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Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers perform

By Dalton Zbierski
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HAMPDEN -- A packed house was in for a treat on Nov. 19 when the Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers performed at Thornton W. Burgess School.

The puppeteers traveled from Bar Harbor, ME to Hampden to bring "The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow" to life. The family-owned touring company was founded in 2000, and the puppeteers are friends of new Parks & Recreation Director Dan Blanchard.

Blanchard is tasked with bringing in new initiatives and said the Sunday afternoon program was the first big one he's launched since entering the position in September.

"They came in and did about a 50-minute puppet show... We had a total of 96 people there. The puppeteers were even impressed," Blanchard said. "It was a great community event for us. This was our first time using Thornton Burgess really for a program. We coordinated with the school district on using the venue."

Blanchard thanked the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District for making the "cafetorium" at TWB available for the program, complimenting the ven-



The Blanchards pose with members of the Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers.

Photos courtesy of Parks & Rec Director Dan Blanchard

ue for its great stage. He hopes to hold future programs there.

"That's a great building and a great resource, and I would love to continue using it and offering resources there. There's a lot of potential for use at TWB so hopeful-

ly going forward I can continue to work with the school district and use that building for offerings," Blanchard said.

Blanchard promoted the event in Hampden and Wilbraham by distributing flyers through the

schools. He explained that he is looking to offer entertainment and recreation opportunities to not only Hampden residents but Wilbraham residents too.

"I think unique is a spot where we can really thrive. Neighboring

communities like Wilbraham offer a lot of things that people have seen before," he said. "In my eyes, I don't recall a puppet show, or one of this stature, that had been

Please see **PUPPETS**, page 13

Knights of Columbus Council 10195 makes donations



Turley photo by Dalton Zbierski

(L to R) Knights of Columbus Council 10195 members George Reich presents check to fellow Knight George Flanagan, who is on the Board of Directors for the Community Survival Center, on Nov. 21.

Donates to the Community Survival Center and the Veterans Home at Holyoke

By Dalton Zbierski
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WILBRAHAM -- Numerous checks were presented, and

donations were made during the Knights of Columbus Council 10195's Nov. 21 dinner at Saint Cecilia Parish.

The Knights donated \$7,000 to the Community Survival Center in Indian Orchard and approximately \$500 to the Veterans Home in Holyoke, through Wilbraham Veterans Agent Jered Sasen.

"We give back with every single thing that we do; it's about

Please see **KNIGHTS**, page 7



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

(L to R) Tom Farrow, Jim Dupuis and Caryn Graco take a group photo in Thanksgiving-themed hats after another successful Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinner event at Hampden Senior Center.

Hampden Senior Center gives out over 200 Thanksgiving grab-and-go meals

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
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HAMPDEN -- Residents lined up early in the senior center parking lot on Nov. 22 to

pick up their Thanksgiving grab-and-go meals.

The event, which started during the pandemic and is now in its third year, had senior center staff and volunteers giving out more than 200 grab-and-go

Thanksgiving dinners.

Additionally, goodie bags from St. Mary's Catholic Church were distributed.

This year's sponsors were Monson Savings Bank, the

Please see **SENIORS**, page 16

Ann Gobi visits Hampden to discuss Mill Pond

By Dalton Zbierski
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HAMPDEN -- Massachusetts Director of Rural Affairs Ann Gobi visited the Board of Selectmen on Nov. 20 to learn more about Mill Pond and determine if state funding can be used to dredge and improve the town-owned property.

Gobi spent 21 years in the state legislature, serving both in the House and Senate. Currently, she serves rural communities, consisting of less than 7,000 people or 500 people or less per square mile.

"When she was going across the state, the governor said she would be a governor for all 351 cities and towns; 181 are classified as rural... The majority are in the western part of the state," Gobi said. "Part of my role is to meet with those 181 communities because I am under the economic development umbrella to find out how we can be helpful and what we can do."

The pond on Mill Road has slowly deteriorated since being cleaned by Gary Weiner and Art Boothe in the late 1990s. Today, its public benches are being swallowed by the water and its surroundings are overgrown.

Despite this, the Selectmen voiced in July that the site has potential for open space recreation, and Gobi arrived at the Hampden meeting on Nov. 20 to offer her input on what funding is available to help clean the property again. The Selectmen



Turley photos by Dalton Zbierski

Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi visited the Board of Selectmen on Nov. 20 to discuss the pond on Mill Road.

greeted her with a bottle of syrup from Ferrindino Maple.

Town Administrator Bob Markel outlined what the town is seeking, as it looks to dredge the lake.

"We're looking for funding to first of all get an estimate of the cost of dredging and secondly to hire a private company that would have one of these machines, I think they call the mudcats, where they sit on top of the water and harvest whatever is on the bottom," Markel said.

Conservation Commission Co-Chair Ted Zebert said the equipment might be too big for the pond and that a contractor would most likely excavate from the pond's edges. He described the pond.

"It's a small pond," he said.

"It's more wetlands than pond. It has a feed in and a drain that when the Scantic River gets high, that's where it goes. That's part of the original stormwater overflow when the area had bad storms."

Zebert noted that the rising pond water could prevent the drains from working, which puts homes at risk for flooding. He said that the property has multiple uses that are being jeopardized and explained how it might've gotten to its current state.

"The pond used to have some use in that when it was deep enough, the local kids could ice skate on it. There are some fish that may get in there... people may do fishing. Over time what's happened either by the Scantic overflowing or by just all the surrounding trees dropping, it's slowly kind of filled," Zebert

said. Zebert cautioned that it could be difficult to get approval to do work on the pond because the Scantic River feeds into the Connecticut River, which feeds into the Long Island Sound, "and if you know anything, the Long Island Sound is being watched very closely," he said, referring to nitrogen pollution that is killing marine life.

Weiner, who said the pond dates to about 1875 and was originally part of a mill, explained how he and Boothe got the ball rolling in the late 1990s when they cleaned the pond. They secured construction approval and a dredging permit from the Corps of Engineers.

He said the water's depth was 10 feet and that children swam in it.

"We pulled out about almost 30,000 yards of material out of there, and the Highway Department was able to use the material along the side for their grass

seeding, but it has significantly deteriorated to the point where it's probably four to five feet deep now," Weiner said.

