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WSC Memory Café

welcomes
magical guest

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On June 1, members of the senior center came together for the center's monthly Memory Café.

This month, there was magician Deanna Congo, who provided entertainment for the seniors.

Congo is a magician located in West Springfield and provided magical entertainment such as card tricks, sleight of hand work and making a table fly.

Congo took a minute to talk about working with the Memory Café.

"I love coming here to the Memory Café," Congo said. "This is my second time here, and it's just so rewarding and fun. Magic is something that brings joy to people, even if there's language barriers or memory issues. It's something I really enjoy sharing that joy with other people. Se-

Please see **MAGIC**, page 13



Deanna Congo, the magical entertainment for the June Memory Café.

Turley photo by Noelle Hisgen

Broadband Committee meets with Select Board

By Ben Hernandez
Staff Writer

WILBRAHAM - Mat Nelson, the new Chair for the Broadband Committee, shared updates with the Select Board on June 1.

Nelson recalled some feedback on April 2 he received from the inspector general's office when the committee met with them on where to move forward.

"It seems like the suggestion, even though it's not very explicit from the inspector general, is that we need to kind of step back and start over and look over the process and make sure that we're following a more bulletproof process for that kind of design build procedures," Nelson said.

Nelson explained the suggestion was made and discussed as a whole "that perhaps this is an appropriate time to kind of step back before we go down that road again," noting vendors in other local towns that are being brought in to do broadband, such as Westfield Whip City Fiber in West Springfield.

"So, the discussion was around perhaps this is an opportunity to, whereas, we're not necessarily saying we're going to down that road, but kind of open it up for information gathering. To make

sure that we're doing our due diligence before we go down this more broad and detailed path of the design build procedure again," Nelson said. "Board as a whole agreed and the general consensus was at this point that if we go down this road and we don't find a viable vendor and we go down the next road after that and go down the design build road and for whatever reason that doesn't come to fruition, as the Broadband Committee, we can't say that we did not look under every rock to try to do what we wanted to get done."

He mentioned there "still has an appetite for fiber" and that residents are dissatisfied with "the intermittent service around the town."

"I think we would be doing them a great disservice if we just stopped at this point without proceeding further based on what the inspector general said," Nelson said. "So, in my mind and I think in the mind of the board, the worst-case scenario here is we if go to, say, Westfield Whip or any of the other vendors and say 'We'd to receive a bid for what you're going to offer.' Worst-case scenario we get information, we find out what the competition can

Please see **BROADBAND**, page 4

Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth seeks community support

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - The Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth Coalition is seeking the community's support and help.

Brianna Berneche, director of the coalition, explained how it's been federally funded for many years through many safety grants that have supported "many different initiatives in the school district and the community."

"There's so many differ-

ent programs that our grants pay for for the school district. Some that help kind of measure where students are at on emotional behavioral scales, so mental health initiatives," Berneche said. "And the other big part, obviously, is Jackie (Hafner)'s role with the coa-

lition as the coordinator and working one-on-one directly with students, providing prevention efforts and curriculum to the students. For example, we have a program called iDecide and that's any student that's struggling with substance use or alcohol use

and if they so happen to get caught on school grounds, this is a program that we offer them and Jackie is the lead facilitator for that. There used to be facilitators—I was one of them as well—but now it pretty much is just Jackie doing this program for the students."

Berneche said that funding is ending on Sept. 30.

"The predicament that we're in right now is that we have a little bit of funding over the last few years that we've

Please see **SUPPORT**, page 13

Library welcomes Mark Gostkiewicz's and 'Raise the Coop'

By Selena Nguyen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The library welcomed Mark Gostkiewicz and his "Raise the Coop" Class — an informative lecture-style event centered around keeping chickens in a backyard on June 2.

The event was sponsored by the Wilbraham Friends of the Library.

Originally from Connecticut, Gostkiewicz also owns "Tri Gable Lea Farm" in Colchester alongside his wife, Naomi Niemann. When he isn't adventuring in the outdoors or giving classes about it, Gostkiewicz

works as a full-time middle school and high school educator.

"You know, I'm not passionate about math. My students are surprised and they're like, 'you don't actually like that?' Like no, I like it, but I like fishing and gardening... I like all those hobbies in life and I like connecting with people through their hobbies," Gostkiewicz said.

As a true enthusiast for the outdoorsy hobbies, Gostkiewicz hosts an array of classes on topics includ-

Please see **RAISE THE COOP**, page 11



The Richards Family with the Little Free Library outside Green Meadows Elementary School in honor of Beth Richards, which was dedicated on June 8.

Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

Little Free Library honors Beth Richards

By Kristin Rivers
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HAMPDEN - Friends, family members, colleagues and community members gathered outside Green Meadows Elementary School on June 8 to dedicate a little free library in honor

of Beth Richards.

Richards, a beloved reading specialist at the school, passed away on November 15, 2025, at the age of 57.

Readers may recall a story early last month about a little free library proposal discussed by the Select-board. After that meeting on May 4, the board met with

Principal Sharon Moberg on May 18, who provided information on the proposal.

"The project is especially meaningful to our school community because it is intended to honor the memory of Beth Richards, a beloved

Please see **FREE LIBRARY**, page 8

Seniors party at Senior Prom

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The Hampden Post Acute Care hosted a Senior Prom for their residents on June 4.

The theme for the prom was masquerade. Attendees were able to have their own masquerade mask for the afternoon.

The prom also crowned a Prom King and Queen: Michael Before and Lucinda Chelo.

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Turley photo by Selena Nguyen

Mike Gostkiewicz engaging with his audience, asking them what brought them to "Raise the Coop."



Photo courtesy of Niki Willis

John Harris wears a masquerade mask at the post acute prom.

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SB holds financial year-end review

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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HAMPDEN - The Selectboard held a financial year-end review discussion with Town Treasurer Richard Patullo and Town Accountant Elise Diemand on June 8.

Chair John Flynn noted how it was the last month of the fiscal year and thanked Diemand "for what you're sending out on a monthly basis."

"I think it's very valuable to the different town departments letting them know where they stand on their expenditures. Obviously, the close to and overspent accounts. I mean, obviously, some are spent out as they should be. Couple of them over by a buck or two and some—you look at some like the fire department operations—over by 1%, but the 1% represent \$800," Flynn said. "What are we thinking for something like that? Are we going to start preparing some line to lines from inside there?"

Diemand replied yes. "We'll do some budget transfers which I've already started putting them together, but I don't feel comfortable presenting that to you until we see June," Diemand said.

"Right," Flynn said. "And I think you had mentioned before that July 17 was your drop dead?"

"It is, yes," Diemand said. Flynn said "a lot of these I think easily can be taken care of inside departments without even going into reserve," which Diemand agreed.

"That's what it looks like right now," Diemand said.

Flynn then noted what ones jumped out to him.

"Not any major money, but the vests. Any idea why they got overspent?" Flynn said.

Patullo answered this question.

"We're waiting for reimbursement. It's a grant and there was a snafu in getting Dan's name on and Scott's name off. That just happened last week. The federal bureaucracy is strong, but I anticipate we'll get the money. It's just a matter of time," Patullo said.

"That's not big money but that's just kind of surprising," Flynn said.

When Selectboard Member Don Davenport noted information technology, Town Administrator Brian Domina said he would have to go back and look at the account.

"So, there's the office equipment acquisitions account, \$20,000," Domina said.

He later said he thought it was coded wrong but would look into it.

"Some of that may have been attributed to the move, we'll have to see," Domina said.

On the overdrawn for police training, Patullo said "it always is."

"Training is mostly a salary item and she's probably going to be turning back \$100,000 on the salary line," Patullo said. "You'll notice that this year, the new chief asked for a \$10,000 or so increase in the training salary line, and the Advisory did a light reduction on the salary line. Honestly, I'm not even sure why there's two separate lines there. It's not like that line item is used to pay for program. It's used to pay for the officers for the overtime for the training. It's a salary line."

Davenport asked Diemand about the transfer station.

"That July amount, that's the \$15,000 that the town allocates to the tax levy?" Davenport said. "July 2025 revenue was \$22,000. So I'm thinking that's \$15,000 from the tax levy..."

After checking, Diemand said this.

"That does not include raised from taxes," Diemand said. "That's purely revenue from bags and permits."

