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Football team finishes with win
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Photo courtesy of Brian Domina

The new sign welcoming the community to the new town hall in Hampden at the former Thornton W. Burgess Middle School.

Hampden's new town hall officially open

By Kristin Rivers of Dec. 8.

Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The town of Hampden's new town hall officially opened at 85 Wilbraham Rd—the former Thornton W. Burgess Middle School—on Nov. 18.

Open house dates are to be determined.

The library, also, is still in the process of moving from the Town House—the now former town hall—and will be closed the week of Dec. 1. It will later reopen the week

The History
The now former Hampden Town House was opened in 1932 and a gift to the town from Elizabeth Sessions, whose family had lived in Hampden since right after the American Revolution. The building at that time housed school facilities, a library, town business offices, recreational work and other community activities and,

Please see **TOWN HALL**, page 13

Wilbraham Junior Women's Club hosts Community Blanket Making Event

By Natalie Proulx
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On Saturday, Nov. 15, the Wilbraham Junior Women's Club hosted a Community Fleece Blanket Making Event.

From 10 a.m. to Noon, members gathered with the community at the senior center to create no-sew textiles for The Ronald McDonald House, nursing homes and local shelters. With all the supplies provided by the club, participants worked together to cut and tie the edges of scarves, blankets, baby blankets, and lap throws.

The Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is a volunteer organization for women of all ages that provide programs, workshops, and other services in all different themes for the Wilbraham community.

"We just finished up doing a breakfast for the veterans," Kathy Fuss, the director of Saturday's event and member of the Wilbraham Junior Women's Club said. "We also were just over at the YWCA Domestic Violence shelter doing some sorting of their goods up in the storage area."



Photo courtesy of Brenda Willard

Volunteers showing off their first completed blanket.

Alongside these deeds, they've made comfort pillows for breast cancer patients at Baystate Medical Hospital for over 25 years.

Fuss explained the setup of this event as a "pretty easy project."

"We got the fabric over

the summer," Fuss said. "and then it was just matching it up and pre-cutting it. Then we came here yesterday evening and set everything up on the tables."

Though the setup was less intensive, the impact of an event like this is worthwhile

to the community, especially in light of the holidays.

"It's a fun hands-on project for the community and people of all ages and there's a lot of needy places that the

Please see **BLANKET**, page 5

Giving Thanks at the Senior Center

By Patricia Sullivan
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The turkey was hot, the stuffing was savory and the pie was sweet when 120 seniors enjoyed a free pre-Thanksgiving lunch sponsored by Spectrum at the Wilbraham Senior Center on Nov. 13.

Spectrum/Charter Communications also presented the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors with a \$5,000 donation.

Matt Villamaino, president of the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors, said this donation is "not just an act of kindness, it is also essential

Please see **THANKS**, page 5



Turley photo by Patricia Sullivan

Volunteers Maria Cacela and Joanne Mack serve turkey and all the trimmings at the Wilbraham Senior Center.

HSC honors Cindy O'Sullivan

Submitted by
Claudia Kapinos

HAMPDEN - "Once upon a time." That is how the story of Cynthia (Cindy) O'Sullivan should begin. She was a true teacher and lover of the written word...and a very special "Friend" of the Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens. Our loss when she passed away was God's gift to the library in Heaven.

Cindy taught second grade for many years at Green Meadows School in Hampden. If you speak to many of her former students, they will tell you she was their favorite teacher. After her retirement, Cindy stayed active despite some health issues that she so bravely overcame as best she could. She became a treasured member and volunteer at the Hampden Senior Center serving on the Board of the Friends and also "teaching" us when she started a read-



Photo courtesy of Claudia Kapinos
Cindy O'Sullivan

ing group called "Between the Lines." Those of us who would get a bit chatty during the class, heard the bang of her cane to get us back in line. Yes - even adults get rowdy in class and she used her experience of many years in the classroom to let us know we needed to pay attention.

Her sessions were different every month. There were always artistically

made handouts on certain subjects. Each one presented to let us know that "any kind of reading is reading." Whether we loved long novels, short stories, cookbooks, magazines, poetry—all these are the joy of reading. Such a special message to remember.

Sadly, Cindy passed away on November 11, 2023. Some of us spent hours with her listening to her wisdom of being a teacher. Her feistiness, love of her friends and energy left an indelible mark on our hearts.

Cindy has lovingly honored the Friends of Hampden Seniors with a very generous monetary gift. Her memory will live on for many years with the programs the Senior Center will be able to provide due to her generosity.

RIP dear friend! And we all hope that you are catching up on those hundreds of books you still planned on reading.

HISTORICAL WILBRAHAM

People from the Past are gone but not forgotten

From Jesse Rice to rattlesnake-bit Timothy Merrick

By Charles F. Bennett
Times Editor Emeritus

We are continuing the column this month with more historical figures that I call "People From the Past" - providing a small profile on why they were important to the town. They join the likes of Rev. Noah Merrick, the town's first minister and Nathaniel Hitchcock, the town's first settler. Also, Revolutionary War soldier Lt. William King, "Town Father" Fred W. Green, strong woman Miss Evanore O. Beebe; and 20th century select-

man John Lovejoy who ushered in the new Minnechaug Regional High School.

Lucia S. Foskit
You can't think about Lucia Foskit without appreciating the Civil War Soldiers Statue or the Wilbraham Grange.

She was the oldest resident of the town in 1913 at the time of her death at age 93. The philanthropist widow of prominent physician Dr. Stebbins Foskit, who was known as the man who brought the first telephone line to the Center Village. Lucia was responsible for bringing the Soldiers monument



Charlie Bennett

to Crane Park where it looks over all passers-by every day.

(The monument was just cleaned by the Rotary Club and the Minnechaug Military Club this fall.)

She also gave the Grange Hall to the town and that's why it was named Foskit Memorial Grange Hall. The Grange was constructed in 1900. In

2004 it was sold and remodeled for residential use. The name "Grange" itself refers to the National Grange, the oldest agricultural organization in the United States and has long history of community service in Wilbraham until it merged with the Palmer

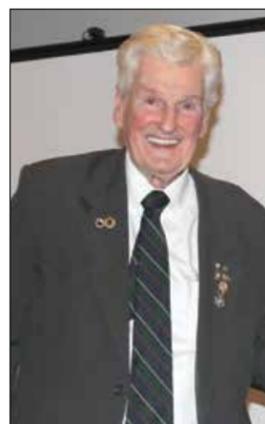
Grange in 2004. Foskit's other accomplishments include she first wiring of the Methodist Church for electricity.

She donated the cost of the bell for the Congregational Church building, which was demolished in 1962. Her most unique gift, according to the Charles Merrick history book, was the donation of the sidewalks in the Center Village.

Don Flannery

Who in our Wilbraham modern era didn't know of real estate agent Donald Flannery, the "Townie" who would speak up at annual town meetings and verbally volley with the Moderator or argue with a committee chairman?

Please see **HISTORICAL**, page 11



(Times photo by Charles F. Bennett)

Don Flannery was known as the man who was not afraid to ask the tough question. And many times he didn't like the answer. He was known as a person who, when he felt strongly about a town issue, would never let go of it, even if it was not logical. But he always had good intentions.

62 Years Ago

Antique Décor at the Ball

Here is a news clipping reported by my mom, Ethel M. Bennett, who was the Wilbraham correspondent for the Springfield daily newspaper The Morning Union from the 1940s through 1970s. From an November, 1963 edition. "All is in readiness for the annual Fireman's Ball to be held Saturday evening in the Minnechaug Regional High School gymnasium.

The decoration will be antique fire equipment and many persons are planning to attend in Colonial attire. Charles E. Dorey will serve as master of ceremonies."

COMMUNITY

Select Board holds tax classification hearing for FY26

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The Select Board held a tax classification hearing for FY26 during their Nov. 3 meeting.

The meeting had a quorum of the Board of Assessors in attendance, with Principal Assessor Christopher Keefe leading the presentation to the board.

The motions to take no action relative to the adoption of an open space discount, to take no action relative to the adoption of a residential exemption and to take no action relative to the adoption of a small commercial exemption all passed unanimously.

The motion to adopt a residential factor of one also passed unanimously.

Keefe explained the town is just under \$2.8 billion in assessed value, "which is up about 5% year over year."

"That will be the fifth year in a row that we have an increase of property values overall. Since the shutdown, we're up 45% from basically June 2020 when the market exploded, and since then the tax rate has been trending down in response," Keefe said. "So, good news and good news."

Keefe said the tax rate in the presentation was a placeholder and not approved and can only be approved by the state's Department of Revenue.

"It's usually a penny or two in either direction, but we still have a couple of numbers in flux, so the bottom half of the tax equation is set, which is a valuation. We're still working on the top half," Keefe said. "We'll do so timely and bills will go out on time."

Keefe shared how in the past, the board would vote "basically whether or not to split the tax rate amongst the residential and the commercial properties, take your vote, answer's no as it historically has been and be done," but there's a change.

"Recently, the state has started to emphasize that they want four votes, which is what we did last year and the year before and the year before. So, that's why the slow, tedious process of making four motions on this particular classification hearing needs to be done. The state has really made it a point this year that all four need to be considered," Keefe said.

After Keefe provided an overview of the four motions, Vice Chair Marc Ducey asked

"WE'VE BEEN FORTUNATE SINCE MY ARRIVAL, WE'VE CUT THE NUMBER OF ABATEMENTS ANNUALLY IN HALF AND ONE YEAR, IT WAS ENOUGH TO TURN BACK SOME OVERLAY MONEY, SO THAT WAS A NICE THING."

- Christopher Keefe
Principal Assessor

him about the property tax values going up.

"Do you—and you look at it by class—do you look at it also as what the value of the property is? In other words, a \$400,000 home versus a million-dollar home? Have they gone up equally? I don't think they have, but I was just curious," Ducey said.

Keefe replied, "they hadn't for a while," and the average value of a home is still under \$500,000, "but not much," and the segment value for over \$500,000 "had lagged the segments underneath."

"Basically, anything under \$300,000 appreciated more rapidly than anything else. It was like the entry ticket to get

into town. People willing to pay \$300,000 just to get in. Then, we saw a recovery in that segment and, all of a sudden all the way up to \$1 million, we're definitely seeing some traction. So, the market has fluctuated for a while," Keefe said.

Ducey added this. "It just seems in talking to some of the people that have voiced some frustration with the increase in taxes because their property values have gone up, seem to be more in that lower-priced market than the higher-priced market," Ducey said.

"You're exactly right because it's been disproportionate because that's what the market is doing. We have

to reflect what's going on," Keefe said.

"But then the market kind of settles that out," Ducey said.

"Correct," Keefe said.

After Clerk Sue Bunnell shared, to her understanding, that every house is reevaluated every three years, Keefe said how the town changes values every single year, but the state changed their cycle to every five years.