Weiner predicted that regardless of what happens, Mother Nature will return the site to its current state in several decades. Gobi disagreed.

"You'd like to see something where it's not going to fill in, in 10 years," she said. "I think that would have to be part of (the plan). The idea is planning forward and looking ahead; what can be done if the state is going to invest. These are expensive projects."

First, Gobi says survey work must be completed on the site. She said she would take the item and bring it back to agencies on the state level and encouraged Hampden to look into pursuing an environmental bond, although the process of getting the money released from a bond bill is chal-

Please see **POND**, page 7

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Selectmen vote to publish RFQ for expansion

By Dalton Zbierski
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HAMPDEN -- After discussing it earlier in the month, the Board of Selectmen unanimously voted on Nov. 20 to publish the Request for Quote for design plans for the expansion of the fire station on North Road.

Reports and recommendations have already been received from Mitchell Associates Construction Corp. and Tecton Architects, but a solid set of design plans is critical to keep the process moving.

"I think if you had actual blueprints where you could go in front of actual contractors and get pricing (it would be beneficial). While no one can give you an accurate detail of cost analysis with a drawing, if you have blueprints, it's more firm," Fire Chief Ed Poulin said.

Town Administrator Bob Markel reviewed the RFQ and said everything is to standard. Selectman Don Davenport initially questioned the process and its lack of momentum.

"I'm just hung up because we've already hired two of these guys (Mitchell and Tecton) and spent

\$70,000 and we haven't gotten any further," Davenport said. "We haven't decided what we want to do. We haven't decided if we want to take the Mitchell report and do all the renovations, the heating, the windows, the doors and all that kind of stuff or do we want to put on one, two or three bays."

Representing the fire department, Mark Barba explained to Davenport that the firm the town chooses will use the Mitchell and Tecton reports and then establish two definitive options that the soon-to-be-established building committee can bring to town residents for a vote.

"What we've had so far is we've had conceptual drawings of both the Mitchell Report and Tecton. There were no blueprints," Barba said. "There were estimates of vast ranges, so this is taking the work that's been done to this point, meeting with the committee and saying, 'These are the needs of the town.'"

Barba described the Mitchell assessment as "fantastic."

He said the assessment outlined the possibilities, ranging from a brand new \$16 million fire station to just \$2 million of improvements.

"Somewhere between the \$2 million to repair the most critical things and the \$16 million, there should be a solution. That's what I think this is; coming up with a firm that will give us (that solution)," Barba said.

Barba noted that the spring town meeting is in the second week of May and that the blueprints would need to be finished by April to have a realistic shot at being considered at the meeting. He said it might not sound like a lot of time, but said it is really a fair amount.

"It's aggressive but could be doable; to have a product to bring to Spring Town Meeting. That's our goal, if not we lose a whole 'nother year with this. We're ready. We have as much as we can bring forward," Barba said.

As the discussion wound down, Selectman Craig Rivest asked if the town should now look into establishing a building committee for the new fire station like the one that was created for the senior center.

When asked by Poulin for the parameters, Flynn said that all the members of the committee don't have to be from Hampden.

Christmas Tree Festival evokes an 'old-timey' celebration

By Charles F. Bennett
Times Editor Emeritus

WILBRAHAM – 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 Museum at 450 Main St. in the center of town.

And, what better way to immerse your family in an "old-timey" atmosphere at the holidays than in a museum that is hosting a total of nine Christmas trees each decorated with nine unique themes by local community organizations. Each group provides their own special design to their tree.

The Christmas Tree Festival will be held over two Sundays, on Dec. 3 from 3 to 5 p.m. featuring an ice carving demonstration at the rear of the museum, mulled cider and baked treats, a wreath raffle, crafts and the Giving Tree to benefit the Community Survival Center.

On Dec. 10 from 2 to 4 p.m. the focus will be on youth with refreshments of cookies and milk instead of mulled cider. There will be a visit from Mrs. Claus, a scavenger hunt

and crafts.

The museum, operated by the Atheneum Society of Wilbraham for the town, is free and open to the public. The trees will be on display and the Gift Shop will be open according to Tree Festival Chairwoman Marianne Wagner, an Atheneum Society Trustee.

Last week, Wagner announced the lineup of participating groups who have decorated trees this year. They are: Five Star Gardens, Friends of the Wilbraham Library, Karen Geoghan Photography, St. Cecilia's Women's Club, Wilbraham Art League, Wilbraham Children's Museum, Wilbraham Flowers, Wilbraham Garden Club, and Wilbraham United Church.

Unique Themes

As an example, from last year's festival, of how the trees reflect the theme of their decorators, the Wilbraham Art League hung red-colored tree ornaments interspersed with colorful artistic circular geometric patterns around the tree.

The Friends of the Wilbraham Library took pages from books and fashioned them into various shapes, then placed them around candy canes.



(Times file photo)

Christmas Tree decorated by the Wilbraham Art League at last year's Old Meeting House Christmas Tree Festival.

True to form, the Peach Blossom Festival committee offering had peach-colored garland, and small replica peaches hung as ornaments.

Please see **FESTIVAL**, page 7

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Corrections

In a Select Board story in the Nov. 23 edition, Tracey Planter's title was misidentified as Certified Planning Accountant Chair. Her actual title is Community Preservation Committee Chair.

Also, in the Nov. 16 edition, a statistical error was listed in parentheses next to Hampden Senior Center Building Committee member Rita Vail's quote. It should have said Architectural Insight's quote for the senior center expansion design was \$27,175.

We apologize for the mistakes.

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Select Board approves moving forward on pickleball courts

The plans experienced a setback after Article 97 concerns

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
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WILBRAHAM -- The Select Board approved on Nov. 27 to again move forward on and support plans for pickleball courts at Memorial School.

Chairman Theresa Goodrich was absent this week.

Before the Select Board discussed the topic, residents voiced their support during citizens open forum.

John Hegarty said after reading Article 97 himself, in his opinion, it doesn't apply.

"The way Article 97 reads is you would actually have to take that land and either compensate someone for it or acquire it, purchase or an easement, etc.," Hegarty said. "This land isn't being taken; the land is already there. It's already owned by the Town of Wilbraham. So, my opinion is, not being a lawyer, Article 97 does not apply."