"Okay. So, the \$12,000 deficit as of the end of May," Davenport said.

"Yep," Diemand said.

"But really, if the \$15,000 tax levy goes then it's really only, there were \$3,000 that

were good," Davenport said.

"Yep, that's correct," Diemand said.

"All right, we're pretty close to that," Davenport said. "And I think the salaries are \$2,800 a month."

"Yep," Diemand said.

"We should be pretty good there," Davenport said.

On the senior center utilities, Flynn said it was no surprise as natural gas went up and electricity went up.

"Looks like \$2,600. But at least, do you see other potentials inside the senior center to take care of that or no?" Flynn said.

Diemand said yes.

"Like I said, I have started a list and the majority of the budget transfers I'm putting together now are interdepartmental," Diemand said.

For the \$212,000 overspent on snow and ice, Flynn said it was the largest number seen "in several years," but "it was a heck of a winter."

"It is what it is," Flynn said.

Patullo said the cash flow was good.

"We've got about \$3 million in the general fund right now, although we're going to be paying \$1 million to the school this week. We have gotten bids for the State House notes. They're borrowing for the water problem. So, it was very important to borrow more than we spent, otherwise it hits the free cash number. So, we ended up buying \$1.45 million," Patullo said. "And the bad news is we only had one bidder for the state house note. Only one bank was interested. The good news is the rate's three and a quarter percent, so I can't complain about that."

He added how municipal bonds tend to go for two-thirds of the rate of mortgage rate.

"So, that's predictable, because it's interest-free to the borrower. So University Bank has borrowed it, so has bid it and I have documents I need you to sign tonight so that we will get the money next Wednesday so that we can push off the last part of the water project until we can appropriate for it," Patullo said.

The borrowing, which was \$1,450,000 for the purpose of the Water District was then unanimously approved.

Musical Storytelling & Folk Songs by Eli Elkus

WILBRAHAM - The Musical Storytelling & Folk Songs with Summer Reading Program theme: "Plant A Seed, Read," will take place at the Wilbraham Public Library on Wednesday, July 1, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Tales of travel, humanity, and treasures of the natural world; told, sang, and fingerpicked by Eli Elkus. This Musical Storytelling program weaves themes of the iREAD 2026 Summer Reading Program; "Plant a Seed, Read," exploring culture, history, science, and human connection. Rekindled works of Folk, Country Blues, and Americana tell stories of humanity and our relationship with the land and its inhabitants through-

out history. Original Songs & Stories crafted by Eli in various parks, forests, and towns in the Americas bring these themes into present day, telling tales whose merit fosters reverence and respect for the earth and dignity and liberty for all its inhabitants, ecologically and socially. This family friendly program is layered in ways folks young and old can enjoy and participate in, singing and playing along to part of the program. Songs & Stories for the young, old, and young at heart.

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

Beatles Concert to be held at the WPL

WILBRAHAM- All are invited to attend "The Music of the Beatles" at Wilbraham Public Library on Monday, June 29 at 6 p.m. In this one hour concert, musician and instrumentalist Melodious Zach will perform the Beatles' greatest hits and quiz the audience on Beatles trivia.

Weather permitting, this performance will take place outside of the library and attendees are encouraged to bring a chair. This program is supported by a grant from the Wilbraham Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Registration is appreciated but not required. Sign up at wilbrahamlibrary.org, or call the library at 413-596-6141.

BROADBAND from page 1

offer, see if it's more viable for what we want to accomplish and if not, then we go back to what the inspector general's comments are and we follow their recommendations for design build again."

Nelson added this decision was voted on unanimously by the Broadband Committee and they would meet again later that week to discuss how they should further proceed if the Select Board agreed with this direction.

Clerk Michael Squindo had this thought.

"I think the question that comes back to me, particularly if you go down a bid with any existing public vendors, is the value of the service compared to what we're already getting in terms of my understanding is these other public vendors have largely created Spectrum publicly," Squindo said. "So, we're not really getting an enhanced service beyond the speed of the internet. You're still getting your sole vendor. You're still getting one service point, one speed point..."

After noting the historical side and what the committee had been pursuing, Squindo noted "the idea that what we're trying to create is, actually, a totally different model than what Spectrum or anybody else offers."

"I say that in the context of I don't think more information is necessarily bad, but I don't know that there's somebody out there that's ready to do what we're trying to do here and I think that needs to be understood not just as a point of financing, but as a point of service offering," Squindo said.

Nelson agreed saying how, "we don't know what there is either."

"We're not entering into that path with a perception that, 'Okay, there's a 90% chance of this working and if not, we're going to go down this road.' This is so, at the end of the day, if the original path for whatever reason never happens. Something happens where it completely implodes, we can always say we did explore this other option as well to see if it was viable," Nelson said. "Like I said, worst-case scenario, we exit that process with much more information and we can confidently say to the citizens of Wilbraham if it comes to that, 'Well, we did look at this, we did look at that and it would be no better than Spectrum. It would be no better than what you have now, so that's why we chose this path.'"

After noting the marketing perspective, Nelson said this.

"It behooves us to at least investigate what they're offering," Nelson said. "This would be a path that would be exploratory and give us information that like I said, when we do go down that design build road again, we'd be able to integrate that into the proposal."

Chair Marc Ducey thanked the Broadband Committee for "all the time you've dedicated to this."

"Part of the problem I have now is I think things changed. The dynamics have changed with Charter's changing pricing and everything else. I think that's all become more of a factor, and I think the feasibility may not be as clear as it was to me many years ago," Ducey said. "So, I have no problem going down another path. But I don't want you guys wasting a lot of time. It's your time and if you're willing to do it, I'm okay but it just seems to me that the fea-

sibility may not be. It's been rejected by two neighboring towns recently, Hampden and recently Longmeadow. So, I just am concerned that the opportunity has passed itself."

Nelson noted Ducey's point in terms of cost-burden analysis.

"I think that would be an output of this initial kind of rework of this process before we spend more time doing it," Nelson said.

Ducey also noted the other town projects on hand too such as the middle school, which Nelson agreed. He again reiterated his appreciation to the committee overall.

"If you're willing to go forward—to Mike's point—options are always good," Ducey said.

After Nelson reiterated the most important point is to explore options and angles to figure out the best option, Ducey asked how much longer the committee would still need, which Nelson replied "maybe a couple months" to research the offerings and put together all the scenarios they come up with.

After Vice Chair Sue Bunnell asked if there was a way for the board to get materials from a provider or if an RFP would need to be done, Town Administrator Nick Breault replied he was sure "there would need to be some kind of procurement process."

"I'm not aware of any exemptions for that," Breault said.

Bunnell echoed the concerns of her colleagues, adding how the board needs to do "a little more work" of sharing the information provided by Spectrum on better rates.

"She has made it very clear that anyone in town who's looking for a better rate for their internet service can reach out to her directly if they aren't successful. So, I want to make sure that as many folks in the community as possible have that option," Bunnell said.

After further discussion, it was agreed the Broadband Committee would proceed further and more updates would come soon once they have more information.

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PROM from page 1

The event started with appetizers and congregation in the lobby, then they opened the dining room for dinner. Lastly, the prom ended with lots of dancing with music provided by a DJ.

The prom was open to all family members of the post acute community. Residents were able to get their hair and makeup done, and also got gowns donated from Second Time's A Charm in Palmer.

Nurse Manager of the Post Acute Rehab Unit, Alyson Sapaugh, took a moment to talk about the prom.

"What we're really trying to do is to do things that really bring the residents, family, and community together to make it a positive experience for our residents in a long term care setting," Sapaugh said.

Stephanie West also took a moment to say a few words about the prom.

"This is one of the many events I've participated in since October, and they really put their residents first above all. They're very people driven and they really care about their residents," West said.

Director of Nursing Carrie Beliveau and Administrator Natasha Pieciak added on their own thoughts on the senior prom.

"It's to celebrate them and their lives," Beliveau said. "And to show them that we really care about them."

"It's a really important event for our seniors to participate in our senior prom," Pieciak said. "It gives them something to look forward to, focus on, and just appreciation, and their family members become involved. They look at old photos that have been posted up. I think it draws up really good memories of past proms and things like that."

Receptionist Alva Margulis also took a moment to talk about the importance of the Post Acute's prom that afternoon.