"So, this year coming up is a revaluation year. So, I talked to Marc about how we look at different segments and we look at the styles and neighborhoods. We'll actually take a deeper dive and we'll start to go into age, we'll start to go into parcels with excess anchorage versus parcels under the zoning increments. We'll really start to take a look at some of the more details, and so, it's more of a full audit and that's coming up this year. But, we will adjust values every year," Keefe said.

Chair Michael Squindo asked what happens next after the semantics with the state for formally setting the tax rate and then the tax bills going out.

"What's the timeline for folks to maybe seeing those and looking for exemptions,

abatements and applications relative thereto?" Squindo said.

Keefe said the valuation abatement window "is always the same" and once the bills are mailed Dec. 31, the due date is the application for the abatement date, which is Feb. 1.

"We've been fortunate since my arrival, we've cut the number of abatements annually in half and one year, it was enough to turn back some overlay money, so that was a nice thing," Keefe said.

The exemption deadline, meanwhile, is April 1, and forms have been mailed out already.

"We're trying to get those in timely in terms of we need them in for Dec. 1 to try to apply them to the third quarter tax bill, so you end up instead of a situation where you get three big bills and then a really big exemption on the Veterans side on that fourth bill, and we certainly don't want the treasurer writing a bunch of checks on the fourth quarter," Keefe said. "So, we mailed the forms out in October and probably processed close to 200 already. But, worst case scenario is April 1 on exemptions."

Kids looking forward to Town Tree Lighting with Santa

Rotary Chairman contacted 'The Jolly Old Elf' himself

By Charles F. Bennett
Times Editor Emeritus

WILBRAHAM - When asked, Wilbraham-Hampden Rotary Club Christmas Tree Lighting Chairman Peter Salerno said he was on the phone with Santa Claus last week and firmed up the date of the Town Tree Lighting in Gazebo Park for Sunday, Dec. 7 starting at 4:30 p.m.

Salerno was assured by town officials that Santa would be delivered to the Park on a Wilbraham Fire Engine around 5 to 5:30 p.m.

"We are thrilled to see Santa Claus touch the lives of Wilbraham's children. This is something that our club works on every year," stated Salerno. Salerno said, "A lot of preparation goes into planning for the town Christmas Tree to be lit up for the first time this holiday season."

Because the Tree Lighting is an event that everyone in town looks forward to, lots of people have had their hand in getting ready.

Salerno said the chairperson of the Wilbraham Select-board Michael A. Squindo

will greet attendees and say a few words; the office of state Rep. Angelo Puppolo has also been invited.

In addition to the commitment from Santa, Mark Pafumi of "Pafumi's on Main" next to Gazebo Park has provided for a lifting mechanism to add lights to the tree. Salerno has agreed to donate the cost of the new lights.

Town Facilities Manager Sam Boyd has tested the electrical power that supplies the tree and adds seasonal sparkle to the center of town.

The event will feature holiday music supplied by DJ David Gomes and hot chocolate, cookies and candy canes will be donated by Luso Credit Union said credit union official Emmely Chelo. The Wilbraham Fire Department deputy chief, Matt Walch, and Capt. Patrick Farrow will be responsible for delivering Santa to the Park around 5 p.m. atop the Fire Engine with sirens sounding and lights a-blasting.

After a countdown that everyone takes part in, Santa flips a magic switch and the colorful, twinkling lights of the tree turn on for the first time officially this season. They will remain on each night through New Years.

Adjacent to the tree Wil-



At a previous Tree Lighting, Santa greets the crowd after arriving at Gazebo Park on a firetruck. (Times file photo)

braham Boys Scout Troop 359 will install a manger scene which will remain up for the season. Country Bank will provide a throne-like chair that Santa will use in the Gazebo.

Tree Festival
Leading up to the Tree

Lighting at 4:30, the Athenaeum Society's Old Meeting House Museum will present its annual Christmas Tree Festival themed "An Old Fashioned Christmas" at 450 Main St. from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. chaired by Trustee Marianne Wagner. The museum will open at 3 p.m. and stay open until 6 p.m. so that those who attended the Tree Lighting will also have a chance to come to the Museum to see the various Christmas Trees in the

museum decorated for the holidays by local organizations.

The Festival includes an ice carving demonstration, a wreath raffle, hot cider in the Hearse House. A "Twelve days of Christmas" Tree will be installed on the back porch of the building where children can take home an ornament.

Please see **TREE LIGHTING**, page 3

Rotary Club to launch Hygiene Drive

WILBRAHAM - Maintaining good personal hygiene is crucial for preventing illness, boosting mental well-being, ensuring social acceptance and preparing for the world of work. Like many necessities today, the cost of hygiene items can put a strain on the family budget.

According to club secretary Brad Sperry, the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden is collecting personal hygiene items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo and hairbrushes that will be donated to local community organizations helping needy families.

Collection boxes for donations are located at LUSO Federal Credit Union on Crane Park Drive in the center of Wilbraham and at The Sugar Chalet Café also located in Crane Park a few doors down from LUSO's.

Hygiene items may also be donated at the Town of Wilbraham's Holiday Tree Lighting on Sunday, Dec. 7 starting at 4:30 p.m. "The annual event, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden, is a wonderful way to begin the holiday season of "giving", said Sperry.

For more information about the Hygiene Drive, or other service projects of the Rotary Club, contact Brad Sperry at 413-537-4171.

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Tree Festival to feature 'An Old-Fashioned Christmas'

Old Meeting House Museum will be decorated for the season Dec. 7

By Charles F. Bennett
Times Editor Emeritus

WILBRAHAM – Marianne Wagner, chair of The Old Meeting House Museum Christmas Tree Festival, thought a good theme for the annual Christmas Tree Festival would be “An Old-Fashioned Christmas” since she remembers taking her children to the festival 35 years ago. Now, as a member of the Atheneum Society’s Board of Trustees, Wagner enjoys helping plan the event, which is set for Sunday, Dec. 7 from 3 to 6 p.m.

The Festival, which will present eight Christmas Trees decorated by eight different community organizations, is free and open to the public and will feature an ice carver, hot cider, a wreath raffle and a special display on the museum’s porch with the theme “The Twelve Days of Christmas”. Every child visiting the museum that day can take home an ornament.

There will be a group of activities centered around the Twelve Days of Christmas. In keeping with the theme, there will be drums (“drummers drumming” and pears (“a partridge in a pear tree) on the tree.

Topping off the festival will be a festive cookie tray, a variety of desserts such as raspberry walnut and chocolate rugalach with cream cheese, peppermint bark and a selection of European cookies.

Old Fashioned

One of the reasons the Festival celebrates “An old fashioned Christmas” is that the historic building, built 232 years ago at 450 Main Street in 1793 as a Methodist meet-

inghouse and now a museum, lends a look back to observing the holidays. It is one of the oldest meetinghouses still standing in New England and is owned by the town and overseen by the Atheneum Society of Wilbraham who leases the facility for one peppercorn a year from the Historical Commission.

If folks in Wilbraham want to experience Yuletide celebrations with an historic twist, the best place this season to enjoy a selection of theme-decorated Christmas trees is at the Old Meeting House.

Wagner recently released the names of eight different organizations who each have a Christmas tree with its own theme. Each group provides their own special design to their tree.

They are Five Star Gardens, Friends of the Wilbraham Library, Karen Geaghan Photography, The Wilbraham Art League, the Wilbraham Children’s Museum, Wilbraham Flowers, the Wilbraham Garden Club, and the Wilbraham Girl Scouts.

The backdrop for all the gaily decorated trees is a living museum which tells the story of “old-fashioned” Wilbraham. There is a cast iron stove from the Merrick farmhouse kitchen, an organ that once belonged to Grandma Rice, a chalice from the first meeting house built in the 1740’s, a red hobby horse in the Children’s Room donated by Past President Peter Ablondi, a sign featuring a tom turkey from the Bennett Turkey Farm and a desk from one of the first schools in town.

Gift Shop

The Gift Shop expects to be busy and has added staff to handle the crowds. It will be open during festival hours and offers Wilbraham memorabilia in addition to town history books, and stationery to



A past Tree Festival tree decorated by the Wilbraham Art League. (Times file photo)



en Geaghan, the Atheneum vice president in charge of the shop.

Recent product additions are Wilbraham Hill Climb tee-shirts for those who missed out on them during the Hill Climb in May and historic children’s toys.

Marianne Wagner remembers taking her children to the Tree Festival at the Old Meeting House 35 years ago. This year it is Sunday, Dec. 7 from 3 to 6 p.m. (Times file photo)

For more information about the Old Meeting House Tree Festival, email president@wilbrahamatheneum.org or logon to the Old Meeting House Museum Facebook or Instagram page.

purchase for Christmas gifts. It is one of the few places that one can buy tee shirts, sweat-shirts and hats with the name “Wilbraham” on it,” said Kar-



TREE LIGHTING from page 2

Local Support

In keeping with Rotary’s motto of “Service Above Self”, and in the spirit of the “Giving Season”, the Club will be collecting hygiene item donations at the Tree Lighting.

According to club secretary Brad Sperry, the Rotary Club is collecting personal hygiene items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo and

Rotary Club President Peter Salerno, at the Senior Center Christmas Tree, says he has a direct telephone line to Santa Claus to talk about the Tree Lighting taking place Sunday, Dec. 7 at 4:30 p.m. (Charles F. Bennett photo)

hairbrushes that will be donated to local community organizations helping needy families.

Collection boxes for hygiene donations are also located at LUSO Federal Credit Union on Crane Park Drive in the center of Wilbraham and at The Sugar Chalet Café also located in Crane Park a few doors down from LUSO’s.

Salerno said the club hopes for a good turnout. “Our club members sincerely wish all of our community a joyous and merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday Season!” he said.

For more information about the event, or the Rotary Club, contact Club Secretary Brad Sperry at 413-537-4171.



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COMMUNITY

MRHS IRC hosts Candlelight Concert

By Angelina Acevedo
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On the evening of Nov. 6, the Minnechaug Regional High Schools Information and Research Commons (IRC) hosted its second Candlelight Concert.

The Candlelight Concert, run by the Information & Research Commons Community Committee (IRCC), gave students the chance to perform, and the unique opportunity to explain the importance of their work.

Dr. Georgia Trebbe, the head of the IRCC and Minnechaug's librarian, explained that "candlelight concerts are found all over the world."

"They're usually done in old churches, but you can do them anywhere. The idea is you fill the space with just candles and musicians can perform traditionally acoustic songs, but the IRCC welcomes any genre of music for our concerts," Trebbe said.

This Candlelight Concert had three musical acts: the band Tra Appleby & Key to the Afterlife, solo guitarist Bartosz Checick, and solo pianist Ella Gagliarducci. Tra Appleby & Key to the Afterlife performed three original songs, "Floating", "Dead End", and "Pool of Love, Pool of My Blood", and explained the significance and backstory of how each song was written.

Vocalist Tommy Appleby said in between songs how "music is meant to be performed, and we're so grateful to have this opportunity."