John Liebel, an attorney, provided his perspective, explaining Article 97 is an amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution with the ability to provide protection for open space.

"Open space, which by the way does include, by definition under the statute, recreational uses," Liebel said.

Liebel then walked through the process

of bringing the pickleball courts to Memorial School, including the past two town meeting votes and funding coming through the Community Preservation Committee and their two votes on the item.

"It seems interesting to me that Article 97 suddenly raises its head at this point," Liebel said.

Liebel noted how Article 97 would apply if there was disposal of property, but he hasn't "heard anyone tell me you're going to dispose of the property."

"But if you are, you may be constricted by Article 97 and follow the requirements, which are simple, straightforward requirements," Liebel said.

During open forum, residents also expressed confusion and asked questions about what, exactly, the board would be discussing on the topic itself.

After several minutes, Ellen Liebel's question cleared up the confusion immediately.

"Does that mean that what was approved (a) few weeks ago is in jeopardy of being disapproved?" Liebel said.

Town Administrator Nick Breault confirmed yes, later adding he would be talking with the board about open forum in a future

meeting after attending a recent managers' meeting and, also, share advice that was given.

Breault then provided a timeline on the plans and said his recent consulting with Attorney Brian Winner was to make sure the analysis expressed on Nov. 13 "was still the same or if there have been changes about that" after the Article 97 concerns were raised.

"The board has in its folder an email that basically confirms everything that was said in that previous meeting and previous discussions," Breault said.

After summarizing the latest information and providing further clarification, Breault presented his recommendation on how to proceed.

"My recommendation to the board would be to take one additional affirmation vote for the courts to be located up at Memorial School, if the board is so inclined, and to authorize me to have that process begin with the recreation director," Breault said.

The motion to authorize Breault and the Parks & Recreation Department to move forward with pickleball bids at Memorial School passed 2-0.

Annual tree lighting a community-wide holiday gathering

By Charles F. Bennett
Times Editor Emeritus

WILBRAHAM – Wilbraham's Annual Christmas Tree Lighting, to take place at Gazebo Park starting at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 3, has been likened to a Norman Rockwell painting according to former Wilbraham-Hampden Times editor Tyler Witkop.

Witkop, a hometown Hampden Minnechaug Regional High School graduate, should know what goes into Rockwell's depiction of an iconic New England scenes, the way he describes it: "What could be a better hometown tableau than a huge Christmas Tree in the center of town, full of colorful lights, Santa arriving on a fire engine with sirens blazing and hordes of youngsters waiting in line to tell the Jolly Old Elf what they want for Christmas in a twinkling, lit up Gazebo, while their families look on," said Witkop.

There will be traditional Christmas music in the air while the Tree Lighting takes place presented by David and Lisa Gomes.

LUSO Federal Credit Union will contribute candy canes, for Santa to hand out to the children, and will provide hot chocolate and cookies to everyone. The Tree Lighting is co-sponsored by Country Bank. The Wilbraham-Hampden Times is the media sponsor.

The Rotary Tree Lighting effort is being coordinated by club secretary Brad Sperry.

The Tree Lighting will take place in Gazebo Park, just down Main Street in



(Times file photo by David Miles)

In a photo from a previous Tree Lighting, Santa listens to what kids want for Christmas in the Gazebo at Gazebo Park.

Hygiene Items Collection

Rotary Club President Don Flannery has announced a hygiene item collection to take place at the Tree Lighting. Families attending the event are being asked to bring personal hygiene items such as shampoo, soft soap, hand sanitizer, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs and more and drop them into a collection box near the Gazebo at the event. The club will donate those items to local organizations serving needy families and individuals.

And in the tradition of Norman Rockwell, Sperry said he is glad to coordinate the annual event that the club has presented for the last 35 years.

"I just enjoy it," Sperry said. "I like to see the children come down and see Santa. And it's great that our 'Rotary Elves' continue to put 'service above self' (the club's motto) for this wonderful tradition."

After Santa arrives on the fire engine he will say a few words to the gathered families, and then flip the switch turning on the colorful LED lights on the Christmas Tree. From there, children will line up at the gazebo until it is their turn to tell Santa what they want for Christmas. He will listen to their Christmas wishes and give them a free candy cane.

After the Sunday spectacle the tree lights will turn on daily from sunset to 11 p.m., set by a timer, throughout the holiday season.

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

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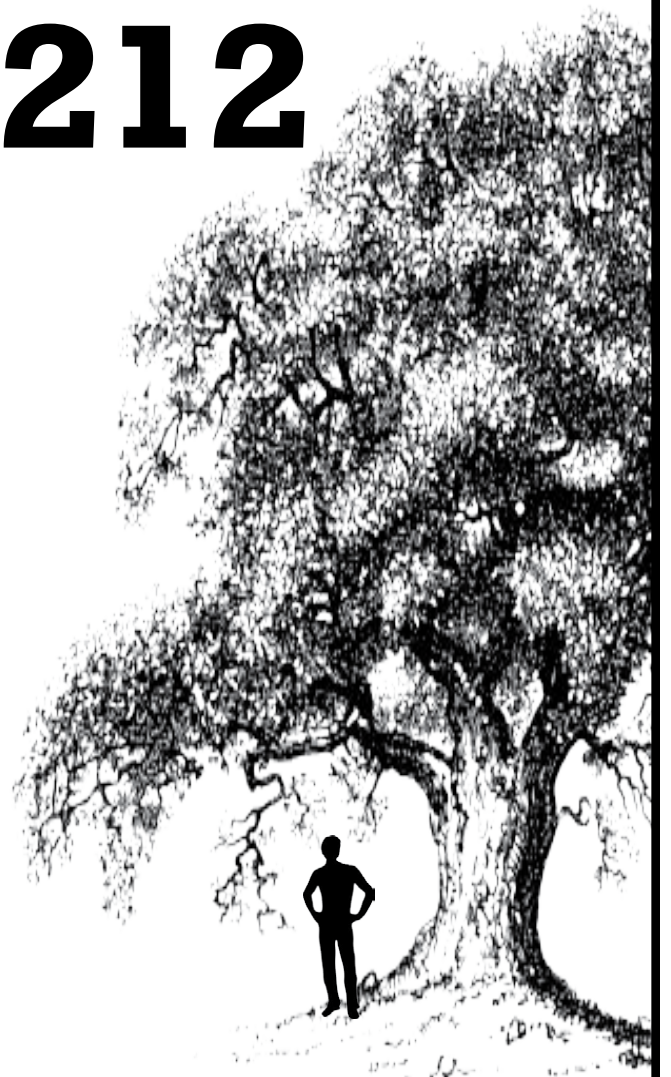
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VIEWPOINTS



By Ellenor Downer



Song sparrow

I received an email from a Brimfield resident. He said he had a few song sparrows in his yard in late October along with white-throated sparrows.