"The prom is a big deal for young folks when they're in high school," Margulis said. "And I think it's pretty important to give older people stuff to celebrate, because they have joy in them, and they have the desire to celebrate, to remember being younger, and all of the millions of memories that they have throughout their lives. So, the senior prom's a way to call on some of those memories and try to make some new ones."

During the cocktail hour there was a non-alcoholic bar, and the bartender was Human Resources Manager Jasmine Bell.



Masks are set up for residents to take and use during the prom.

"It's a great way for engagement and to get the residents to have a taste of what's going on outside of the facility and have fun, reliving what it was like to be young, having a chance to get dressed and have a good time," Bell said.

It was a wonderful celebration for the residents

to come together and enjoy good food and company in the Hampden Post Acute.

The Hampden Post Acute is hosting another event on July 16 with Brookhaven Hospice: Planning Ahead for Piece of Mind: a Family Guide to Important Documents presented by Kim O'Connor.



Turley photo by Noelle Hisgen
Jasmine Bell takes the role of bartender for the afternoon at the Hampden Post Acute Senior Prom.



Cheryl Branham wears her masquerade mask and gown at the senior prom.

BELOW: This year, the Post Acute crowned Michael Before and Lucinda Chelo as Prom King and Queen.



Michael Before and Elizabeth Scanlon have a good time at the prom.



Carrie Beliveau (Top), Alyson Sapaugh (Left), and Laura Bernard (Right) join Karen Decker (Center) for a photo together.



Adult Crafternoon at the Wilbraham library

WILBRAHAM – Wilbraham Public Library is offering a Crafternoon for Adults on Friday, June 26, 2 to 3:30 p.m.

Join us to create personal-

ized beaded bookmarks. This is an easy to learn craft that produces excellent results. And the bookmarks make great gifts!

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and all craft supplies will be provided. But registration is necessary as space is limited. For more information or to register, please call the library at 413-596-6141.

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VIEWPOINTS

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

Why don't we have a minimum Social Security benefit?

Dear Rusty:

I think we should have a Social Security baseline of \$2,500 for each person.

When I retire, my Social Security benefit will not be enough to survive. There are many of us, who worked low paying jobs all our lives because we raised families and only started saving later in life. Considering all the money our government wastes on other countries and welfare programs for people who have not worked, it seems unfair that they will not reward those of us who contributed to society all our lives.

Signed: Needs More Social Security.

Dear Needs More:

For information, the concept of a "minimum" Social Security benefit is not new and, indeed, already exists, but it is one which few beneficiaries qualify for.

The so-called "special minimum benefit" was meant to lift low-earning workers above the poverty line, but less than 32,000 SS beneficiaries (out of about 59 million retirees) currently qualify.

That's because Social Security's benefit formula turns out to be more generous because it is based on lifetime earnings (wages), while the "special minimum benefit" program is based on consumer prices. That causes the SS benefit formula to provide a higher SS benefit than is provided by the "special minimum benefit" option. In other words, people get a higher benefit because their SS benefit is based upon their actual lifetime earnings vs. an artificially created special minimum benefit.

In short, the existing SS benefit formula usually provides more than the established "special minimum benefit."

The SS benefit program is based on each person's average monthly income over their lifetime.

However, it is very important to understand that the program is also designed to provide a higher monthly benefit to those with a lower lifetime income.

Thus, the percentage of "replacement income" for those with lower lifetime earnings is more than it is for those with higher lifetime earnings.

Typically, a lower-lifetime income person will get about 40% of their average pre-retirement monthly income as their Social Security benefit, whereas a high-

er-income person will get about 20% or less of their pre-retirement monthly average income.

In this way, Social Security is already a "progressive" program. But it's important to understand also that Social Security, from its beginning, was never meant to provide 100% of a person's income needs in retirement.

Thus, each beneficiary should plan to supplement their retirement income in other ways such as retirement savings, investment income, working longer, working part-time, etc.

Having said that, it is also important to know that Social Security is a completely self-sustaining program and not dependent on general public funding, which would make it more susceptible to political shenanigans (imagine giving re-election seeking politicians easy access to Social Security's separately held resources).

While it is certainly true that the government spends freely on "welfare programs" for those who have not worked, Social Security is not a program, which is dependent on government largesse. Rather, it is a benefit which is earned by working and contributing to the program, which provides retirement benefits based upon each person's average lifetime work income.

If you expect financial difficulties when you retire, I encourage you to visit this website sponsored by the National Council on Aging (www.benefitscheckup.org). Here you can enter your zip code and find many public programs which you might be eligible for where you live, including assistance with healthcare costs, housing, utilities, etc.

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.

A 320-mile hike on the Appalachian Trail

When we stepped onto the Appalachian Trail for a twenty-six day, 310-mile backpacking trip from Fontana Dam, North Carolina to Damascus, Virginia, we had no idea what adventures-and misadventures-lay ahead.

We had no idea that on our very first night in the Great Smoky Mountains, we would come face to face with a large black bear, who would lunge forward, clamp his enormous jaws around another hiker's backpack-which happened to be lying by my feet-and lumber off into the woods with it.

We never imagined that the same fearless bear would return to the campsite a half a dozen times throughout the night while we were snuggled in our 2-person sleeping bag. Or that we would be standing outside of our tent at midnight blowing whistles as the bear slowly approached us-the beam of light from our headlamps igniting the bears' eyes a golden yellow. Or that Tom would pick up a medium-sized boulder and lift it over his head in case the bear came any closer. Or that other backpackers who had been sleeping in the nearby shelter would race towards us with headlamps shining like spotlights through the shadowed



forest, and one of them would dispense bear spray directly into the bear's face to finally ward it off for the last time.

Or that, due to this close encounter, Smoky Mountain National Park officials would close the campsite to hikers the following day.

This is the longest backpacking trip Tom and I have ever embarked on. In our attempt to hike all 2,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail, we know that we need to amp up the mileage with each trip we take. At 61 and 69 years old, we likely have limited time before our bodies protest against this type of strenuous activity.

But being out here is about so much more than making miles and achieving a goal. It's about rediscovering who we are AWAY from the creature comforts we are accustomed to. Away from the chaos. Away from the responsibilities. Away from the noise.

As I write this, we are halfway through our trip. We've been out here on trail for 13 days, hiking between 9 and 11 hours each day.

We have been awed by the power of nature in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Been pelted by torrential rain while thunder rumbled overhead and have melted in 90-degree heat under a blazing sun. We have stood on the highest mountain on the entire Appalachian Trail, the 6,640-foot summit of Kuwahi, formerly known as Clingmans's Dome. Played 'who's going to blink first' with a 5-foot long snake.

We've stood atop mountains looking at views that

have taken our breath away, and we've sat side-by-side on the ground in the middle of the forest, our legs stretched out on the dirt and our heads leaning back against our backpacks, simply watching the clouds dance across the sky.

Tonight, we have pitched our tent on a bed of pine needles under a tree, not far from the summit of Big Bald. We are surrounded by twisted, gnarled trees and rocks the size of mobile homes. It feels as though we are in a cloak and dagger mystery novel.

After eating our freeze-dried dinner of beef and pasta, we walked 150 feet up the trail to a small viewpoint, where we sat down on a large flat rock for almost an hour while waiting for the sun to meet the horizon.

We talked about every-

thing. And nothing. Important things and nonsensical things.

We relived our days out here so far. Reminiscenced about past adventures and future plans. Talked about family. Life. Dreams.

I snuggled in closer to Tom as the air chilled. And we waited.

The sun hung low. Clouds caught the fading sunlight and the golden orb blazed through them with such intensity that we briefly looked away. But when the sun drifted lower, we watched the world catch fire in shades of crimson, orange and gold. Like strokes on canvas, the sky was transformed, leaving us breathless.

Our conversation paused. The earth slowed. The world existed only in the present

Please see **HIKING**, page 10

Rock into Summer

HAMPDEN – Rock into Summer featuring Acoustica will be taking place on July 11 from 6 to 10 p.m. at Thornton Burgess Middle School—the town hall—at 85 Wilbraham Rd. in Hampden.

The event is in partner-

ship with Hampden Parks & Rec and East Village Tavern.