Bartosz Checick performed five classical acoustic guitar songs that showcased his progression and experience playing the guitar. His final song, "Autumn Leaves", arranged by Yenne Lee, transported listeners to "outdoor European cafes", as one audience member described.

Ella Gagliarducci sang and played piano, showcasing "Selections from Reader's Digest: Treasury of Best Loved Songs", and described



The Minnechaug Regional High Schools Information and Research Commons hosted its second concert on Nov. 6.

her personal connection with each prior.

"Mr. Ingram, the choir teacher here at Minnechaug, helped the students with whatever instruments they needed," Trebbe said. "The students just told him what they needed, and he made sure it was in the IRC."

Trebbe was excited to hold the concert again.

"This is our second Candlelight Concert, our first was last year. The IRCC Student Advisory wanted more events and things in general to happen at the IRC, and I had recently seen that there were Candlelight Concerts happening in Boston and Springfield. I asked them what they thought, and they liked the idea, and they took it from there by organizing the event," Trebbe said.

For now, the concert only has musical performances, but there is room for more.

"The Candlelight Concert, so far, has only had musical performances, but we do welcome other forms of artistic expression, such as dances and reciting poems. We would also be interested in displaying artwork such as paintings and drawings behind the area where the musicians perform. Even for these media,



A close-up shot of one of the performers.

we'd ask that the performer explains the meaning behind their work," Trebbe said.

With the success of the event, another Candlelight Concert is scheduled for Dec. 4. Anyone is welcome to attend to watch Minnechaug students showcase their talents, and students who are interested can reach out to the IRCC to sign up.

Trebbe also shared what she enjoys about these concerts.

Turley photos by Angelina Acevedo

"I really enjoy these concerts and seeing what talents students have that they might not be able to show often. Midway through the concert, I thought to myself 'This is why I teach', and it's true. A teacher helps to grow a child, and then another, and so on," Trebbe said. "Eventually, you get to see that you've helped grow a community, and these concerts are a place for the talents at our Minnechaug community to shine."

Hampden-Wilbraham educators calling for contract mediation

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - The Hampden-Wilbraham Education Association is calling for state mediation to settle a contract after more than a year of bargaining has failed to produce an agreement that addresses students' needs and educators' concerns.

"Educators in our district have been working for more than 140 days without a contract. We have been bringing forward fair and reasonable proposals to address low wages for our paraprofessionals, fair wages for the increasingly complex and demanding jobs our educators face, and our lack of paid family leave, a benefit more districts are providing to educators," said Damian Konkoly, president of the HWEA.

The district's financial offers fall well below that of recent contract settlements

in the region, and the Hampden-Wilbraham schools are already seeing poor retention rates for staff.

"Our proposals are fiscally responsible and represent a smart investment in the communities we serve. Our students deserve schools that are properly staffed and have the resources and programs to meet their needs," Konkoly said.

The state Department of Labor Relations will assign a mediator once it determines whether bargaining between the HWEA and the district has reached an impasse.

"A settled contract provides long-term stability in our schools and establishes working conditions," Konkoly said. "Right now, educators are unfairly saddled with uncertainty as they show up every day ready to give their best to their students."

Wilbraham Garden Club Dec. 4

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Garden Club will meet in the St. Cecelia Parish Center at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 4.

Lee Lyon, a talented florist from Wilbraham Flowers, will demonstrate his techniques for creating spectacular holiday arrangements with greens, flowers and other materials. These arrange-

ments will then be raffled off at the end of the program. A light luncheon will be served. There is a \$10 Guest Fee for this festive meeting and pre-registration is required. Please contact Lisa Lafleur, Treasurer, at 413-596-9539 by Dec. 1. to secure your reservation. Unfortunately, we will not have room for walk-ins at this popular event.

Stuff a Cruiser set for Dec. 6

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Police Relief Association will be holding its annual Stuff a Cruiser Toy Drive on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Big Y located at 2035 Boston Road in Wilbraham.

They will be accepting donations of new, unwrapped gifts for local

families in need. More information to follow.



Polish National Alliance Lodge 711 to host Annual Meeting and Christmas Party

CHICOPEE - Lodge 711 Polish National Alliance of Chicopee will hold its annual meeting and election of officers on Sunday, Dec. 7 at 11:30 a.m. followed by the Lodge Christmas party with dinner served promptly at 1 p.m. at the Chicopee Falls Polish Home, 27 Grove Street, Chicopee, MA.

The Christmas party will feature the singing of Polish and English Christmas carols. Refreshments will be available and gifts for members,

ages 0-12 will be distributed by Santa. Assisting the President and Chairman, Joanne Cebula, are Jeannie Zapala and members of Wilbraham PNA Lodge 3276, dinner and refreshments, Teresa Sherman, publicity, and Cindy Kirejczyk, toys, decorations and entertainment. There will be arts and crafts, games, and a hot cocoa station.

We are very fortunate to have volunteers from the National Honor Society at Minnechaug Regional High

School in Wilbraham, MA to assist the committee in preparing and conducting this fun-filled event.

There is no admission fee. Donations for the raffle are welcome to help defray party costs. Please RSVP by Dec. 1.

PNA Lodge 711 is a non-profit organization dedicated to assure an active role in area social, cultural, civic and charitable events. For more information call Teresa Sherman at 413-596-9578.

Wilbraham Troop 359 holding Wreath Sale

WILBRAHAM - Wilbraham Troop 359 will have a Wreath Sale on Sun, Nov. 30 in St. Cecilia's Church parking lot from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. or until supplies last. All proceeds will go towards camping equipment and materials. The generous community support is greatly appreciated. Thank you from Troop 359.

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THANKS from page 1

to allow us to continue providing services to seniors in Wilbraham and neighboring communities. The funds help support programs such as exercise, music and a host of others made possible because of the generosity of folks like you.”

Nancy Clark, director of government affairs for Spectrum in Massachusetts, spoke about the company’s \$50 million investment to improve broadband across the Commonwealth.

“It will allow us to increase speeds to support all the needs of the community, such as education, tele-health and working from home,” Clark said.

Clark also encouraged people to inquire about Spectrum’s special pricing for low-income customers.

Even though their truck broke down, Chet Kurr and his wife and roadie, Vicky, made it to the Senior Center on time to entertain the crowd. They put all their instruments and sound equipment into their two cars for the drive from their home in West Warren.

At the lunch, Kurr played and sang songs from the 50s, 60s, and 70s, transporting the crowd from “Country Roads” to “Folsom Prison.” He also threw in a polka.

Paula Dubord, director of elder affairs, said that reservations for the luncheon filled quickly and there was



Chet Kurr and his wife, Vicky, provided entertainment at the luncheon.

a waiting list of more than 20 people.

Volunteers helped the Senior Center staff plate and serve the hearty meals to the crowd. One volunteer, Maria Cacula, made lovely seasonal centerpieces out of eucalyptus and fall leaves for the luncheon tables.

“Nothing is too good for the seniors,” Cacula said.

A group of seven female friends who met through the Senior Center and through swimming at the Scantic Valley YMCA shared a table and urged Madeline Wray, who brought them together for lunch, to be their spokesperson.

“The staff here is fantastic and they treat us like gold,” said Wray, who has lived in Wilbraham for 38 years. “It’s great to have delicious free

food that we don’t have to cook, plate or clean up. We truly appreciate it.”



Turley photos by Patricia Sullivan
ABOVE: A group of friends gather for a festive pre-Thanksgiving lunch at the Senior Center.



AT LEFT: Spectrum presented a \$5,000 check to Friends of Wilbraham Seniors. From left: Matt Villamaino, president of the Friends; Cherie Spinks, office of State Rep. Angelo Puppolo Jr. (D-Springfield); Lee Tyrrell, treasurer of the Friends; and Nancy Clark of Spectrum/Charter Communications.

Update on HPL Hours

HAMPDEN – The library has shared the following information on their hours ahead of the upcoming move to the former Thornton W. Burgess Middle School.

Week of Nov. 24: Open at 625 Main St. for regular hours Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 1 to 8 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. except on Thursday, Nov. 27 for the Thanksgiving holiday

Week of Dec. 1: Library closed for moving

Week of Dec. 8: Open at the new Town Hall at 85 Wilbraham Rd. Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 1 to 8 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Santa and Mrs. Claus will also be at the new library location on Saturday Dec. 13 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

‘Adapting and Transitioning as We Age’ at the WPL

WILBRAHAM— Join Steve Lanning, volunteer with the AARP MA Speakers Bureau, for “Adapting and Transitioning as We Age” at the Wilbraham Public Library on Tuesday, Dec. 2 at 6 p.m.

Learn about how we can best navigate constant change so that we can continue to enjoy our lives and our loved ones. We will discuss the importance of developing a personal man-

agement system that may make you feel more secure and comfortable and, therefore, have more time and energy to deal with the numerous aspects of rapid change in your life.

This event is free and open to the public. Registration is appreciated but not required.

Sign up at wilbrahamlibrary.org, or call the library at 413-596-6141.

Food Drive set for Dec. 1

INDIAN ORCHARD – On Dec. 1, the Community Survival Center will be having a fundraiser at the Local Table N Tap in Wilbraham on Boston Rd. 20% of everyone’s bill that goes to support

the nonprofit organization will be given to the Community Survival Center.

There will also have a box to collect non-perishable food for the Community Survival Center.

BLANKET from page 1

blankets are going to,” Fuss said.

People of all ages were invited and in attendance to help out and craft warmth for those in need, meeting new people and building connections.

Fuss’s favorite part of the event was meeting all the people who volunteered their Saturday morning to participate in a local arts and crafts community project for the benefit of others.

“We’re going to drop some of the baby ones off at the YWCA Domestic Violence shelter,” Fuss said. “Some of the fringe blankets will go to the Ronald McDonald House,

and some of the other shelters as we think of them. The lap throws we’re probably going to take to the life care center.”

The community support meant a lot to Fuss and the members.

“It means a lot,” Fuss said. “We had a great turnout. We didn’t have people officially sign up, you could just walk in, so we really didn’t know who was coming...I think we had about 25 people come and help, plus our 9 or 10 ‘juniors’ here.”

Helping out alongside participants, the “juniors” from the Wilbraham Junior Women’s Club were assisting, taking photographs, setting up fabric and sewing their own blankets to give. With all that help, the crafting went

speedy.

Fuss explained how even though it was the first time holding this event, it went over “pretty well.”

“And,” Fuss said. “We had a good response, so we’ll probably consider doing it again next year!”

Community-wide events like this run by the Wilbraham Junior Women’s Club are open to all and so are their meetings.

“We have meetings once a month on the third Tuesday of the month meeting at the Senior Center,” Fuss said.

To learn more about the Wilbraham Junior Women’s Club’s programs, upcoming events, or meeting information, you can visit: wilbrahamjuniorwomens.org/.

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

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VIEWPOINTS

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

If we both collect Social Security, will our benefits be affected?