The song sparrow is six inches long and has a whitish breast with brown streaks. A dis-

tinguishing mark is a black, central spot on its chest. The song sparrow's crown is reddish brown and it has gray eyebrows. Its tail is long and rounded. Song sparrows feed on the ground eating seeds, insects and some fruit.

This sparrow's song is a few repeated notes followed by a rich and varied warble. Its call includes a "tsp" and "tchump." The female lays three to five greenish, white eggs with dark marks in a cup like nest of grasses and occasionally leaves. She place the nest on the ground, in a shrub or weeds.

The male song sparrow defines his territory by singing from prominent perches in about 1/2 to 1 1/2 acres. The male chases the female away when she first arrives and reduces the amount of his singing. Courtship includes male diving at the female and her making a trill like call.

Song sparrows inhabit dense shrubs at the edge of open areas such as fields, yards and streams. They inhabit this area year round.

Other Brimfield birds

The Brimfield resident said he had juncos and one golden crown and one ruby-crowned kinglet. He also saw four male Eastern bluebirds, a pair of house finches and juncos. He said, "The 'best' sighting was a male American kestrel. It was perched on a wire, flew to a tree and then down into the grass where it caught what looked like a mouse or vole."

Cedar waxwings

My daughter and family saw a flock of cedar

waxwings eating berries in Granby near Horse Caves.

Pond birds

The Brimfield resident did a tour of some ponds in Brimfield, Sturbridge and Warren recently. He reported lots of Canada geese, but not a lot of ducks other than mallards. He saw two-ringed necked ducks in Warren and a robin eating fruit from a mountain ash tree.

He compiled a list of birds seen Nov. 18 in Brimfield, Sturbridge and Warren. It included 33 mallards, 76 Canada geese, a pair of hooded mergansers (male and female), two great blue herons and two mourning doves.

Feeders

I still have not put out my suet feeder until I am sure the black bears are hibernating. I have lost too many suet feeders to black bears; they either destroy them or take off with them. There must be a pile of them in the woods somewhere.

I do put some bird seed out during the day, but I only put a small amount for the birds. I include shelled peanuts as the tufted titmice, woodpeckers and blue jays love them. Yes, the squirrels do as well.

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



by Roberta McQuaid



A reader from Palmer wrote in with this holiday question for the Garden Lady: "I enjoyed your wreath-making column last week. I thought it was interesting that you advised scouring the landscape for suitable greenery. Overgrown boxwood shrubs are plentiful at home. Can I harvest the tips for making my own holiday wreaths and swags? If so, how do I ensure that the shrubs look good come spring?"

Yes, you can certainly harvest boxwood, especially since your plants are considered "overgrown." A haircut doesn't sound as if it will do much harm, even though it's the off season.

Rather than snip just the tips, however, insert your clippers further into the plant where the growth has become woody. Cutting deeper in several random spots will make "windows" for new growth, at a reduced size!

The addition of boxwoods to your wreaths, planter boxes and swags will offer a nice variation in texture to coarser greenery.

Tabletop "trees" made almost entirely out of boxwood make great Christmas centerpieces.

Here is how you do it, straight from the archives: Cut a piece of wet floral foam into an elongated triangle and secure it in your container of choice. I prefer to use a plastic centerpiece base available from the florist - the bottom of the foam fits in perfectly.

From your collection of boxwood or other greens, choose a nice, pointed piece for the top of the tree and place it

Christmas-time questions

into the foam an inch or so; three or four inches will be left sticking out the top. If leaves or other stems along the branch are in the way of insertion, remove them first so that the smallest hole possible will be made in the foam.

Now, gauge the size of the rest of your tree by inserting pieces of greenery at the halfway point as well as at the very bottom.

After that, fill in between the top and middle and middle and bottom, turning the foam as you go, so that a multidimensional tree results. Once greenery completely covers the foam, you can decorate it any way you like.

Tiny glass balls, battery-powered lights, dried cranberries or cinnamon sticks are just a few options. Don't forget to water the tree at the base - the foam will absorb moisture and keep the greens hydrated for weeks of enjoyment.

Marissa, who reads the Ware River News, posed this timely question concerning flowering gifts. "I purchased an amaryllis kit as a gift for my sister. Do you have any tips for to make sure it grows and flowers well?"

Sure! As long as the amaryllis bulb is dry and free of soft spots it should bloom just fine. Like other flowering bulbs, the amaryllis is a self-contained unit ready to do its thing!

Just follow these simple planting instructions: fill the container with moistened growing medium to about one-half to two-thirds full. Position the bulb on top and add the rest of the potting soil- the upper portion and the neck should rest

just above the rim of the pot.

The bulb may rot if it stays too wet, so add water only when the soil dries out. Temperatures should be kept around 60 degrees.

Once the sprouting occurs, fertilizer can be added, but the amaryllis will likely bloom well without it. Stake heavy flower stalks as they form to prevent them from snapping.

Keep blooms looking their best for the greatest amount of time by pinching away anthers before they form pollen, and by housing the plant in a cool room of the house.

Pet owners be forewarned, toxic alkaloids present in these tennis ball-sized bulbs can cause vomiting and diarrhea in animals who have consumed them. Dogs, who are more likely to play with and chew objects this size, are at greater risk.

Purdue University states that the stomach upset will likely cure itself within a few hours, but that special medical attention should be given to weak, old, or otherwise in-firmed dogs who have come in contact with amaryllis bulbs.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 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.