Sponsors include Cloud 9 Marketing Group, Charlie Arment Trucking, Deer Park Recycling, Scags Enterprise, SAFCO Foam Insulation, Affordable Waste Solutions and more.

Teen Programs at the library

HAMPDEN – The following teen events are coming up at the Hampden Free Public Library.

Thursday, June 25 at 4 p.m., Perler Beads

Make a fidget keychain, magnet, or traditional Perler Bead design!

Saturday, June 27 at Noon Teen Spa Day

Self-care should always be a priority - embrace summer relaxation and make lip scrub, body scrub, and bath tea! There will be door prizes.

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

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

UPCOMING ELECTIONS
 Membership Meeting
October 28
 • 2-year terms
 • All officers and directors open
 • Nominating Committee
 • Contact Pam Sonnefeld



Friends of Wilbraham Seniors hold informational meeting



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

The Friends of Wilbraham Seniors held an informational meeting on May 20 to share more about the group and look for new members. During the meeting, discussions included information on the Friends' mission, how they've supported seniors in the community including the new senior center which opened in 2024 and their varying fundraising events held over the years.

For anyone interested in joining the Friends or learning more, they can Pam Sonnefeld at pamelasonnefeld@charter.net.



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Love, Mom, Dad, EJ, Niko, Aleks, Maisy and family



Submitted photo John Flynn

Deacon Leo Coughlin celebrated

Deacon Leo Coughlin of St. Mary's Church received a surprise celebration on May 8 to mark 25 years as deacon of the church. Here he is pictured with Selectboard Chair John Flynn.

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FREE LIBRARY
from page 1

long-time reading teacher and recent retiree who passed away unexpectedly last fall. Beth dedicated many years supporting our students and fostering a love of reading and literacy within our school community," Moberg said. "Establishing a little free library in her memory would provide a lasting tribute to her legacy and the impact she had on generations of students and families. Current and former staff and students and members have already raised funds to purchase and maintain the little free library so that there would be no financial obligation to the town. We are committed to ensuring that the library remains well-cared for and stocked and maintained over time."

Moberg had noted the other little free library at Memorial Park and that also having one directly in front of Green Meadows "would serve a unique purpose by encouraging literacy and reading engagement among our students and our families, providing convenient access to books before and after school hours, creating another positive community resource centered around education and offering a visible and meaningful tribute to Beth Richards at the school where she spent so many years in her career."

The suggested location was the grassy area to the right of the school driveway.

After noting Custodian Darryl Fidalgo had reached out previously on the potential placement options, Moberg added she also came before the board to make sure that the proper process was followed, along with receiving formal approval from the town before moving forward.

After the discussion, the proposal was unanimously approved, allowing the project to move forward.

The Dedication

Moberg said today "is about celebrating a life that made a lasting difference."

"Beth was more than a reading specialist at Green Meadows School. She was a caring educator, a trusted colleague and a source of kindness and encouragement for so many students and families. Throughout her years of service, she shared her love of learning and helped countless children grow in confidence, knowledge and success. As a reading specialist, Beth believed deeply in the power of books and opportunities that reading creates for children," Moberg said. "She knew that reading was more than just

a skill. It was a pathway to learning, understanding, confidence and connection. Beth had a gift for helping students discover books they loved and for showing them that they were capable readers."

Moberg added that whether Richards "was working with the struggling reader or celebrating a student success, she brought patience, enthusiasm and a genuine joy to her work."

"One of the things many of us will always remember about Beth was her love of reading. She was passionate about helping children develop lifelong appreciation for books and for stories. She understood that a single book could inspire a child, provide comfort, teach an important lesson or open the door to new ideas and experiences. Her belief in the importance of literacy touched the lives of so many children and families in our community," Moberg said. "This little free library is a wonderful way to honor Beth's life and the work she loved so much. Every book placed on these shelves and every story shared through this library reflects something that Beth valued deeply. Long after today, children and families will stop here to discover a book, share a favorite story or enjoy the simple pleasure of reading, just as Beth would have hoped. In that way, her love of literacy and her commitment to children will continue to make a difference in our community for years to come."

Moberg also extended gratitude to the Richards Family.

"We are honored to have her husband, Shawn, her daughter Mackenzie, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harrington, her sister Amy and husband and other family members with us today. Thank you for sharing Beth with the Green Meadows community. She leaves behind a legacy of kindness, compassion, dedication and a love of reading that will continue to inspire others for years to come," Moberg said. "As we dedicate this little free library today, may it serve as a lasting reminder of Beth's generous spirit, her commitment to children and her belief in the power of literacy. May every book borrowed and every story shared here honor her memory and keep her legacy alive."

Moberg then placed a book, "My First Day of Irish Dance," inside the little free library, reflecting Richards' Irish heritage.

"Many of us have fond memories of welcoming her daughter Mackenzie to Green Meadows each year on St.



Selectboard Chair John Flynn and community members, colleagues and friends of Beth Richards at the dedication ceremony.



Fourth Grade Teacher Kristen Chapdelaine donated "Blueberries for Sal" for the Little Free Library.



A look inside the Little Free Library, filled with books.



A shot of the Little Free Library. The inscription says, "In Memory of Beth H. Richards. Teacher, Reader, Friend."



First Grade Teacher Melanie Patterson places her book donation inside the Little Free Library.

Patrick's Day to share her Irish dancing with students and staff. It was a tradition that brought joy to our school community and reflected the pride Beth had in her family, her heritage and the traditions that were so important to her," Moberg said. "It is my hope that this first book would remind us not only of Beth's love of reading, but also of the many ways she shared herself, her family and her culture with us. Beth will always be a cherished member

of the Green Meadows family and her legacy will continue through the students she inspires, the colleagues she supported and that the stories that will be shared through this little free library for years to come."

Fourth Grade Teacher Kristen Chapdelaine presented "Blueberries for Sal" as her donation.

"It's set in Maine and we are reminded of Beth because we know she liked to spend a lot of time in Maine with her

family and friends," Chapdelaine said.

Kindergarten Teacher Amanda Shute chose "Marley and Me."

"Beth and I shared a yellow lab connection. I had Moon, who were both equally as in trouble as Marley and I thought what a great addition," Shute said.

First Grade Teacher Melanie Patterson shared how Richards co-taught writing classes with many of the teachers and one of those books was "The Important Book," sharing an excerpt.

"The important thing about you is that you are you. It is true that you were a baby and you grew and now you are a child and you will grow into a man or into a woman. The important thing about you is that you are you," Patterson said. "And Beth was very important to all of us."

Richards' mother, Joan Harrington, brought "Bridge to Terabithia" and "Where the Red Fern Grows," which were two of her daughter's favorite books.

"We thank you so much for doing this. You can't know how much we appreciate it," Harrington said.

Richards' sister, Amy Ferrero, donated books that her sister found impactful on

teaching, which were "The Lemonade War," "Nate the Great," and "The Chocolate Touch." Also, "Charlotte's Web," which both sisters loved.

Shawn Richards, Richards' husband, said this.

"I just want to thank everybody. Beth loved being here. She loved all of you. This is a very special, special day. I know she's looking down," Richards said.

Ferrero said her sister "truly loved what she did."

"She always had a wonderful story about one of her students, maybe some funny gesture they made or some funny saying or an impact like they made a milestone from a reading perspective or she'd talk about one of her colleagues and how they collaborated together with a particular student," Ferrero said. "Gosh, this is a wonderful tribute. She absolutely adored and loved every single of you. She absolutely adored and loved every single student she encountered and as Shawn said, I know she's looking down right now and she's so appreciative of this gesture and the potentially lasting impact it'll have on students' lives. So, thank you for doing this. It means more to my family and all of us than you can imagine."