Dear Rusty:

I reached full retirement age back in June, but I have not yet filed to collect Social Security. My husband currently collects SS funds, and he waited until he had reached full retirement age a few years ago. I am considering signing up now to receive my funds, but I am a little confused about whether I will receive my full benefit or is there some kind of adjustment made based on both of us collecting?

We are a simple case. We have been married for 46 years, so there are no other exes involved in this equation. He did everything online when he was ready to start receiving his funds, but we didn't consult with any advisor when my husband claimed. Now I think that adding me as a spouse might trigger some other things I should consider. Thank you for your advice.

Signed: Concerned Wife

Dear Concerned:

Since you and your husband have both reached your respective SS Full Retirement Age, you are both entitled to receive your full benefits without any reduction. And since you haven't yet filed, you are now accumulating Delayed Retirement Credits at the rate of 667% additional benefit for each month you continue to delay. You will get your full SS retirement benefit plus any earned DRCs when you claim. The only question you need to consider is whether either you or your husband will be entitled to a "spousal boost," an increase when you claim.

If the SS retirement benefit you were entitled to at your FRA is less than 50% the amount your husband was entitled to at his FRA, then you will get a "spousal boost" on top of your own SS retirement amount (the "boost" amount would be the difference between your FRA amount and half of his FRA amount). But if your SS amount at your FRA is more than 50% of your husband's FRA entitlement, then you will only

get your own SS retirement benefit based on your own lifetime earnings record. Spouse benefits are always determined from each partner's FRA entitlement and if one partner's FRA amount is less than 50% of the other partner's FRA amount, then a spousal boost will be given. And that also works if your FRA entitlement is higher than your husband's, if your FRA amount is more than twice your husband's FRA amount, then he will get a spousal boost from you. Otherwise, each of you will get only your personally earned SS retirement amount and both of you collecting SS will not negatively affect each other's individual SS benefit.

FYI, the spousal boost amount stops growing at full retirement age, so if you are eligible for a spousal boost from your husband then you should claim your SS benefits now and ask for benefits retroactive to June (your FRA month). However, if you will not get a spousal boost from your husband, you have the option of delaying even further and earning more DRCs (thus a higher monthly benefit). You can earn DRCs up to age 70, at which time you will get the maximum possible Social Security benefit about 127% of your personal FRA amount if you delay that long.

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.

Thanksgiving questions for the Garden Lady

Eva, who has a big vegetable garden in Ware, wrote in with this question for the Garden Lady: "We are supposed to have a low of 27 degrees one night this week. With that said, are my Brussels sprouts going to be OK? I was hoping to harvest them just in time for Thanksgiving." It has been a few years since I have grown Brussels sprouts, but I do remember that they do thrive well into late fall and early winter. A few frosty mornings won't hurt them!

For readers not familiar with Brussel sprout culture, I will elaborate. Brussels sprout seeds are started indoors, around the same time you would start their cousins, broccoli, cabbage or kale.

For me, seeds are sown off heat the first week of April through tax day. They are grown cool but under supplemental light to prevent stretching, and are transplanted once the first set of "true leaves" unfold.

I transplant mine into the cells of a six pack, although individual two or three inch pots are also a good option. Brussels sprouts can be moved into the garden a couple of weeks prior to Memorial Day, where fertile soil and eight-10 hours of direct sun are preferred.

They need to be given a lot more room than their cousins, about nine square feet of growing space per plant! It will pay off!

Placing transplants under



by Roberta McQuaid

float-ing row covers is smart, and will protect young plants from flea beetles and swede midge, then from various "cabbage" worms. The plants will grow tall over the course of their long growing season and will form buds along the stem.

It is the buds that we harvest, known as the "sprouts" we so enjoy. Experts recommend "topping" the plants in September, or cutting off the first couple of inches of top growth, so that the plant puts all of its energy into the sprouts it already has, making them bigger.

When I grew Brussels sprouts many years ago, aphid were a big problem. There are a number of varieties that have a spaced branching habit that seem to reduce the population of these pests. "Divino," "Speedia," and "Nautic" are all good choices.

Harvest the half-dollar sized sprouts after the first few frosts and you will be in for a great, sweet treat. Like carrots who endure a little cold, starches turn to sugars and yum!

Personally, I like to roast them for heightened crunch and a little more caramel-

ization. I hope they will be a wonderful part of your family meal, Eva!

Melissa, who gardens in Palmer, just moved to a house that has a few "highbush cranberries" on her property.

"I was curious if this shrub is a tall version of the Thanksgiving cranberry and if so, if it is edible? The word 'highbush' reminds me of blueberries, so I thought maybe it worked out the same," she asked.

The American cranberry is not to be confused with *Viburnum trilobum*, an eight-12 foot multistemmed shrub sometimes called highbush cranberry, crampbark, or even cranberry viburnum.

The berries of this native shrub hang in clusters and are orange-red in color. Although they are edible, birds generally find them a whole lot more appealing than we do, and will typically "gobble" them up before winter hits.

The shrub typically has great fall interest, too, with foliage that varies in hues of orange, red and purplish red.

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

Should you challenge a medical bill?

Estimates suggest that up to 80 percent of medical bills contain at least one error. That's why I always recommend to my clients that they not pay a medical or hospital bill until they have received an itemized bill and carefully reviewed it.

There are a lot of reasons for mistakes in medical billings, which can cause you to incur a bigger-than-expected bill or your insurance to be denied, as I wrote recently.

Some common types of medical billing errors include:

Incorrect diagnostic codes: For example, an administrator might enter the wrong code, indicating that a patient had an X-ray on both legs when only one leg was imaged.

Typos: A typo can cause a single saline drip to be registered as many more.

Incomplete or incorrect information: Information for a patient or provider might be entered incorrectly or incompletely.

Duplicate billing: The same service might be billed for more than once.

and Economics, surveyed a cross-section of health consumers and found that one in five – fully 20 percent – reported that their household had received a medical bill that they could not afford or didn't agree with.

Most of them didn't reach out to the health-care provider because they didn't think it would make a difference. But, she wrote, "the experiences of those who did reach out provide evidence to the contrary."

"Most respondents who reached out reported at least one form of financial relief, bill corrections, or better understanding of the bill," she wrote. "These findings suggest that patients benefit from reaching out to the billing office on receiving a problematic bill, and those who do not reach out may be missing financially advantageous opportunities."

The study found few differences in the households

Please see **HEALTH**, page 13

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

THANKS for GIVING



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The Wilbraham-Hampden

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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 800-824-8458 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.

Random Acts of Kindness

By Barb Turcotte

he saw what an incredibly hard worker she was. Marline then began her next career; banking. She

worked for various banks in the area and wound up obtaining the position of Retail Lending. With a laugh she explained that she always wore long sleeves for that professional look needed in the banking industry.

When I asked about Random Acts of Kindness she'd done, she said she worked so much supporting herself and her family she never had time to volunteer. Then she explained how she would do things monetarily instead and always put charity in her budget. Rather than giving to a big named charity, she prefers making a difference by giving to someone personally. Perhaps seeing someone buying groceries who's struggling so helps them with their bill. She explained

Please see **KINDNESS**, page 8

It was such a joy being introduced, then chatting with Marline Claremont. At first her sleeves were down but soon it got warmer and she pushed them up revealing several tattoos. She admitted she has over 30, each one having very significant meaning, they aren't just haphazard.

She has a rather diverse background. She worked as a truck driver for over 20 years, explaining in the trucking trade most had tattoos which is when she started getting hers. She explained what some of them meant to her, one in particular that I'll clarify later.

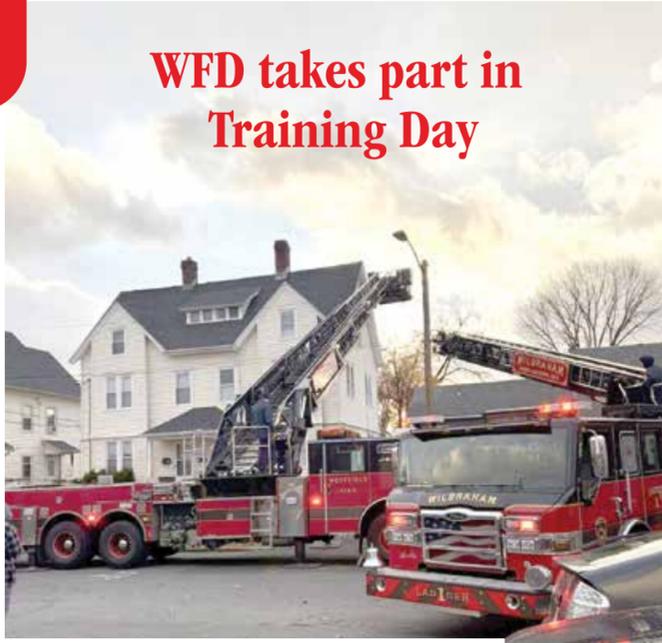
After leaving trucking, she did a stint as a real estate broker then moved on to owning her own mortgage brokerage. Soon after that she was offered a job by the President of a bank because

Life in
WILBRAHAM & HAMPDEN

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

WFD takes part in Training Day



Photos and caption courtesy of Wilbraham Fire Department

Training Day! On Nov. 13, members of the Wilbraham Fire Department participated in an aerial ladder training class hosted by Western Region Homeland Security Council and delivered by truck tactics. This hands-on training is crucial for enhancing our skills and ensuring we're always prepared to serve our community safe and effectively.



COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JAXSON



Happy birthday to Jaxson Hatch who turns 6 on November 25.

Love,
 mom and dad,
 Charley, Harper,
 Nana,
 Grammy and Grampy.



Submitted photo and caption Laura Lucarelle

The Little Warriors Movement supports Shriners

Laura Lucarelle shared with the Times how her son, Jack, a senior at Minnechaug, and his friends started a club last year called The Little Warriors Movement and the impact it's had on the community. "Last year, Jack, along with a few other friends, created a club called The Little Warriors Movement. Its goal is to support children who are receiving medical treatments. It is a new club only formed last year, but they have made Christmas Cards and most recently, its members, along with members of National Honor Society at Minnechaug (which Jack also is a member of)-collected items on the Shriners wish list for children. They are in the midst of planning more ways to support the children," Lucarelle said. "His goal is to become a physician, so he has had a strong interest in the medical field, which was the foundation for forming The Little Warriors Movement. Jack has shadowed several surgeons in order to get exposure to the field. So far, he likes orthopedics the most. He will be attending Bowdoin College in the fall, majoring in Biology with a concentration in Pre-Medicine." Lucarelle said her son delivered the items to Shriners the week of Nov. 10 as a representative of both The Little Warriors Movement and also National Honor Society of Minnechaug. "We're so proud of him," Lucarelle said.

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KINDNESS from page 6

how someone she'd heard about was having a financial difficulty, anonymously, she sent a money order to them for two-hundred dollars. She said she likes to do things quietly knowing she is helping an individual in their time of need.