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Correction Policy

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

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

Wilbraham Men's Glee Club to begin rehearsals

WILBRAHAM -- The Wilbraham Men's Glee Club will begin rehearsals for the 2024 concert season on Monday evening, Jan. 8, 2024, at Christ The King Lutheran/Episcopal Church, Wilbraham at 7 p.m. Rehearsals will continue each Monday thereafter at Christ The King Lutheran/Episcopal Church at 7 p.m. until local performances in late April. The chorus is conducted by Ray Drury and accompanied by Marcia Jackson.

Drury has selected a varied program for Men's voices consisting of contemporary works, folksongs, pop tunes and sea shantys.

Interested singers should be able to "carry a tune" and be willing to pay a nominal fee for sheet music. No audition is required. Hope to see you there!

Virtual holiday programs for cold winter nights

WILBRAHAM -- Two virtual programs will be presented by the Wilbraham Public Library in December. On Tuesday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m., chef and cookbook author Erin Jeanne McDowell will demonstrate how to bake one of her favorite holiday recipes, then answer attendees' "burning" questions. On Monday, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m., John Charles will share his top holiday romance book recommendations of 2023.

In addition to reviewing for "Book-

list and "Library Journal", Charles is the co-author of "Romance Today: An A to Z Guide to Contemporary American Romance Writers" and "The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Ultimate Reading List". To register, please contact the library at 413-596-6141 or visit the Event Calendar at www.wilbrahamlibrary.org. These free programs are facilitated in partnership with the Ashland Public Library.

POND from page 2

lenging.

A Community One Stop grant could also be an option. She said that 17 grants with a cap of \$500,000 were recently awarded and the state is preparing for another round of funding.

Gobi also noted that it could be useful to contact the Geology Department at UMass Amherst to see if any students want to survey the pond. She also said

she can reach out to Stephen Mabee, the state geologist, who is also employed at UMass Amherst.

Gobi also recommended working with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to fund the initial study. She was happy that the Conservation Commission and Board of Selectmen are working together on this project.

"Any time a community can put skin in the game, if you will, that goes a long way," she said.

KNIGHTS from page 1

giving back to the community," said Jim Rooney, a Knight.

George Reich, a Knight, said that the group has donated over \$80,000 to local charities in the past two years.

Last Tuesday, a small check presentation ceremony took place before the Knights moved into their regularly scheduled meeting. Several dozen members filled the parish hall for the occasion.

Community Survival Center

The Community Survival Center is a 37-year-old nonprofit agency dedicated to helping families struggling to provide food, clothing and household items. The Knights have fundraised for the Community Survival Center for approximately 30 years.

On Oct. 14, the Knights held a fundraiser in the parish hall. Beyond covering direct expenses like food and liquor, all the proceeds benefited the Community Survival Center, and \$7,000 was raised.

"We work hard on these events, but we have a good time and a lot of laughs and enjoy the results. As much as possible, we look for people to donate," Reich said. "(The Community Survival Center is) giving back to the people who need it. They have a food pantry a couple days a week, they have a thrift store, they've been around a long time."

George Flanagan, a Knight who is on the Board of Directors for the Community Survival Center, was blown away when he found out how much the Knights donated to different charities in recent years. He attributes the accomplishment to a great group of guys who do everything for

others.

"There's nothing that we do that is for us, although the reward is that we're doing this for others, and that feels good," Flanagan said.

Flanagan runs the kitchen for the Knights during their regular dinners. He explained what inspires him to serve the survival center and how it operates.

"The survival center is 100% dependent upon donations and other means of funding. We feed over 1,000 families every month at the survival center. We have a clothing store there; it's used clothing, and that's one of the ways we raise funds," he said.

Three weeks ago, the parish's Women's Club held its annual rummage sale. All the clothing that was left over from the sale was donated to the survival center, which turns that into money to buy food, Flanagan said.

"It's an endless cycle of giving, and we have a very, very generous parish. Every week, I go from here to the survival center, every Wednesday with my car, it's a big SUV, and it is full of food that is donated each week by the parishioners here," Flanagan said.

Flanagan is motivated to give back by his Christian faith. He retired in 2006 after working a demanding job that prevented him from being able to give back in a hands-on way. He is happy he found a second home with the Knights of Columbus.

"When I retired, that was one of the first things I looked for," he said. "It's just the most rewarding feeling in the world. You get to know that you're doing something to help others who can't help themselves."

Veterans Home
Formerly known as the Sol-

diers Home, the Veterans Home at Holyoke is being rebuilt after the old facility and administration's shortcomings were revealed when at least 76 veterans lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To contribute to the reform, the Knights decided to donate by holding a raffle during the summer.

"In light of the deplorable conditions that the veterans went through during COVID, we were moved to do something," Jim Rooney, a Knight, said. "We didn't know what to do. One of our fourth degree assembles makes wooden flags for charity. They're absolutely gorgeous. We, as a council, voted to buy one, and then I raffled it off all summer long. The money that I raised; we're giving to (Sasen) to give to the veterans in the Veterans Service Home."

About \$500 was raised, and a check was given to Sasen on Nov. 21. Sasen will deliver the check to the Veterans Home. Sasen was impressed by the Knights as he participated in their Tuesday evening dinner.

"It says a lot," Sasen said. "The fact that these guys keep with the pulse of what's going on in the veteran community, the Soldier's Home, now the Veterans Home, has been something that has been on the forefront of everybody's mind sadly since the tragedy that happened during COVID, but knowing that these guys recognize the needs that they still have there and they put this all together to make sure that they kind of fill in a little bit of that need. It's amazing. It speaks volumes about the character of each one of the members and what it means."

Sasen said ground was broken on the new Veterans Home



Marianne Wagner as Mrs. Claus welcomes visitors to the Old Meeting House Museum Christmas Tree Festival last year. (Times file photo)

FESTIVAL from page 3


Of course, the backdrop for all the gaily decorated trees is a living museum which tells the story of "old-timey" 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 Historic Commissioner Peter Ablondi, a sign featuring a tom turkey from the Bennett Turkey Farm and a desk from one of the first schools in town.