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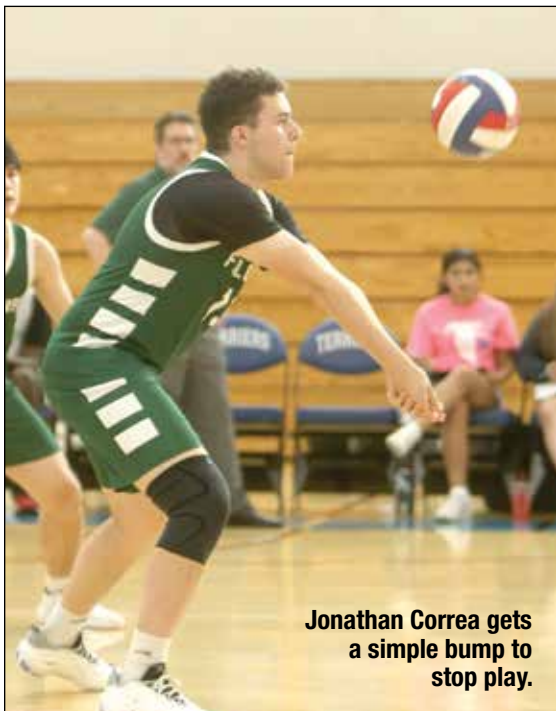
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Kevin Cordova goes for a bump for the Falcons.



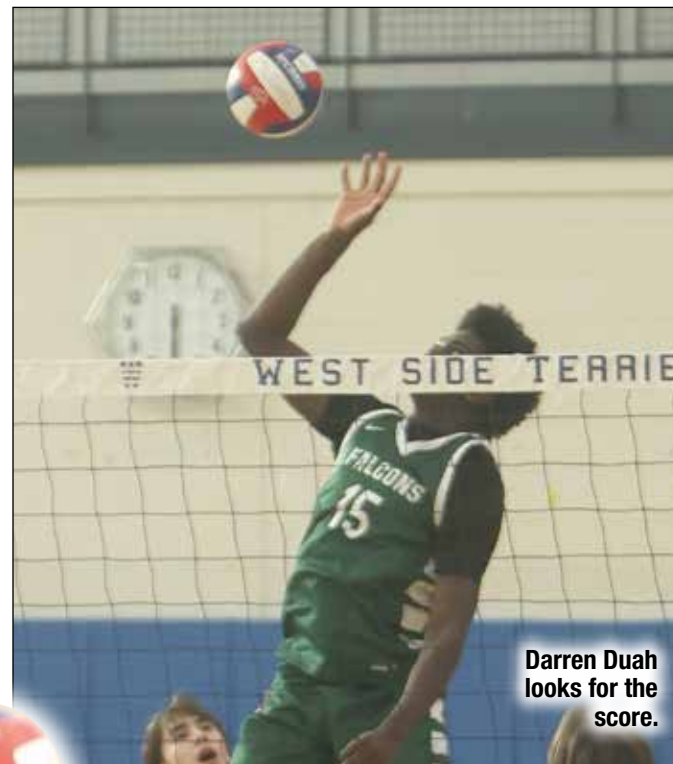
Jonathan Correa gets a simple bump to stop play.

Falcons swept away in state tourney opener



John Dyer flies for a hit over the net.

WILBRAHAM – Earlier this month, though all three sets were very competitive, the Minnechaug Regional High School boys volleyball fell to West Springfield 3-0 in the opening round of the Division 2 State Tournament. Minnechaug lost sets of 26-24, 25-21, and 26-24, ending Minnechaug’s season at 10-11. Minnechaug managed to qualify for the state tournament with a .500 record and a finish in the top 32 in the state.



Darren Duah looks for the score.



Domenic Fontane goes straight down for a spike.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

LEFT: Brennan Rost gets an easy set.

Teddy Bears Pools scores rare win over defending champs

SOUTH HADLEY – Teddy Bear Pools and Spas wasted no time last Monday evening at South Hadley High School, sending eight men to the plate in the bottom of the first and not looking back en route to a 15-0 blanking of PeoplesBank. The margin was never in question.

The first inning established the tone with swift and relentless efficiency. Bailey Griggs drew a walk that scored a run. Xavion Maldonado doubled to bring home two more, a PeoplesBank error allowed another pair to score, Sean Rosemond drew a walk to push across yet another, and Alex Gochinski grounded out with enough to score one more. Six runs — before PeoplesBank could exhale.

The scoring resumed in the second when Travis Kagan singled to plate one, and

Please see **TRI-COUNTY**, page 10



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Danny Gaines pitches for the Bankers.



Tyler Evans makes a catch at first.

Dave Clark picks up a grounder for PeoplesBank.



Milla Lee starts up the field.



Gabby Williams goes after a loose ball.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Eva Blatz sends a free kick away.

Mutiny defeats Maine Footy

LUDLOW – Last Sunday afternoon, June 7, Maine Footy made their annual visit to Luistano Stadium. The New England Mutiny continued their success against the Footy, defeating Maine 4-0. The UWS win was followed by a win at the Worcester Wanderers 3-0. The Mutiny did suffer a USL-W loss against Hudson Valley 2-1 last Tuesday. The Mutiny will face Hudson Valley against on Saturday, June 20 at Luistano Stadium.



Valentina Molinari looks to get around an opposing player.



Sophia Scyocurka tries to overcome an opponent.

Blue Sox out to great start this summer

HOLYOKE – The Valley Blue Sox (6-1-1) took down the Danbury Westerners (3-5) by a score of 4-2 June 13, driven heavily by strong pitching performances from RHP Jackson Hinchliffe (Richmond) and RHP Jake LeFrancois (UMass Lowell).

It was the second night in a row where the Blue Sox's starter pitched at least five complete innings and was relieved by one pitcher who finished the rest of the game.

The ability of Valley's starters to consistently work efficiently through the fifth inning as well as head coach John Raiola's willingness to keep his starters in the game seemingly have a correlation to the team's early success. Opponents in 2026 have not left a starting pitcher in more than 3.2 innings against the Blue Sox. Valley has done so in all but one game this season.

"It's all them and their ability to throw strikes and to get off the field," Raiola said. "We talk a lot about trying to get length in five or six innings, whatever it is. But the reality is, it's pitch count more than anything. And if we have quick, efficient innings, then they can keep going."

Hinchliffe did exactly that on Saturday night. His final line from June 13 was six innings pitched, four hits, zero earned runs, three strikeouts, and zero walks, all on 70 pitches. LeFrancois, who earned the nine out save, pitched three innings, allowing one hit, one

earned run, striking out two and walking none.

"100 percent," Hinchliffe said when asked if his performance showcased the kind of pitcher he's built himself to be. "With the two-seam sinker thing, just getting weak contact early in counts allows you to get deep in games, save the bullpen and let the defense work."

As of the morning of June 14, Hinchliffe and RHP Dylan Reid (Brown) lead the NECBL in innings pitched, each with 11.0.

Hinchliffe's second start was a nice recovery after his first start of the season where he lasted five innings, but allowed five earned runs and five hits. For LeFrancois, it was his fourth appearance of the season and his second in three days.

With the Blue Sox still waiting on select arms to join the team for the summer, the bullpen has stepped up in a major fashion with relievers recording longer outings in order to preserve other pitcher's arms.

"When you play every single day you can't just go 1-1-1 and not have guys available," Raiola said. "You need some length at times and you have in this case, [LeFrancois] down for a couple days. We have the off day on Tuesday, and we'll get him back on Wednesday. And so, it sets us up nicely for Sunday and Monday."

With the Blue Sox off to one of the hottest starts in the NECBL, the team mentality will not change.

Obie wins rain shortened \$5k Winchester 101 Modified

WINCHESTER, N.H. - Modified superstar Brian Robie added to his legacy at the great race place Saturday, topping the \$5,000-to-win Open Modified Winchester 101 at Monadnock Speedway.

The reigning and multi-time speedway 604 Modified champion set fast time in qualifying and then outran a stout 18-car field to earn the big payday at his home track, the site of scores of feature victories by the Sunapee speedster over the last decade.

In other events Saturday on the high banks, Hillary Renaud survived a wild one to notch her first Limited Late Model victory of the season, Eric Pomasko ended a long drought by topping the Mini Stocks, and Young Guns sensation Dylan Stati won for the sixth week in a row.

The start of Saturday's main event was postponed earlier for one hour, ten minute rain delay but when the night's top show went green, nobody was more ready than Kimball, except maybe Robie, who started back in row four.

In qualifying Robie set fast time with a lap of 11.713

around the high banked quarter-mile. He, Meservey, and Joey Jarvis each eclipsed the 12-second mark. With Kimball second and Meservey third in the main event, current weekly 604 Modified top points man Tyler Leary was fourth, and NASCAR Whelen Modified series regular Kyle Bonsignore was fifth.