We agreed, people somehow just cross another's paths whether it's you noticing they need help or sometimes it's like this, our meeting so I'm able to tell her story. She also was a foster mom to a young boy who is now thirty-two and is still very much in her life.

Now that Marline is retired, she has time to volunteer and is dedicated to making a difference in honoring our local fallen veterans. She became involved with the 'Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam' when she lost her son in July of 2022. He is one of her tattoos. He was a veteran of the Coast Guard and she is now the guardian of his child. This young person made the comment to Marline, "I lost my dad and that's hard but you lost your son". Quite a comment of maturity and understanding from such a young person.

In order to be on the board of 'Agawam Veteran's Council', which is a separate organization, you have to be a veteran. Not being a veteran herself, Marline became a co-coordinator of 'Wreaths Across America' and is serving her second term in that role along with someone from the 'Veterans Council'.

In 2024 a new organization was formed called 'Friends of the Agawam Veterans Council' so non-military people could help and also hold an office. Marline is on this board. Some of the things they do as 'Friends' is cleaning the headstones and hope to help with a digital sign in the future.

One of the big things as President Marline is responsible for is fundraising for 'Wreaths Across America'. On December 13th they will be placing wreaths on each gravesite in the cemetery and I was truly surprised by the number of wreaths it would take to accomplish this mission. In order to do this, they need 10,800 wreaths, and that's just at the Agawam Veteran's Cemetery. Each wreath costs \$17.00 which means they need a lot of help to accomplish this. Luckily, they do get money from business sponsors and citizen's donations but they still need help to reach their goal of 5,000 wreaths to be able to achieve this feat. To sponsor a wreath you can make a do-

nation at: www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/MA0110P and for more information on how to get involved with 'Friends of MA Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Agawam', the address is PO Box 03, Feeding Hills, MA 01030 or www.agawamfriends.org

Another way you can help is getting involved with 'One Call Away', also located in Agawam. Their mission is to support veteran's who suffer from PTSD & also help to prevent suicide. Their website is: www.onecallawayfoundation.org or call 413-301-6026, Local crisis 413-367-8738, National crisis is 988.

Thankfully we have people like Marline who have this type of devotion and dedication willing to give of themselves. As you can see, it's not always monetary but instead a contribution of time & commitment. Thank you Marline!

If you'd like to share a Random Act of Kindness story or if this one has touched you, please contact me at bdt514@aol.com or 413-575-9385. Who knows, you might see your story, 'Just Cause' you witnessed, you did or maybe received something nice being done for you. See you soon with another Random Act of Kindness! ~ Barb



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For every \$50 gift card purchased, you'll receive an extra \$10!
Our bar will be open Xmas Eve 11am-4pm. Last chance for last minute gift cards

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 • 11:30AM-5PM
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SPORTS

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Aiden Dzierwinski carries the ball from a handoff.

Chaug football caps season with win

Max Baroni set a regional record for receptions in the game

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

CHICOPEE — Seven days after the two football teams lost in the opening round game of the Division 3 state tournament, the Min-

nechaug Regional Falcons and Chicopee Comp Colts battled each other in the inaugural Western Mass. Class A Bowl.

The Falcons closed out their season by celebrating a 34-6 victory over the Colts at Mitchell S. Kuzdal Field, last Friday night.

“Both teams didn’t get the result that they wanted in the opening round of the Division 3 state playoffs,” said Minnechaug head coach Will Nickerson. “My players were very excited to play in the Western Mass Class A Bowl game. We don’t play a game on Thanksgiving, so this was the final high school football game for our seniors.”

The Falcons, who lost at Hingham, 35-14, in the round of 16, finished their season with a 5-5 overall record.

The Colts (8-2), who lost, 51-0, against top-seeded King Phillip Regional, will be facing archrival Chicopee High School in the annual Sword Game on Thanksgiving morning.

The Colts seniors, who were hoping to a win in their



Max Baroni comes down with a reception.

home finale against the Falcons, are Jacob Giec, Austin Abert, Adrian Gonzalez, Josiah Feliz, Joe Chmielewski, Victor Ferrer, Logan Yucka, JaVon James, Jake Galas,

Please see **FOOTBALL**, page 10



Quarterback Jack Lucarelle sends a pass attempt away.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Vinh Nguyen gets ready to punt.



Mason Jones and Liam Metzger combine for a tackle.



Owen Antaya looks to pull down the ball carrier.

MIAA makes calendar change to start of fall

FRANKLIN – The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association recently approved a couple of changes in their calendar, including codifying a practice that is already in place. The biggest change will be the start of the fall season for football preseason while two other changes were denied.

The Board of Directors voted to set the official start date of all fall sports, including football at two Mondays prior to Labor Day, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. In recent years, football would begin the Friday prior to that Monday with the rest of the sports beginning two Mondays before Labor Day.

Please see **MIAA**, page 10

Monadnock Speedway set to hold awards banquet in Dec.

MILFORD, N.H. – Monadnock Speedway is set to close out another thrilling racing season with a night of celebration, recognition, and community. On Saturday, Dec. 13 beginning at 5:30 p.m., the speedway will host its highly anticipated Annual Awards Banquet at the Best Western in Keene,

New Hampshire. The event will spotlight the achievements of the champions and top ten drivers in the regular weekly divisions, while also recognizing the top three in the Six Shooter Division, Teddy Bear Pools & Spas Triple Crown Champions, and competitors in the Young

Gun Division for their dedication and commitment to the sport. In addition, several specialty awards will be presented throughout the evening, honoring standout performances and contributions both on and off the track. Fans, drivers, teams, and families are invited to join the festivities as

Monadnock Speedway celebrates the close of a competitive season and the community that makes it all possible. This annual tradition brings together the best of the racing family for an evening of camaraderie, reflection, and excitement for the upcoming season. To purchase a tick-

et online go to: <https://square.link/u/jHfglOQf>
Tickets are limited! Event capacity is 200. Seating is 8 to 10 people per table. Requests to be seated with another team may be made by emailing the speedway @ monadnockspeedway@gmail.com.



Cora Pace sets a ball straight up.



Coach Mark Taylor, Anna O'Toole, Maliha Daubon, and Cora Pace pose at the High School Girls Volleyball All-Star Showcase.

Falcons fly in all-star game

HOLYOKE – Last Tuesday evening, members of the Minnechaug Regional High School girls volleyball team participated in the

High School Girls Volleyball All-Star Showcase held at Holyoke Community College. Minnechaug had six total players named to the two

games played. A second-team game and a first-team game were held. The tradition has been happening for several years.



Maliha Daubon send a spike over the net.



Anna O'Toole gets the easy bump.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

SPORTS

Railers score shutout of Maine Mariners

WORCESTER – It only took 2,187 games.

Finally, though, one of the city's pro hockey teams played one in which brothers scored goals. It happened Tuesday, Drew and Anthony Callin getting the first two goals of what turned out to be a 4-0 triumph for the Railers over the Maine Mariners.

Lincoln Hatten matched the Callin family total by scoring two of his own as Worcester won its third straight game, second straight shutout. The timing was great, too. It was a School Day game, a crowd of 8,512, and the home team probably created some new hockey fans as the clock passed noon.

It was the fifth-largest attendance in team history. The Railers are perfect when playing before crowds of 8,000 or more at the DCU Center — eight games, eight victories.

The Callins were not the only history makers.

Henrik Tikkanen stopped 29 shots to become the first Railers goalie ever to post con-

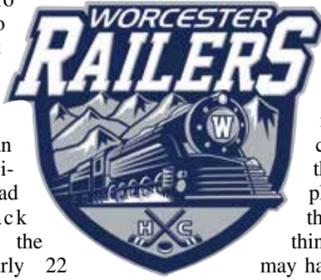
secutive shutouts. Tikkanen is merely the second

Worcester pro goalie to do that. It must be a European thing; the other was Austrian Reinhard Divis, who had back-to-back shutouts for the IceCats nearly 22 years ago in December of 2003.

It marked the first time in Tikkanen's career he had two consecutive shutouts.

"It just feels like, easy now," Tikkanen said. "The pucks are coming in slow, the guys in front are doing a good job creating the lanes and blocking the tough shots, so it's been easy for me the last couple games."

This was Worcester's 12th game of the season, fifth against Maine. By now, everybody has a good idea of everybody else's strength and weaknesses.



"You start to know what the guys are trying to do,"

Tikkanen said, "and of course if they don't make any changes on their power play and all that stuff, I think the goalie may have a little bit of an advantage."

Tikkanen's best save was one of his first.

The teams played a scoreless first period and the Mariners owned the best chance. Sebastian Vidmar had a short-handed breakaway at 13:10 and Tikkanen just held his ground until Vidmar got in close and fired the puck into the goalie's torso.

"In every game," Tuzzolino said, "you're going to have a Grade A chance and it goes in that keeps the game interesting and if you stop it, that kills confidence. The last couple of nights we've done that."

Anthony Callin made it 1-0 24 seconds into the second period with a 25-footer set up by Anthony Repaci. It was Repaci-to-Callin again at 2:42 with Drew Callin beating Luke Cavallini to the top far corner.

Hatten tipped Matt Stief's shot home on a power play at 13:25 and it remained 3-0 until Hatten hit an empty with 1:35 left in the third period.

Hatten has goals in three straight games, points in four in a row. Both are career bests. The two-goal performance was the second of his career.

The victory snapped Maine's four-game winning streak versus Worcester this season. The Mariners had won eight of the previous nine games between the teams going back to last season. The Railers had not beaten the Mariners at the DCU Center since last Dec. 21.

The decision also snapped Cavallini's four-game winning streak against Worcester. It dropped his career record against the Railers to 12-6-0.

MIAA from page 9

A proposal was denied to delay the start of winter preseason to the Tuesday following Thanksgiving. Right now, practices immediately begin on Monday after Thanksgiving. The proposal sought to

give an administrative day for schools to prepare for the winter season.

Another proposal denied was for all postseason tournament brackets to be released exclusively on weekdays, with the exception of the football brackets, which are

released on the Sunday after Week 8 games conclude.

The final accepted proposal was establishing a firm date for the end of all spring athletic seasons to be no later than the third Sunday in June, to coincide with the end of the academic year. It ensures that

all postseason play and championship would take place on a consistent timeline each year. This is the current practice so no noticeable change will be seen on the current MIAA calendar.

FOOTBALL from page 9

Frank Jordan, Harrison Wellington, Noah Johnson, Josh Maldonado, Chris Carrasquillo, Myles Besner, Tucker Jones, Jeremy Santalucia, Jacob Lopez Losacano, Abdulrahman Shehaden, Sean Desormier, and Anthony Cabrera-Cavette.

Minnechaug senior Max Baroni entered the contest with 22 career receiving touchdowns, which was tied for the Western Mass. record. Alex Henry, who graduated from Minnechaug in 2019, and Springfield Central's Joe Griffin, also finished their high school football careers with 22 receiving touchdowns.