Each year the Museum Gift Shop hosts a Guest Merchant. "The guest vender this month is Wilbraham Candle Co. who will provide a holiday-scented candle to raffle

off. The Gift Shop will be open during festival hours and offers Wilbraham memorabilia in addition to town history books, and stationery. It is one of the few places that one can buy tee shirts, sweatshirts and hats with the name "Wilbraham" on it," said Karen Geaghan, the Atheneum vice president.

Examples of questions from last year's Scavenger Hunt, which will be held for kids on Dec. 10 are: What room has a cross stitch tree with small ornaments? What is on the top of the tree decorated by Five Star Gardens? Or, what type of bird is on display on the Wilbraham Flowers tree?

For more information about the Old Meeting House Tree Festival, email president@wilbrahamatheneum.org.




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Deadline for photos and forms is Friday, December 6, 2023

OBITUARIES

Death Notices

Jason Ryan McDiarmid, 41
Died on Nov. 13, 2023
Forastiere Smith
Funeral & Cremation

Jason Ryan McDiarmid 1982 – 2023

SPRINGFIELD – Jason Ryan McDiarmid, 41, died unexpectedly on Nov. 13, 2023. Jay was born in Springfield, MA on May 5, 1982, and was a graduate of Minnechaug Regional High School. He continued his education and completed an Associates Degree at Springfield Technical Community College and earned his Bachelor of Science in Business at American International College, graduating Cum Laude with a major in Accounting.



He worked at the Friendly's plant in Wilbraham for over 15 years as an accomplished and well-liked Production Group Leader. He loved weight training and fitness, bicycling and taking very long walks.

He leaves his mother Martha McDiarmid, his father Jack McDiarmid, his brother Robert McDiarmid, his nephew Tyler and his niece Brooke, and many uncles, aunts and cousins.

Services were entrusted to Forastiere Smith Funeral & Cremation, East Longmeadow MA.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Jay's name to the Springfield Rescue Mission, 10 Mill Street, P.O. Box 9045, Springfield, MA, 01102. To leave an online condolence visit www.forastiere.com.

Wilbraham-Hampden Times OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$225, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

Wilbraham Select Board holds public hearing on annual entertainment licenses

Also, updates on ongoing topics

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM -- The Select Board held a public hearing on Nov. 27 for two annual entertainment licenses for Dominic John Inc., dba The Local Table-n-Tap.

The licenses would apply to various forms of entertainment, including music and dancing, Monday through Saturday and on Sundays.

While explaining the applications, Town Administrator Nick Breault suggested the board consider pausing the decision on the dancing portion.

"There are a couple of questions that haven't been posed, and again this isn't fair in a sense to Mr. Arillotta because I've not had the chance to talk with him about it or to the fire chief or to the police chief," Breault said. "But where the location of potential dancing might be needs to be better sorted out. We have not asked him to provide that."

Christopher Arillotta, the applicant, was willing to wait. When he asked if there would be another meeting to approve the dancing portions, Breault suggested the public hearing could be continued for that, while the others could be approved.

Arillotta was pleased with the suggestion.

"That's fine as long as we can move forward," Arillotta said.

Michael Goncalves expressed support for the licenses.

"I think it's a great location for that kind of entertainment. There's no houses around there, so I hope



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers
(L to R) Wilbraham Select Board Clerk Michael Squindo, Vice Chairman Sue Bunnell, Christopher Arillotta and Town Administrator hold a discussion during the public hearing for two annual entertainment licenses during the Nov. 27 Select Board meeting.

the board supports it," Goncalves said.

The motion to approve the application of an annual entertainment license Monday through Saturday to allow indoor entertainment to include recorded and live music was approved 2-0. Next, the motion to approve the application of an annual entertainment license on Sundays to allow indoor entertainment to include recorded and live music was approved 2-0.

The caveats include specific provisions that cannot exceed a four-piece string band and have one vocalist at a time, with no duets, trios, quartets or choral groups permitted. The DJ would use an application system to host trivia nights and karaoke during the business hours of 11 a.m. to midnight Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to midnight Sundays.

Lastly, the motion for a public hearing on the dancing for the annual entertainment licenses to be continued at a date to be determined by the board was approved 2-0.

Other meeting highlights included these updates from Breault on other topics.

On Route 20 flooding, Breault explained DPW Director Tonya Capparello informed him MassDOT had gone to the area and "did a significant amount of work."

"There's still work to be done, and she's closely working with them. The director reported that with the last rain there did not appear to be any flooding. So, there's still work to be done and they're working on it, so hopefully that problem will be addressed," Breault said.

Additionally, updates on the Devonshire/Stony Hill Road intersection overgrowth.

Breault said fences are installed and bushes will be installed.

"(I) appreciate the willingness of the resident to acknowledge that it's a serious issue and just appreciate the work that the DPW director, fire, police chief to get on it," Breault said. "Hopefully that's a solution that the community can agree with as well."

Hampden Selectmen make appointments

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
dzbierski@turley.com

HAMPDEN -- The Board of Selectmen made appointments to the fire department and to the senior center building committee on Nov. 27.

Fire Chief Ed Poulin brought forth Brendan Kennedy to be appointed as a full-time firefighter, rounding out Position 3. He was the best of three candidates.

"We held interviews, he rose to the top, and I'd like to see if the board has any questions for him," Poulin said.

Kennedy, of Palmer, was a member of the Palmer Fire Department, District 1. He also works for Cataldo Ambulance in

Holyoke on a per diem basis, is studying to become a paramedic and is an EMT, which he said is important because a lot of calls are medical.

"The reality of it is being a first responder, and all the training and investment of time and as many resources as I've put into it, has put me in a position where it's what I have to do. It's what I want to do. That's why I'm here in Hampden," Kennedy said.

Kennedy said he looks forward to serving Hampden and insinuated that he is prepared for whatever call volume he experiences.

"Actually, last month, I did 30 calls in Palmer alone. Then, in Holyoke, I weekly per diem. I try to jump on shifts as much as possible, but those shifts are anywhere from 12 to 16 to 24-hour shifts," Kennedy said.

The new Hampden firefighter is also a business owner.

"I have a small business," he said. "I have a tattoo parlor... I started out in Germany, worked over in Dublin, Ireland for a while so it's brought me around, it's been a great resource to be able to go and travel and learn things."