Kimball, from row two, took the lead from Bleau on lap one, with Robie quickly up to third on lap six and blasting into second a lap later. Kimball then held an eight-length advantage.

With reigning MRS champ Brett Meservey storming into Robie's shadow, Kimball rode all alone at the front, but his advantage vanished when a Chris Pasteryak spun that brought out the caution flag and, with it, brought Robie to the leader's door on lap 29.

Robie was quick to cash in on the opportunity, taking charge on lap 30 and holding Kimball and Meservey at his bumper until heavy rain swept in mid-race, effectively ending the show. After a meeting of track management and the racing teams, the race

was declared official.

Hillary Renaud was jostled backward early in the night's Twin States Truck Services Limited Late Model main event but when the chips were on the line, the Vernon, VT star was in the right place at the right time to score her first win of the summer.

Wesley Stedt powered into the early lead, with Renaud and previous winner Robert Hagar close behind. With Renaud shuffled back in the top groove, Hagar held the point, just ahead of Stedt and Daniel Petrowicz, who, like Hagar, had triumphed the night before at Claremont.

Petrowicz rubbed past Hagar on lap 28, but a caution flag put Hagar back at the top, Three laps later, with the checkered flag high in chief starter Chris Horton's hand, Petrowicz again tried to muscle his way to the front, this time sending the top three cars spinning wildly across the finish line.

Renaud, whose ride ended half way to pit road, walked away with her first victory of the summer. Hagar, who was somehow able to drive away from the carnage, was

second, and Erik Smith third. Petrowicz, whose destroyed car had to be scraped from the frontstretch wall, was credited with fourth, and Michael Lashua was fifth.

Popular veteran Pat Houle led the first 15 laps of Saturday's Keene Towing and Recovery Mini Stock 25-lapper, with Eric Pomasko challenging until inching ahead on lap 16 and the two crafty vets - each many moons from victory lane - went to work. When Houle's ride quickly dropped off pace, former track king Louie Maher was quickly into second.

Maher tried over and over to wrest the top spot from Pomasko but the Peterborough speedster refused to budge, holding strong to earn his first win in years. With Maher a strong second, potent Craig Chaffee impressed in third, Tim Paquette finished fourth and Houle came home fifth.

Pre-teen ace Dylan Stati won for the sixth week in a row Saturday, topping the Doug's Auto Body Young Guns 15-lapper with ease. Maeve Barry was second on the night.

TRI-COUNTY from page 9

the third inning became an exercise in patience and plate coverage. Ray Toth hit a sacrifice fly, Willie Landman singled to center, Griggs singled to right, Kagan grounded into a fielder's choice, Ty Evans doubled to center, Rosemond singled down the right-field line, and Ryan Magni singled down the left-field line — each driving in a run. Seven different players contributed to that inning. Kagan finished the night with four RBI on a single hit, the most efficient line on the card.

Nate Kelleher-Mochak was untouchable on the mound. The starter worked five innings without allowing a run, giving up just two hits, striking out four, and walking one. It was the kind of outing that makes a winning pitcher's night feel almost anticlimactic — he threw strikes, got outs, and watched his offense do the rest.

Jackson Lavalley absorbed the loss for Peoples-Bank, lasting just one inning and allowing one run on one hit. The final score reflected a difficult evening for the visitors, who managed only two hits on the night — one apiece from Hogan G and Macdonald.

Teddy Bear collected 10 hits as a club, with Magni, Rosemond, and Maldonado each going 2-for-the-night. Equally notable was the

team's discipline at the plate: eight walks drawn, with Griggs and Gochinski each earning two. Teddy Bear also played a clean game in the field — no errors, with Evans handling the most chances at five. On this Monday, everything worked.



Mason Barcomb sends a throw to first for Teddy Bear Pools.

Cam MacDonald makes a strong throw to first.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

LEFT: Bailey Griggs slings a throw to first base for an out.

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T-Birds agree to bring back head coach Ott

SPRINGFIELD – St. Louis Blues President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Doug Armstrong announced today that the team has signed Steve Ott to a two-year contract extension as head coach of the Blues' AHL affiliate, the Springfield Thunderbirds.

Ott, 43, took over as Springfield's head coach on January 19, 2026. In the club's final 34 regular-season games, he led the team to an 18-14-2 record, clinching a berth as the sixth seed in the Atlantic Division for the 2026 Calder Cup Playoffs. Ott then guided the Thunderbirds to the Division Finals following a first-round series win over the third-seeded Charlotte Checkers and a historic victory over the Macgregor Kilpatrick Trophy-winning

Providence Bruins (the regular-season champions) in the Division Semifinals. Springfield's win over Providence marked the single biggest upset in AHL history, as the two teams were separated by 38 points in the regular season.

Ott originally joined the Blues' coaching staff on May 25, 2017, spending seven seasons as an assistant coach before being elevated to associate coach ahead of the 2024-25 season. During his tenure, the Summer-side, Prince Edward Island, native helped the Blues compile a 350-244-74 regular-season record and make five postseason appearances, including 2019, when he played an instrumental role in helping the organization capture its first Stanley Cup championship.

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HIKING from page 6

moment. Time stood still.

Once the sun disappeared behind the distant ridges-leaving the lingering shades of blue and pink and purple behind-Tom and I stood, bowed our heads, and praised God for his goodness.

Then we slowly walked hand in hand back to our tent

as darkness descended on the forest.

Over the past 8 years of backpacking, with well over a thousand miles completed, there are about 5 nights on trail that I will never forget.

This is now one of them. Stay tuned for the second half of our backpacking trip in a future edition of the newspaper. Onward!

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Wilbraham Women's Club awards four scholarships



WILBRAHAM - On May 21, the Wilbraham Women's Club was honored to present four, \$1,500 scholarships to the following Minnechaug Regional High School students at the Wilbraham Country Club luncheon: Allison Demetri, daughter of Lynette and Philip Demetri who will study business and marketing; Elizabeth Woytowicz, daughter of Katie and Joe Woytowicz, who will attend St. Lawrence University and study math and sciences, Ty-

ler Jaslanek, son of Walter and Amy Jaslanek, who will study mechanical engineering at WPI; and Elijah Webster, son of Alison and Steven Webster, who will attend the Colorado School of Mines and major in Engineering. Each student was presented a Certificate of Achievement at the MRHS Evening of Recognition on May 13, 2026 as well. Pictured from left to right: Elizabeth Woytowicz, Allison Demetri, Webster, and Tyler Jaslanek.

HCC honors students for 2025-2026 achievements

HOLYOKE - Holyoke Community College is proud to celebrate the students who earned honors and awards for their outstanding achievements during the 2025-2026 academic year.

Awardees were honored Wednesday, May 20, during a ceremony in the Bartley Center for Athletics and Recreation.

Below is a list of HCC honorees and award recipients for the 2025-2026 ac-

ademic year. Some students received multiple awards.

A full list of students along with their specific honors and awards can be found at hcc.edu/awards-2026

HCC Honors & Awards for 2025-2026:

Hampden:
Korey Colglazier (two awards), Heather Wrona.

Wilbraham:
Anna Heimsath, Collin Trombley.

RAISE THE COOP

from page 1
ing fishing, gardening, arts, and more.

"This is actually the second time that we hosted Mark," Adult Services Librarian Emilie Lang said. "Last year, he was here for a container gardening class and that was very popular, so I was interested to see what kind of other programs Mark offers."

Community members in attendance described Gostkiewicz as "entertaining to watch", praising him for his ability to keep an audience engaged while learning through his witty sense of humor. Gostkiewicz's biggest tip for raising chickens was this.

"Be kind to yourself, give yourself some slack. You're going to lose some. Some are going to get through your fences, a hawk is going to take some of them out. It sucks because people have their hearts

into it, they're pets," Gostkiewicz said.

Another important tip Gostkiewicz advised was to only do it because you want to, not just for eggs, as it is far more expensive to raise chickens than to buy a carton of eggs on a weekly basis. For those looking to learn more, you can visit his website, Trigableleafarm.com.

Gostkiewicz thanked the WPL and Lang for having him, crediting libraries in

general for making hosting these classes he's passionate about easier to happen.

Lang also expressed deep gratitude towards the WFOL—the Wilbraham Friends of the Library—who made this event possible through their most recent biggest fundraiser — the Annual Book Sale — that funded "Raise the Coop."