Baroni is one of the Falcons senior captains, along with Jack Lucarelle, Aidan Dzierwinski, and Vinh Nguyen. The other Falcons seniors are Mason Jones, Zach Kozub, Lincoln Stiles, Cal Blanchard, William Vezina III, Donovan Belton, Jacob Fahey, and Liam Howe.

With 1:33 left in the second quarter, Baroni broke the record after catching a 12-yard TD pass from Lucarelle, who's been the Minnechaug

starting quarterback since he was a freshman.

"I just saw the pylon, and I don't think I've ever run faster in my life into the endzone," Baroni said. "I couldn't have broken the record without the help of my teammates and coaches along the way. I'm hoping to continue playing football in college."

Nickerson also coached Henry when he played football for the Falcons.

"I spoke with Alex, and he was hoping that Max would break the record tonight," Nickerson said. "It was a very special night for Max."

Baroni, who also plays basketball, hasn't made his college decision yet. He wound up with five catches for 68 yards against the Colts.

The record-breaking touchdown by Baroni gave the Falcons a 21-0 lead.

Lucarelle capped off a 15-play opening drive with a 14-yard rushing touchdown with 4:23 left in the first quarter. Then sophomore Connor Walbridge made the first of his four extra point attempts.

Lucarelle completed 12 of his 17 passes for 136 yards. He finished his high school career with more than 5,000



Turley photo by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Owen Anataya and Donovan Belton go for the tackle.

yards.

"I'm very glad that I was able to reach the milestone. All my hard work has paid off," said Lucarelle, who's planning to play football at Bowdoin College. "This is just a very special senior class, and it has been a lot of fun getting the opportunity to play football with them."

It's the first time that

Nickerson has coached a QB who has thrown for more than 5,000 career yards.

"Jack is the first quarterback I've coached who has thrown for more than 5,000 yards," Nickerson said. "He has done an outstanding job during the past four years. I'm looking forward to watching him play college football."

It was also a memorable

game for Dzierwinski, who scored three rushing touchdowns.

"This was Aidan's best game of his high school career," Lucarelle said. "The O-Line made it very easy for us tonight."

Dzierwinski, scored his first touchdown of the game on a six yard run up the mid-

20 minutes and keeping his team's two-goal lead in tow.

The T-Birds could not do anything with two power plays in the second period, but the Springfield penalty kill rose to the forefront in the back half of the frame, killing off three separate Hartford power plays, including a lengthy 5-on-3 disadvantage to hold the 2-0 score after 40 minutes.

The Wolf Pack used a 4-on-4 situation to make their way back into the game at 3:11 of the third as Casey Fitzgerald patiently walked his way past a pair of defenders before setting Justin Dowling for a back-door finish to cut the margin to 2-1.

After Hartford's power play killed off a Springfield advantage, Brett Berard ended a long scoring drought, beating Zherenko along the ice from the left circle at 6:59 to make it a 2-2 game.

Springfield let another man advantage slip through the cracks in the back half of the third, and the 2-2 tie carried into the extra period.

After both teams traded slashing penalties, with Zherenko making a pair of saves with his team down a man, Fitzgerald ended matters with 33 seconds left in the overtime, slipping to the front of the net to tip a Dowling pass over Zherenko's blocker, completing the comeback for the Wolf Pack.

Vadim Zherenko barely had to break a sweat in the goal crease in the first, turning away just three shots in

dle with 8:38 remaining in the second quarter. That scoring drive took 11 plays, and it covered 81 yards.

Dzierwinski, who rushed for 196 yards on 19 carries, scored on a 40 yard run in the third quarter and on a four-yarder at the start of the fourth quarter. He finished his career with more than 1,200 rushing yards.

There were interceptions on three consecutive plays in the middle of the second quarter, which is something that you don't see very often in a football game.

Junior Drew Lang and freshman James Gallagher had the Falcons interceptions, which were sandwiched around an interception by Comp junior Matt Skaza.

The Colts only touchdown was scored by Jordan with 13 seconds remaining in the first half. He finished the game with 90 rushing yards on ten carries.

Before making the trip home, the Falcons players celebrated their final win of the 2025 campaign.

Wilbraham United Players to present 'Five Golden Rings'

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham United Players are staging a holiday production of "Five Golden Rings - A Greeting Card Channel Holiday Musical".

Performance dates are Nov. 28 through Dec. 7. Performances on Fridays and Saturdays are at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday performances are at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are available through the Player's website wilbrahamunitedplayers.org

In Five Golden Rings, Holly, a business exec from "the big city" gets snowed in at a quaint Vermont B&B for Christmas and begins to fall for its non-threateningly rugged owner, Lance. The issue: it's the very B&B her company is supposed to take over! Everything you want (and expect) in a cable-TV Christmas movie, from flannel shirts to flir-

tatious snowball fights to overt product-placement, mixed with fun songs and a lot of holiday cheer! Add a townspeople who "could" be a visitor from the North Pole, overly exuberant residents of the town, Lance's adorable daughter Grace, Holly's best friend Trish and "current" fiancé, Bradley and you've got the usual characters all covered!

The musical is directed by Deborah Trimble with musical direction by Graham Christian and choreography by Jacqui Panasian.

The cast includes Ava D'Agostino as Holly and Nick Adams as Lance, with Rylee Santiago as Grace, Kiernan Cone as Trish, Joe Lessard as "Nick", and Casey Dion as Bradley. Also included are Shannon Martin, Amanda Emet, Jeff Erb and Jim Martin.

Events & announcements schedule

Babes for a Cause: Shop for a Reason Nov. 29

HAMPDEN - The Babes for a Cause: Shop for a Reason event takes place on Saturday, Nov. 29 from 2 to 7 p.m. at The Starting Gate at GreatHorse.

The Holiday Tour event supports Shriners Children's New England and will feature 35+ women-owned businesses, acoustic music featuring Project 267, a cash bar, snacks and small plates for purchase and complimentary spa services and mediumship readings.

Also, a 360 Photobooth by JD 360 Video, Professional Photographer donated by In-

spire Me Photo.

Additionally, meet and greet local sponsors including Northwestern Mutual, Rice Fruit Farm of Wilbraham, Inspire Wellness Co, Team413, Caesar K9 & Equine, Common Ground Cafe of Wilbraham and Key4Women.

10% of sales from vendors will be donated back to SCNE and 50% of ticket sales will be donated back SCNE.

Tickets are \$30 and VIP tickets have already sold out.

This event is hosted by Jill Moccio Connors, owner of Hustle & Heart and founder of Babes Brews & Browsing.

Tech Help at the WPL

WILBRAHAM- Need help setting up an email account, updating your phone, or figuring out a new device?

Students from the Wilbraham & Monson Academy (WMA) Community Service Team will be at the library to assist with technology-related questions. Assistance is available on a

first come, first served basis on Fridays from 3:30 to 5 p.m.

Please bring any relevant devices and/or log-in and password information. Contact the library at 413-596-6141 or visit www.wilbrahamlibrary.org for more information about upcoming dates.

Hampden Senior Center Group Exercise Classes

HAMPDEN - Join us for PWR! Moves Group Exercise Classes, a Parkinson-specific class with a goal to keep you moving and doing more of what you want to do.

Led by Lisa Kern, OT, reiki master/holistic therapist.

Fitness goals include strength, balance, agility, aerobics and flexibility.

Exercises are designed to improve fitness goals and

counteract your Parkinson's symptoms.

Classes take place from 9 to 10 a.m. on Mondays at the Hampden Senior Center.

Pre-paid rate for eight classes is \$65.

Drop-in rate is \$10 per class.

Call to register or for more information at 413-566-5588.

Sponsored in part by the Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens.

SCHOOLS

Superintendent Award

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - John A. Provost, Ed.D., Superintendent of the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District is pleased to announce that Minnechaug Regional High School seniors Aidan Dzierwinski and Connor Seymour, have been selected to receive the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Academic Excellence Award. This award is given to high school students who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence during their high school careers.

Aidan's current GPA is 4.74. He is Captain of the Varsity Football Team, Co-President of Mathletes, Communications Officer for Class of 2026, and a member of The National Honor Society Emerald Key Chapter. Aidan's post-secondary education plan is to attend college and major in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Connor's current GPA is 4.74. He is Co-President of Mathletes, member of The National Honor Society Emerald Key Chapter, International Club,



and Canine Club. He plays soccer year-round for New England Futbol Club. After graduating from MRHS, Connor has committed to Bates College for soccer, and plans on majoring in Political Science. After his four years at Bates, he plans on attending law school as he is interested in Corporate Law.

Stogner becomes a Certified Guest Service Professional

NEWTON - Lucas Stogner, a Lasell University student from Wilbraham, Massachusetts became a Certified Guest Service Professional in the Fall of 2025.

The CGSP designation is

the highest acknowledgment of awarding-winning guest service for employees in the hospitality and tourism industry. The certification is conferred by American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute.

Stogner studies at Lasell Univ.

NEWTON - Lucas Stogner, a student from Wilbraham, Massachusetts began their first semester in the Fall of 2025 at Lasell University.

OPRO holding 'Holiday Magic at the Movies' concerts

WILBRAHAM - Ready to experience some "Holiday Magic at the Movies"? Join the Old Post Road Orchestra in two performances that will highlight old movie classics such as "The Miracle on 34th Street" as well as more recent movies such as "Frozen" and "The Polar Express".

The first concert is Friday, Dec. 5 at 7:30 pm, St. Cecilia's Church, 42 Main Street in Wilbraham. Members of the orchestra will be sporting their most festive holiday pajamas and will be joined by the MRHS Key Club students in theirs! A chance to conduct the orchestra in "Sleigh Ride"

will be raffled off along with many holiday gift baskets. (Many thanks to Berkshire Facial Surgery, Inc. for their ongoing support of this concert.)

The second performance is Sunday, Dec. 14 at 2 p.m., Mary Mother of Hope Church, 840 Page Blvd., Springfield (sponsored in part by RMG Wealth Management Group and a grant from the Spfld Cultural Council, a local agency, supported by the MA Cultural Council, a state agency).

All performances are free and family-friendly.

Please join OPRO for these wonderful holiday traditions!

Free DIY Gift Wrapping Station at WPL

WILBRAHAM- Need more space to wrap gifts, or want some privacy away from prying eyes? Wrap your gifts at the Wilbraham Public Library!

The library will provide scissors, tape, wrapping paper, and basic ribbon and tags, along with plenty of room for you to work. Available during select afternoons in December, while supplies last. For information about upcoming dates, contact the library at 413-596-6141, or visit www.wilbrahamlibrary.org.

Gingerbread House Workshops at the WPL

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Public Library is pleased to announce that it will be hosting two Gingerbread House Workshop events for children and teens.

Decorate your own gingerbread house using cones of frosting, fondant and a generous

candy buffet with Mandy Roberge from Wicked Good Henna!



All supplies are provided, including a homemade gingerbread house for each participant.