Don Collins, chair of the Hampden Senior Center Building Committee, announced that the nine-member body lost a member due to a resignation and needed a new member to avoid tie votes.

"We had one (recent) crucial vote that came down to a 5-4 decision," Collins said. "We have a candidate who is a member of the community and has attended most of our meetings just to observe as a member of the community. I approached him and asked if he'd be interested in the position, and he enthusiastically said he would."

The senior center building committee nominated Michael Duran to join the group. He couldn't attend due to a death in the family and will return to an upcoming Selectboard meeting to be sworn in.

"It's unique that we're halfway through this project and entering a serious phase of it so there's no learning curve," Collins said.

Board of Selectmen Chair John Flynn was pleased to hear that Duran is joining the committee. Having attended most of the committee meetings, Flynn said Duran is always engaged.

"When they ask for public comment, he's always got something pretty salient to say. The committee has been pretty good about sharing its handouts with any member of the public, and he's always wanted to take one, look it over and come back with a

comment," Flynn said.

On Monday, Town Administrator Bob Markel announced that the Hampden Conservation Commission is seeking new members.

John Cushman has relocated to Lee and resigned, associate member Cindi Connors has resigned and Commissioner Andrew Netherwood is going to lead as a full-time member in the associate position because he has time issues.

"I've also been informed by (co-chairs Judy Brewer) and Ted Zebert that they're going to resign in the spring. So, the issue is recruitment. If nothing happens, we'll be down to two members in the spring," Markel said.

Flynn was sad to hear the news.

"I'll tell you, losing Judy and Ted is a tremendous loss. John really stepped up too," he said.

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A COMMUNITY GALLERY



This is a photo of Ms. Rachel and the Storytime kids coming out of class with their craft at the Wilbraham Public Library. Winter Storytime will now be on Thursdays at 10 a.m. in January. People can sign up Dec. 8 online at our website calendar. Photo courtesy of Heidi Kane, WPL.



Cub Scout Pack 177 helped clean up the yard at the Wilbraham United Church. The scouts use the church for their meetings. Photos courtesy of Mary Ellen.

Life in & WILBRAHAM

Readers are encouraged to send in medium to high resolution photos for this page by e-mail to dzbierski@turley.com or mail to TIMES, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069. Please note that if you send us a photo of the Times in different parts of the world, please include a recognizable landmark in the background. Examples: Eiffel Tower; castle in Spain.



Green Meadows School held its Community Read Aloud on Thursday, Nov. 16. Members of the community go into the classrooms Pre-K through Grade 5 to read a picture book aloud. That picture book is then donated to the classroom! Members of the Hampden Fire Department are pictured here. Photo courtesy of Kate Rumprik, youth services librarian.



The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District would like to thank you for enjoying the STEM books that were donated in honor of Dr. Janice E. V.

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The Class of 1973 for their kindness and generosity. The students are... Photo courtesy of Cheryl Erskine.

Community Bulletin Board

Happy Birthday
Adeline Alves

Love, Your Mom, Dad and brother Owen

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

We will pick one each week to run here free of charge,
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Hampden Police Chief Scott Trombly reads to students at Green Meadows School on Nov. 16. Photo courtesy of Kate Rumpalik, youth services librarian.

HWRSD Asst. Superintendent for Finance, Operations and HR Aaron Osborne read aloud to students at Green Meadows School on Nov. 16. Photo courtesy of Kate Rumpalik, youth services librarian.



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Best of the best showcased during 'The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit'



"Lily Blooms" by Sanchitha Vishwanath, an oil painting, on display during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center won first prize at this year's juried art show hosted by the Scantic River Artisans.



Acrylic Painter Joseph Lanier shows off his lighthouse painting, "Nauset Light Up Close," during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center on Nov. 18. Lanier had three paintings featured at this year's art show.



Residents came out in droves to check out artwork and socialize during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at the Hampden Senior Center on Nov. 18.



Nan Hurlburt, president of the Scantic River Artisans, smiles at the Tangled Vine Jewelry table during the "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center on Nov. 18. The table also included Berkshire Wine Jellies for sale.



Heather Bell of Calluna Jewelry smiles at her jewelry table during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center.



Members of the Holyoke Community College Jazz Ensemble perform a song during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center on Nov. 18.

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN -- Large crowds visited the senior center from 2 – 7 p.m. on Nov. 18 and from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Nov. 19 for the fifth annual "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" art show.

The two-day event, hosted by the Scantic River Artisans, featured the best of the best in oil paintings, graphic/pastel, acrylic and watercolor paintings, photography and mixed media/sculptures, with awards given out to the top three winners in each category.

This year's judges were Barbara Goff, Jim Gillen and Jennifer Zera.

Additionally, attendees enjoyed music from the Holyoke Community College Jazz Ensemble, a raffle for three original art pieces created by Ann Bagge, Nan Hurlburt and Chris Sterritt, with proceeds supporting the art association's year-round programming, and other artists showcasing pottery, jewelry and more.

Hurlburt, president of the Scantic River Artisans, was at her wine-inspired jewelry table, Tangled Vine Jewelry, and showed off Berkshire Jellies, which are jams fused with locally sourced wines.

She was thrilled to see many people enjoy the art-



A display of three original art pieces created by Ann Bagge, Nan Hurlburt and Chris Sterritt up for grabs through a raffle drawing during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center on Nov. 18.

work.

"It has been a really spectacular year," Hurlburt said. "We feel it was a good year for us. It was nice to see people coming out for shows again."

Hurlburt explained a juried art show is when people enter artwork to be juried by three judges in three areas: quality of the workmanship, how the artist interpreted the piece and overall composition.



Graphic Art/Pastel Painting "Miss Maui" by Deb Penna on display during "The Season of Art! Juried Exhibit" at Hampden Senior Center. Penna's painting received an honorary mention award recognition at the art show.

"So, each piece individually is judged, and then the pieces that the judges feel have come up to the top even more, those are secluded and then of those pieces, then their final selections are made per genre," Hurlburt said. "In some instances, if the jurors felt they saw something

Please see **ART**, page 13

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Members of the adult choir sing at a recent Mass at St. Cecilia Church in Wilbraham. The choir will present its annual Festival of Carols at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 10.