One message Lang had to the community was this. "Come visit the library!"

Besides outdoor hobby classes, the library also makes an effort to coordinate events in all sorts of fields and interests for all ages. Upcoming adult events include "Gentle Yoga", "An Evening with Paul Revere", "Intro to Ancestry Library Edition" and more.

"I think a lot of people don't realize what kind of resources the library has to offer. Of course we offer books but it's so much more

than that. You can learn a new skill, you can find a new hobby, you can meet more people. Even if chicken keeping is not specifically in your interests, I think it's valuable to be able to expand your horizons," Lang said.

For further information, you can visit the WPL's website at wilbrahampubliibrary.org and newsletters to seek out different resources and events the library offers.



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Deanna Congo reveals a butterfly scarf.

MAGIC from page 1

niors are my favorite. I absolutely love them. I spend a lot of time with my 95-year-old grandmother, and I have so much love and respect for the senior community that it is.”

Barbara Harrington, the social service coordinator for the town, spoke about the Memory Café.

“Our Memory Lane Memory Café meets on the first Monday of every month at 11 a.m. Each gathering features a program that may include music, games, crafts, guest speakers, or other enjoyable activities, followed by a shared lunch,” Harrington said. “At our café, we lovingly refer to those living with memory challenges as our ‘friends.’ We welcome individuals at all stages of memory loss, creating an environment where there is no pressure, no expectations, and

absolutely no judgment. For a few precious hours, caregivers can relax and connect with others who understand their experiences, while our friends enjoy companionship, laughter, and meaningful moments.”

Harrington shared what she enjoys most about the Memory Café.

“One of my greatest rewards is watching the smiles appear, hearing the laughter fill the room, and seeing friendships grow. Those moments remind us that even though memory may change, the need for connection, kindness, and belonging never does,” Harrington said. “Whether you are living with memory loss, caring for a loved one, or simply want to learn more, we invite you to join us. Everyone deserves a place where they feel welcome, valued, and understood—and that is exactly

what Memory Lane Memory Café strives to provide.”

Assistant Activity Coordinator Amanda Renna also took a moment to talk about the Café.

“It’s great. We like to offer a variety of programs and we try to change it up each month. So the fact that we can offer someone like Deanna, especially since it was paid for with a grant, was very generous,” Renna said. “It’s a wonderful thing because it gives them a little bit of time to relax and enjoy themselves.”

It was a wonderful program which was able to help bring people together under great local entertainment.

This program for the senior center was made possible by a grant from the Wilbraham Cultural Council, a local agency, sponsored by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen
Deanna Congo holds up a picture of a butterfly.

SUPPORT from page 1

kind of accumulated. Each year you get a certain amount of money and then if you don’t spend it all, you can carry it forward with you to the next year. So, we have a little bit left that would be able to pay for some things like maybe an additional year. However, with the new administration here—the United States administration—our grants officers have been a little grim about the potential of getting this extension approved,” Berneche said. “This extension is something we have done for our grants many times. Gina Kahn has done this many times. Our coalition grant, which was drug-free communities, we were granted—it’s called a no-cost extension year—so you just use those funds you’ve accumulated. We did that with the coalition last year. So, this is something that over the last 10 years has been something that we’ve always been able to do. However, we’ve been told, like I said, by our grant program officers that it’s unlikely to be approved this year. We will still apply, but we are now in this limbo where if that’s not approved, we don’t have any funding to keep the coalition going.”

the coalition employs,” which would mainly impact Hafner’s role, as the other people who have had roles in the coalition “also are being funded by other sources within the district, and unfortunately, Jackie is the only one who is fully funded by our grants.”

“So, right now, we are really looking for funding opportunities. We’re looking for donors, we’re looking for anyone that wants to help us with fundraising efforts and it will be a bit of a tight turnaround within the next couple months. We’ll need to see how much we can raise and see if that can support any part of Jackie’s salary,” Berneche said. “It would be great if we could secure it for at least a year. Any amount of time to just try and keep this going as much as we can.”

On additional funding, Berneche also noted there weren’t any grants that the coalition could apply to “that we would qualify for as a school district” and a lot of federal funding “has been severely cut.”

Opioid abatement funds are also being explored, with Berneche saying she reached out to the Wilbraham Select Board and Hampden Select-board to explore that option and begin that process if they can pursue that.

There was also an instance where the funding was pulled for one day—which was Sep-

tember 13, 2025—until it was restored due to lawsuits and people speaking out.

“It has definitely been a tumultuous year with the funding and there have been no federal funding opportunities for this work, unfortunately, so that’s why now we are turning to the community to see if there are any businesses or donors who feel really strongly about this prevention work and want to see it remain in the district and in the community,” Berneche said. “So we’re really just hoping to get the word out as much as we can.”

Hafner pointed out how in the last seven years, for example—2019 to now—prevention efforts, education and messaging have helped educate and empower students to make better decisions, leading to decreases in use.

“Prevention is like planting a seed. Again, you’re not going to see it right away, but in time, you are going to see it kind of blossom into these young people into successful adults,” Hafner said. “I think another thing too that’s very interesting is the way that social media has increased accessibility for young people to learn about these harmful products and the industries are not in support of these young students. They want their money and if they become addicted, the richer they’re going to be and as they go into adulthood, the more

money that they’re going to get from these young people because of the addiction.”

Hafner hopes that if students can continue to be empowered with “those skills and those tools” for prevention, “that’s making their livelihood probably more positive as they continue on into their adult life.”

She added that Springfield just got a coalition and Ludlow, West Springfield and Longmeadow have one. However, many other communities, such as Chicopee, don’t have one right now.

“I think having the coalition remain is important. There’s a lot of student engagement and opportunities that were brought out for these young people, like going to Boston and advocating for different things. But they’re becoming leaders within their own school and I think peer-to-peer leadership is so much more powerful than from an adult to a young person as well,” Hafner said.

Hafner stressed “we are in a safe community” and “we do have a lot of positive attributes to give to the community,” but there’s “lack of interventions within our own community,” which means people have to go to outside communities.

She also hopes to continue planting seeds for the students and inspiring future leaders.

“It just would be really sad.

I think coalitions are complete assets to communities in helping families and whatever the need may be and if that was to dissipate, it would be really saddening to see this loss within the community,” Hafner said.

Berneche added she planned to speak with the School Committee at their June 11 meeting about this and share data from the youth risk behavior surveys to show those impacts, thanks to the coalition’s work, emphasizing it’s their last attempt to make their case to the School Committee and try again.

The Times will have more on that meeting in a future edition.

“For the district to not have that I think is going to be a really great disservice to the students and their families. So, I hope presenting this to the School Committee and just have them hear it out again to hopefully change their minds about funding Jackie’s position in some capacity and if they have any other ideas for us or can collaborate with the town more, so we will see,” Berneche said. “It’s just a hard situation to be in because we know that the district is experiencing very large budget cuts and whenever that happens, these types of services are always the first to go, which is always hard to see. I know it’s not easy to make those budget

cuts and to determine what gets cut and, so I don’t envy that position either that they’re in, but it would not be right if we didn’t at least make everyone aware of how much the coalition does and how much it supports the students and the families and I think how much it down the road there will be a negative impact of not having this program here.”

Hafner also stressed maintaining relationships from the YMCA to the police and fire departments and the District Attorney’s Safety and Outreach Team, M.A.D.D. and the YWCA, which also impacts the students.

Also, events such as the Night at the Y, which brought 70 teens together earlier this year.

“When you can plant seeds of prevention work, I just think it’s powerful and it does save the ones that do listen and are receptive,” Hafner said.

If anyone is interested in learning more about what the donations would be used for, to donate or learn more about HWP4Y, contact Brianna Berneche, director of HWP4Y, at bberneche@hwsrd.org or Jackie Hafner, community engagement/communications coordinator for HWP4Y, at jhafner@hwsrd.org.

“We appreciate any help that anyone is willing to give us,” Berneche said.