On Monday, Dec. 1, the Kids' Gingerbread House Workshop for

Grades 3-5 will be from 4:30 to 5:30 pm, and the Teen Gingerbread House Workshop for Grades 6-12 will follow from 6 to 7 p.m.

Registration is required starting Monday, Nov. 17 at www.wilbrahamlibrary.org or call the library at 596-6141. Wilbraham residents only for the first week of registration.

These programs are sponsored by the Wilbraham Friends of the Library.

HISTORICAL from page 1

But he was known as the man who was not afraid to ask the tough question. And many times he didn't like the answer. He was known as a person who, when he felt strongly about a town issue, would never let go of it, even if it was not logical.

When he was younger he was known to affect the "Teddy Kennedy look", strolling through Eastfield Mall in a black suit and tie with perfect wavy hair like a good politician; smiling at everyone - but he never won any elections he ran for. When he rose to speak at town meetings, sometimes a groan would come from the audience.

But, those who knew him as a member of the Knights of Columbus or the Wilbraham-Hampden Rotary Club, which he served for two separate terms as president, said he had a heart of gold and was the first person to volunteer. Don passed away last month at the age of 85 and his obituary read: "Don loved Wilbraham and he genuinely cared about the town's welfare."

Jesse Rice

Jesse L. Rice was known as successful peach farmer and also oversaw apple growing at Rice's Fruit Farm on Main Street towards the end of the 20th century and into the new millennium. He died at 91 in November, 2010. His family owned the farm for over 100 years.

His orchards on the east side of Wilbraham mountain were leaders in local agriculture. Rice's sold their fruit and baked goods in their store on the west side of Main Street. But, like other well-known town folks, he had another



Jesse L. Rice, shown here as a selectman in 1961, was known as successful peach farmer and also oversaw apple growing at Rice's Fruit Farm on Main Street in the 20th century and into the new millennium. He died at 91 in November, 2010. (Times file photo)

side to him.

When he was a selectman, along with Richard Danforth and Roger Hintze he was a leader at a dynamic time for the town in 1961. They were selectmen at a time when the trend was upward in every conceivable phase of town government. Rice was in charge when the school population tripled and the first class graduated from Minnechaug Regional High School. Fifteen miles of new roads were added to town and 1,600 new homes were built.

Kate Leary, a member of the Minnechaug Land Trust said at the time of his death, "He helped preserve a large portion of the farm as open space. He was an old Yankee. He had wonderful principles, many old stories and was an encyclopedia about apples."

He served three terms as selectman, was a veterans agent and a cemetery commissioner.

Wilbraham businessman

and town leader Jeff Smith helped design a granite bench at the highest point in the orchard in the Rice Nature Preserve which memorializes Rice and his wife Winnifred.

Timothy Merrick

Young Timothy Merrick, who was due to get married, but was bit by a rattlesnake and died while working in the fields near what is now Oakland Street in Wilbraham is the star of a famous folk tale that is very Wilbraham-centric. It happened on August 7, 1761. The tragedy became the source of Wilbraham's own folk song "The Pesky Sarpent". Back in 2023 the Wilbraham Atheneum Society presented a program by singer/songwriter Peter Lehndorff of Hampden all about Timothy Merrick and things related to the tragedy.

Lehndorff re-told the tale of one-person calamity that unfolded when Timothy Merrick, son of Lt. Thomas Merrick and his wife Mary, was scheduled to be married to the "Village Sweetheart" Sarah Lamb in two weeks hence. He was cutting hay with a scythe in the south of town near where Oakland Street is now. Town tradition has always placed the site of the snake bite as being in a meadow on the west side of Main Street near the present Wilbraham-Hampden Town Line.

The exact location is subject to controversy and could be located in what is now Hampden, that used to be part of Wilbraham. More than 260 years have passed since Merrick died and much could have changed since then.

Historical Commission

I would like to send out a salute to the two newest mem-



Timothy Merrick, bit by a rattlesnake, was buried in Adams Cemetery shortly after he died on August 7, 1761. (Charles F. Bennett photo)

bers of the Wilbraham Historical Commission who the selectboard appointed Nov. 3. Longtime resident Charles "Chuck" Clark who lives in an historic house on Main Street, across the street from where soldiers from Shays's Rebellion stayed the night before they attacked the Springfield Armory. And, longtime resident Judi Theocles who was in the first class to graduate from Minnechaug Regional High School and a member of the

Open Space and Recreation Committee. Her family was responsible for helping to establish the McDonald Nature Preserve.

Revolutionary Moment

We continue to honor our country's birthday, 250 years of freedom, each month. Dr Samuel Merrick of Wilbraham served as a private in the First Hampshire Militia. The company mustered at Springfield. They marched from West

Springfield towards New York in September, 1777. Young Merrick was in the detail that rode ahead to arrange quarters for men and pasture animals. They were emplaced on the shore of the Hudson River during a fight with the Hessians.

Merrick was a spectator at the formal ceremonies of the surrender and delivery of arms by the British-German Army.

Sources: "History of Wilbraham Bicentennial Edition 1763-1963" edited by Charles Merrick; "The History of Wilbraham, 1731, 1763-1913 by Chauncey E. Peck.

Editor Emeritus Charlie Bennett is a member of the Historic Commission and a trustee of the Wilbraham Atheneum Society. Readers can contact him with comments or ideas for the column at cbennett4765@charter.net.

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Logan Distler
September 22, 2024
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Grandparents: Christopher & Michele Mues, Warren
Carole & the late Bruce Distler, Long Island, NY

Baby's Name: _____

Birthdate: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Parents' Town of Residence: _____

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Deadline for photos and forms is Friday, December 12, 2025

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The Town of Worthington is soliciting letters of interest from qualified candidates to fill two full-time Equipment Operator/General Laborer positions in the Town Highway Department.

Valid MA CDL operator, Hydraulic Hoister's licenses and OSHA-10 certification is preferred.

• salary rate range: \$26.49 - \$38.59 per hour
Further information can be found on the Town's website:

www.worthington-ma.us

Questions will be answered by the Highway Superintendent at 64 Huntington Road, Monday - Friday, 7 AM to 3 PM; the telephone number is 413-238-5830 or send letter of interest, resume and three (3) references with relevant contact information to: **highway@worthington-ma.us** or to **Box 643, Worthington, MA, 01098.** This posting will remain pertinent until the position is filled.
The Town of Worthington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

TOWN OF WORTHINGTON INVITATION TO BID SNOW PLOWING SERVICES

The Town of Worthington Highway Department is soliciting bids for seasonal plowing services for the 2025-2026 winter season. Work will include plowing backroads and selected blacktop sections throughout the Town of Worthington.

Minimum equipment requirements:
• ¾-ton truck or larger
• 8-foot plow (minimum)
Please contact the Worthington Highway Department for bid specifications and route details:

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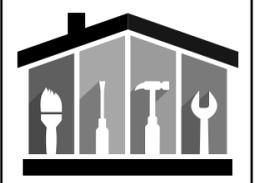
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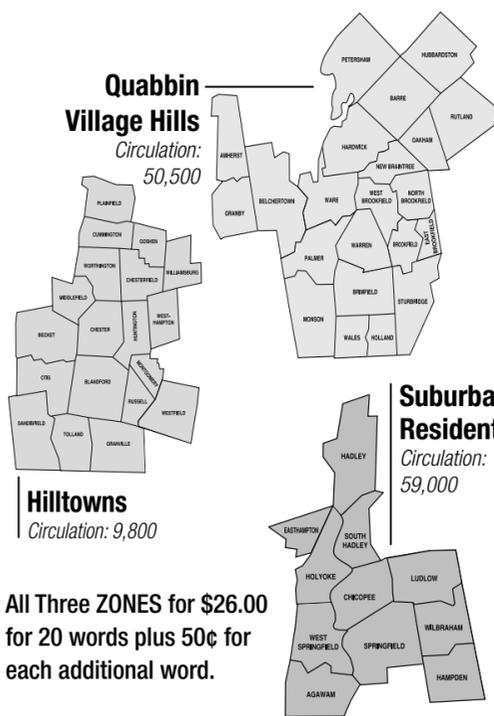
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TOWN HALL from page 1

later on, had a clinic and police department.

When the building was dedicated in June 1932, a graduation of the combined Hampden Schools were also held that day. As the years and decades went on, many more classes graduated from the consolidated school, plays and performances were held, a special family gathering of the Hatch Family during their 50th wedding anniversary in 1949 took place and even a Mardi Gras Ball was held in 1955.

Other uses included fairs, flower shows, town meetings, special town events, elections, wedding receptions and other festivities.

The school also grew and later led to a new elementary school on North Road in 1957, later renamed Green Meadows Elementary School.

Meals for the seniors in town were also served in the Town House's Melville Room until the senior center's move to Allen Street in 1999.

The Town House celebrated 90 years in 2022 alongside the Hampden Garden Club and by 2025, town office buildings and the library remained, with the auditorium serving as space for rehearsals by the Theatre Guild of Hampden, meetings of varying boards, committees and commissions from the Board of Selectmen--now the Selectboard as of 2024--to the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board and voting in elections.

At this year's Annual Town Meeting on May 12, the town voted to facilitate the transfer of the library, the Parks & Rec Department and the town office buildings to the former TWB, which included changing the property's eminent domain. In 1966, the town-owned land had been declared to be the site of a school.

TWB, meanwhile, was named after children's author and conservationist Thornton W. Burgess and opened in 1967. It served as the town's middle school until 2018, following a lawsuit settlement and reorganization plan by the school district.

The school district then moved students to Green Meadows Elementary School and the building was used for other programs and administrative purposes until the lease ended this summer. Afterward, the town of Hampden regained possession of the building on



July 1.

Readers may also recall TWB was considered for one of four initial options for the school district's reconfiguration plans to address under and over-enrollment issues in the schools. However, all options to keep the school open were eliminated by the Planning Committee.

The regional agreement would have also had to be modified due to a requirement that students are to be educated in their hometown until high school.

In 2023, a conditions assessment of the Town House identified \$4.2 million that would be needed for immediate repairs and \$7.7 million total over the next 10 years. There were also concerns about ADA-compliance, many environmental, structural and mechanical issues and not being large enough to meet space needs for the town's administrative offices and the library, along with the building being in poor condition.

Final Selectboard Meeting at the Town House

During the Selectboard's Nov. 10 meeting at the Town House—noted as the last time by Chair John Flynn—there was an update ahead of the Nov. 18 opening.

Town Administrator Brian Domina shared the packing and labeling for the move was nearly complete.

"We will have the movers here first thing Wednesday morning. We're anticipating a two to three-day move of trucks shuttling between the Town House and NTH—I think as John calls it—so everything's on schedule as far as I know," Domina said. "Everybody's done a tremendous job packing their offices and



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

Boxes and packages mark a new era in Hampden as the town offices are packed up and on the move from the Town House to the former Thornton W. Burgess Middle School.

labeling their boxes and I really have to give credit to everyone involved. It's a stressful process, but everybody's really been working hard."

