to the residents, the town departments, sponsors and community for their support. There’s also an online survey for people to share their feedback, including what he can do better next year.

More information on the online survey soon.

Jeff DeMarey, who co-organizes the event alongside Ed Cenedella and is the founder of the Springfield to Boston Education Foundation, was pleased things went well and noted one of the new upgrades this year was the sound system “so that the announcer—starting line—was also heard all the way down to WMA and at the top of the finish line.”

“The finish line worked out really well. We made some huge safety improvements up there. We had some big lights we put up, we coned off the road a little bit and we moved the finish line back a little bit so they couldn’t take that left turn onto Ridge, so that worked out really well,” DeMarey said. “It was a great event. Wayne Carini gave us a great compliment: ‘Jeff, you have a very special town and a very special event,’ he said. ‘For me to be in my car looking over my left shoulder and seeing three to 500 people in the pouring rain watching me go up the hill. There’s really some passion there about having it.’”

DeMarey also heard positive feedback from the food and craft vendors, noting some other booths popped up including lemonade stands from kids. Wilbraham & Monson Academy also provided space for the event, which had the car show and other vendors.

“The rain really hampers it, but the attitudes were really good. Everyone was smiling and happy,” DeMarey said. “It’s pretty enlightening and heartwarming to see how much good stuff there was going on.”

Another highlight—which was also new this year—was the cycle karts.

“The little cycle karts are really cool because they’re all homemade designs by the guys that own them and they went up the hill in a swarm. They don’t go very fast—they’re nothing more than on a golf cart like a Melha Shriners car—but we sent them all up at the start. We had like six or eight of them going up the hill,” DeMarey said. “Those guys were great.”

One thing that stayed with

PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO BID Boiler Replacement Minnechaug Regional High School

Wilbraham, Massachusetts
The project consists of the replacement of one of the five boilers at Minnechaug Regional High School, 621 Main Street, Wilbraham, MA.

HVAC GC Bid will be due, publicly opened and read on Thursday, June 18th at 9:00 a.m. in the Superintendents Conference Room, at Minnechaug Regional High School, 621 Main Street, Wilbraham, MA.

Bids must be addressed to Michael Messier, Director of Facilities & Operations, Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District, 621 Main Street, Wilbraham MA 01095, securely sealed, showing the name and address of bidder. All bids must be clearly marked “Boiler Replacement at to the Minnechaug Regional High School” on the outside of

the envelope. Proposals received after the due date and time will not be accepted under any conditions.

The Project involves the replacement of one of the five boilers at Minnechaug Regional High School.

The estimated cost of the work is \$125,000.

Bids shall be accompanied by a proposal guaranty in the form of a bid bond, cash, or a certified check or a treasurer’s check issued by a responsible bank or trust company having offices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The proposal guarantee shall be in the amount of five percent (5%) of the bid made payable to the Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District.

Contract Documents are available from the Engineer after 2:00 PM on May 22, 2026. Each Bidder may obtain sets of bidding documents from Robt. W. Hall Consulting Engineers by email-

ing Richard Willoughby (rwiloughby@rwhall.com)

A Prebid Conference will be held on June 10, 3:00 PM at the School. The meeting place will be outside the Loading Dock on the east side of the school.

A Payment Bond will be required of the successful bidder.

Attorney-in-fact who signs Payment Bonds must file with each Bond a certified and effective dated copy of their power of attorney. Prevailing Wage rates have been established for this project by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District reserves the right to waive any informalities, to reject any and all bids or any part thereof, and to take whatever action it believes to be in the best interest of the School District.

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