PUBLIC NOTICES

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Jeanne E Hall of Greenfield, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 07/07/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the ad-

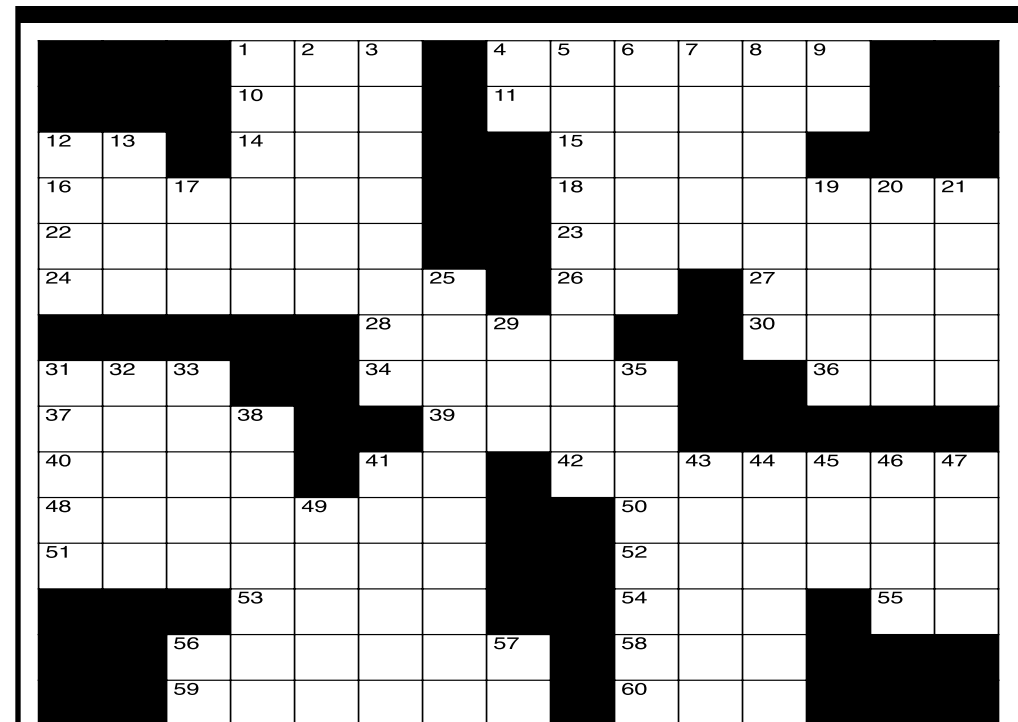
ministration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: June 08, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
06/18/2026

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.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P1241EA
Estate of:
Lucille Stutts
Date of Death: 05/03/2019
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Late and limited Formal Testacy and/or Appointment has been filed by



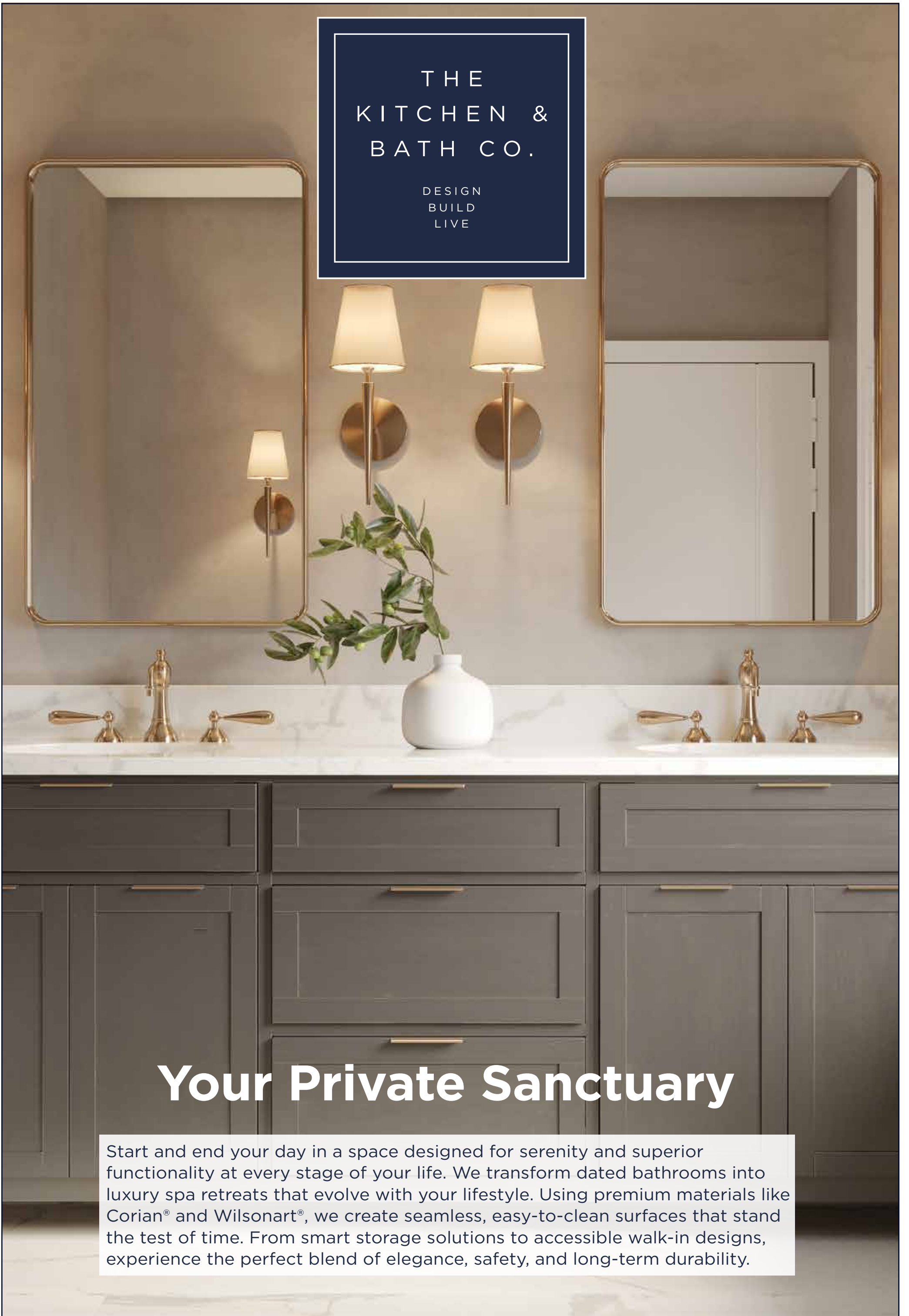
- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Similar
 - 4. Have an ambitious plan or a lofty goal
 - 10. No (Scottish)
 - 11. ___ Aires, city
 - 12. Morning
 - 14. Senior’s son (abbr.)
 - 15. A notable achievement
 - 16. European nation
 - 18. Endings
 - 22. Puts into place
 - 23. Former
 - 24. Grenadier
 - 26. Sea patrol
 - 27. Algerian port
 - 28. Norwegian river
 - 30. Precipitation
 - 31. Sunscreen rating
 - 34. New York is one
 - 36. Patti Hearst’s
 - 37. Soft mineral with greasy feel
 - 39. Retired Brazilian footballer
 - 40. An Indian nursemaid
 - 41. Atomic #24
 - 42. Immobile
 - 48. Insignia of royalty
 - 50. Seeds from which chocolate is made
 - 51. Begin again
 - 52. Round root
 - 53. Beginning to end (alt. sp.)
 - 54. What newlyweds just said
 - 55. Empire State
 - 56. Give back
 - 58. College hoops tournament
 - 59. Unstable situations
 - 60. Young women’s association
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Administer a drug
 - 2. Holy places
 - 3. Contrary opinions
 - 4. Blood type
 - 5. Gags
 - 6. Micturating
 - 7. Silly
 - 8. A type of “cuff”
 - 9. Spanish be
 - 12. Austrian river
 - 13. Messenger ribonucleic acid
 - 17. Consume food
 - 19. California supermarket
 - 20. Electronic communication
 - 21. Cassia tree
 - 25. Written works
 - 29. Cool!
 - 31. Noteworthy 90s lawyer Kenneth
 - 32. One who was compensated
 - 33. National symbols
 - 35. Raising
 - 38. A type of talk
 - 41. Cloud
 - 43. Middle Eastern peoples
 - 44. Pouches
 - 45. 007’s creator
 - 46. A cut of meat
 - 47. Sports entertainment award
 - 49. Christine ___, actress
 - 56. Relief organization (abbr.)
 - 57. Canadian province (abbr.)

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