"And we've had some volunteers helping out as well," Flynn added.

After mentioning some of the volunteers, Domina offered this suggestion.

"I think once this process is all done, we should probably formally recognize all the people that have helped out along the way to make this move possible," Domina said.

On the new sign, Domina said he would check with Highway Superintendent Mark Langone about that.

"It should be coming any time," Domina said.

"Are they changing the green sign at the corner?" Flynn said.

"I don't know. I don't know about any plans to change that at this point," Domina said.

"Would we be adding town hall to that as well?" Flynn said. "The directional sign by the flag pole?"

"Yep," Domina said. As the move has happened, Domina said many devices and workstations were also disconnected on the Saturday before.

"They'll also be returning next Saturday morning to hook up those devices and

workstations over at the new place. So, again, our intent is to remain closed to the public that following Monday so that staff can get into their offices and move stuff around and get set for a full return to work targeted for next Tuesday," Domina said.

At that final meeting at the Town House, Flynn offered this suggestion to Domina.

"I did mention to Brian today that the 18th is a nice goal. I think it's good. If things snowball a bit, don't make it a hard thing. Get it right and do it," Flynn said. "If you got to push it back a couple days and not open because you're getting everything together, do that. It's more important to try and do it when people aren't there than to have the doors open and you're still connecting things and whatever."

The board also decided they would meet next on Monday, Nov. 24.

On the floor for the board's meeting room, Domina said Abide was reached out to for a discussion and sanitorial was set up.

"He has some ideas that I asked Herb to share with me in an email that I could forward to the board that he wants to explore," Domina said. "Yes, the building will be clean."

More on the new town hall soon.

WSC hosting Senior Bus Trip

WILBRAHAM—The senior center will be hosting a Senior Bus Trip on Dec. 4.

The trip costs \$50 per person.

Here are the details:

Depart: Memorial School at 9 a.m. (310 Main Street, Wilbraham); arrive by 8:45 a.m. and estimated drive time is one hour.

10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Yankee Candle; enjoy 2.5 hours of shopping at your leisure. Guests should be back on the bus by 12:30 p.m. for

a 12:45 p.m. departure.

1 to 3 p.m. at Treehouse Brewing; one mile down the road is Treehouse Brewing Company. Each guest will receive a voucher good for one drink (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) and a slice of Treehouse pizza. Guests will board the bus at 3 p.m. for the ride home. Expected arrival time at Memorial School is 4 p.m.

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HEALTH from page 6

reporting problem bills – the residents had different levels of income and education. But these factors did affect a person's willingness to call about their medical bill.

"Those who were uninsured, Medicare insured, and less educated were less likely to reach out to the billing office," Duffy reported. "These differences in self-advocacy may be widening the gap in financial burden of health care between those with higher and lower socioeconomic status."

Self-advocacy is not easy, and challenging a medical bill can be time-consuming and frustrating. Some of the people in Duffy's study said they had spent five hours or more contesting a bill, and quite a few said they didn't feel the people in charge were respectful to them.

But if the outcome is a reduced bill or a payment plan, it can be worth the effort. It's estimated that Americans are carrying more than \$200 billion in medical debt, the majority of it by people who owe \$10,000 or more. While the three major credit agencies no longer include medical debts under \$500 on credit reports, it can still impact credit scores if the health organization reports it to the credit agencies.

Tellingly, only 3.5 percent of the respondents sought help from an advocacy organization to contact the billing office, Duffy said. The time burden plus the fact that many of the people surveyed didn't reach out at all indicates "there may be an unmet need for formal

assistance navigating bills," she wrote.

Patient advocates are one source of such formal assistance. They navigate the intricacies of the health-care system itself and its mind-boggling billing systems, too. A medically trained patient advocate can look at an itemized medical bill and spot duplications and inconsistencies that a lay advocate may miss.

To avoid mistakes and misunderstandings, understand your health insurance coverage; ask questions when you don't. Know what your deductibles, coinsurance, copays and out-of-pocket maximums are. Ask why your doctor is ordering certain tests or procedures. Call your insurer in advance to find out how much you'll be asked to pay. Always document the answers you receive, who you spoke to, and when. Get promises in writing. And if you're uninsured, be upfront about it.

After all that, if you still receive a bill you think has errors, advocate for yourself and you may save yourself some money.

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of Northshore Patient Advocates LLC (NShore). She is also founder and CEO of Nurse Advocate Entrepreneur, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. Teri offers a free phone consultation to newspaper readers as well as to nurses interested in becoming advocates. Reach her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
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Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
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(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD25P2419EA
Estate of:
Harvey A. Smith
Date of Death: 10/07/2025
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**
To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Edward C. Smith of Warren, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests that: Edward C. Smith of Warren,

MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/18/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

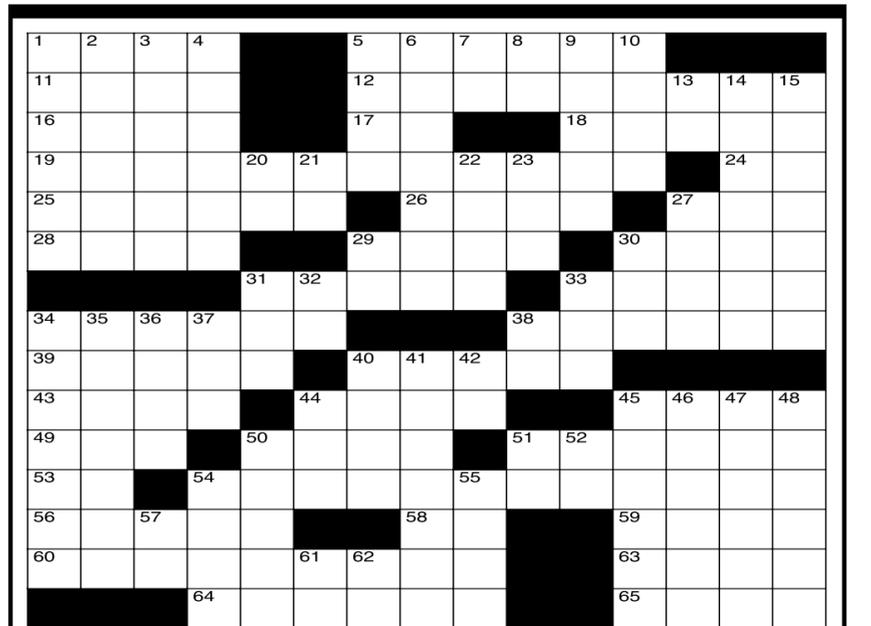
UNSUPERVISED

ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

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

Date: November 20, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
11/27/2025



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Popular wine ___ Spumante
- 5. Greatly impressed
- 11. ___ and that
- 12. Uttered with passion
- 16. Boats
- 17. Veteran actor Harris
- 18. Casserole with game
- 19. Reprehensible acts
- 24. They precede C
- 25. Says under one's breath
- 26. Taxis
- 27. It transfers genetic info
- 28. NFL great Randy
- 29. Where college students sleep
- 30. Major European river
- 31. Taco condiment
- 33. -frutti
- 34. Polish city
- 38. Astronomy unit
- 39. Khoikhoi peoples
- 40. Bears QB Williams
- 43. Scrambled, fried, boiled
- 44. Price indicators
- 45. One-time world power
- 49. When you hope to get somewhere
- 50. Farm building
- 51. Choose carefully
- 53. Magnum was one
- 54. One who combines
- 56. Nursemaids
- 58. Partner to Pa
- 59. Notable river
- 60. Officially honors
- 63. Colorless compound
- 64. A fancy chair
- 65. Email function
- 2. Religion of Japan
- 3. Leggings
- 4. Officially distributes
- 5. Arabian Sea seaport
- 6. Spanish doctors
- 7. It cools your house
- 8. Currency of Poland
- 9. Slowly moves into
- 10. Days (Spanish)
- 13. Unit of volume
- 14. Emit
- 15. With two replaceable hydrogens
- 20. Title for a man
- 21. Equally
- 22. Scarlett's home
- 23. One-time tech titan
- 27. Subway dwellers
- 29. One-tenth of a liter
- 30. Central European river
- 31. Distress signal
- 32. Expression of sympathy
- 33. The bill in a restaurant
- 34. Football equipment
- 35. Dance music
- 36. Russian river
- 37. Cosmetics giant Mary ___
- 38. Gym class
- 40. Automobiles
- 41. Roman honorific
- 42. Losses in sports
- 44. Skin tone in summer
- 45. Distant planet
- 46. Critical humor
- 47. Illegally obtained
- 48. Go back over
- 50. Home appliance brand
- 51. Unit of radioactivity
- 52. Home of the Flyers
- 54. Short official note
- 55. Emit coherent radiation
- 57. Anno Domini (in the year of Our Lord)
- 61. Most common noble gas (abbr.)
- 62. Toward

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.

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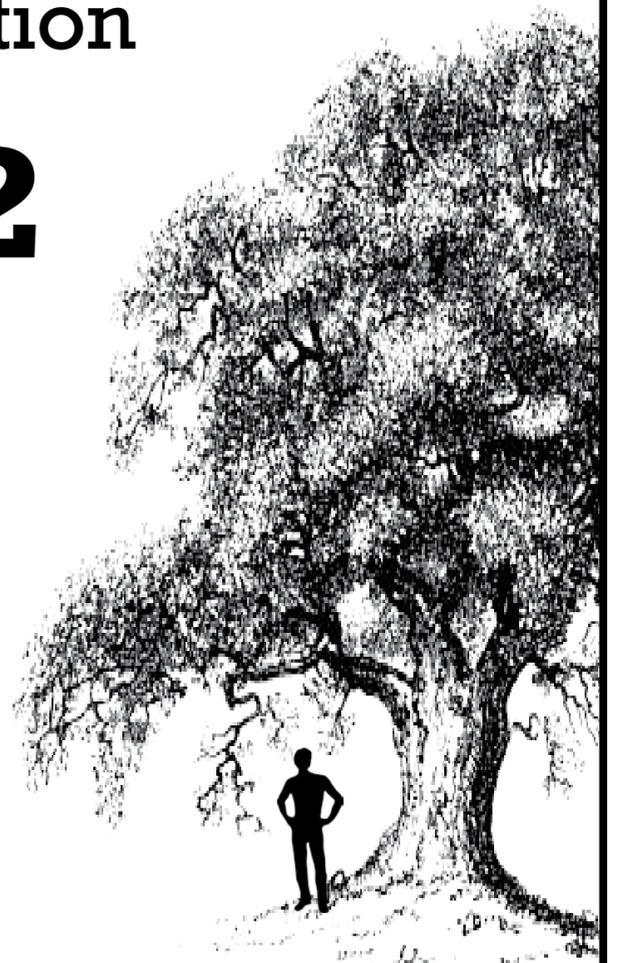
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