Music director Todd Rovelli poses after a recent Mass at St. Cecilia Church in Wilbraham. Rovelli will direct the parish's annual Festival of Carols at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 10.



Photos courtesy of Rebecca Drake

St. Cecilia Parish to present 25th Festival of Carols Dec. 10

WILBRAHAM – Some might say, “Timing is everything.”

So, members of the St. Cecilia Adult Choir are hoping a change of time for the annual Festival of Carols from evening to late afternoon will make it easier to attend the annual Christmas concert, which will be held on Sunday, Dec. 10 at 4 p.m. in the church, located at 42 Main St. in Wilbraham. The performance is free but a free will offering will be accepted.

The time change was first suggested by longtime choir member and alto Luanna Roberts. She noted that many people do not want to go out on Sunday nights.

“I think there will be a larger audience,” she said. “They can go out to a beautiful concert and then go out to dinner or go home and eat dinner.”

Other choir members echoed Roberts’ feelings about the change to 4 p.m.

“It is my hope that the new

earlier hour will open up opportunities for more young families and seniors to enjoy the spirit of Christmas through music,” said soprano Gail Manning, also a longtime member of the adult choir.

Soprano Diane Diehl, whose husband Bruce is a music professor at Amherst College, said, “I’m looking forward to the earlier concert start. I think this time will allow more families, young and old, to attend, perhaps then sharing a nice dinner together afterwards.”

“It can be hard on people who work on Mondays or have young children, or just go to bed earlier, to attend concerts late on Sunday nights,” she said.

She recalled the first time she heard the Christmas concert at St. Cecilia’s.

“Bruce and I were in the audience in 2002,” Diehl said. “We were looking for a parish to join that had a deep and rich music ministry. I still remember turning to Bruce, with tears stream-

ing down my face, saying ‘This is our new home.’ I joined the choir the next fall and Bruce became one of our instrumentalists and arrangers.”

Choir members, along with music director Todd Rovelli, also reflected on the earlier years of the Festival of Carols as they prepare for the concert’s 25th program.

“The Festival of Carols, which began in 1998 as a traditional service of nine lessons and carols, has evolved into a not-to-be-missed concert experience,” said Rovelli.

The program includes a wide range of holiday music, both secular and sacred, from classical to jazz and contemporary popular songs.

“My goal is to put together a varied program, including some cool arrangements of Christmas favorites, congregational singing, and four-hand piano duets,” Rovelli said. “There really is something for everyone. I am as excited now as I was when I first

began to produce the concert because he music never fails to uplift and inspire me, the choir, and the audience.”

This year’s program includes traditional carols, such as “The Little Drummer Boy”; “In the Bleak Midwinter”; “Do You Hear What I Hear”; and “O Holy Night.” There is a jazz arrangement of “Angels We Have Heard on High” and the island groove of “Calypso Deck the Hall.” St. Cecilia cantors Leo Morrissey, Carol Adamski and Jena Fallon will join together for “Child of the Poor/What Child Is This?”

In addition to piano and organ, instrumental accompaniment includes saxophone, clarinet, flute, percussion and trumpet.

While Roberts and Diehl reminisced about previous concerts featuring children and youth members of the parish, “sounding like angels,” they said the best part of the concerts has always been the audience.

“I sing in this choir because

it not only brings me great joy, but I feel it gives joy to the congregation,” Roberts said. “The look on their faces is a wonderful thing... My wish is that they leave feeling blessed and full of joy.”

“By far it is the smiles and thank you’s from the audience that makes me feel so blessed and happy,” said Diehl, “to know that for a few hours we can touch so many hearts.”

“I would like everyone at the concert to leave with smiles on their faces, peace in their hearts, and to share that joy with others this Christmas season,” Diehl added.

The 2023 concert will have special meaning for alto Janet Shea, since she and her husband will be moving to a retirement home in another state next year. “The choir feels like family and the spirit of the holidays blankets everyone there in joy,” she said. “I will miss these events more than anything else we do.”

ART from page 12

in a piece that deserved an honorary mention, then that is also part of the process.”

Donna Villamaino took third prize for her watercolor painting, “Two Gray Barns,” which she submitted at the last minute.

Villamaino has done watercolors since 2016.

“It was taken from a photo, and I absolutely love doing it because it was one that was a little softer,” Villamaino said. “So that was different for me, and I enjoyed it.”

Villamaino said she enjoys watercolor painting as she gets to use her artistic eye during the process.

“So, it enables me to use that. Every time I start a new painting, it’s laying it out and, you know, making sure it’s pleasing. That the eye is pulled into the painting, all those things. I just enjoy that,” Villamaino said.

Joseph Lanier had three acrylic paintings featured in the show, explaining he’s self-taught and got interested in art back in junior high school, crediting his teacher for inspiring his love for art.

Lanier, who later returned to acrylic painting after retirement, was happy to see so many people attend the art show as it highlights the artist community in the Western Massachusetts area.

“It’s good to see the patrons that come out and support the arts. It means a lot to us artists to see that,” Lanier said.

He encouraged aspiring artists to take part in future shows, to believe in themselves and to paint for themselves.

“Enjoy the journey of painting rather than the destination. The finished painting is the destination, but I get more joy out of the journey than the destination, because each time you do a painting, you should learn something. It’s the process that’s educational and invigorating to me,” Lanier said. “And if they want to be good at it to practice, practice, practice.”

Hurlburt had this message for everyone who came and supported this year’s art shows.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you,” Hurlburt said.



Carl and Reid Blanchard from Hampden, picture with the puppets at TWB on Nov. 19.



Photos courtesy of Parks & Rec Director Dan Blanchard Erik Torbeck, of the Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers.

PUPPETS from page 1

done in the community, so it was definitely something new for both Wilbraham and Hampden. We’re going to try to bring some of the programs Wilbraham offers to Hampden as well.”

Blanchard said that creativity is a huge part of what his department hopes to offer residents. He said his department is openly seeking input from residents on what they want to see.

The Parks & Rec Department had a booth at the Hampden Fall Fest last month, where they asked, “What are your Rec-quests,” as they asked people for feedback on what they would like to see for programs going forward.

People can reach out to the department via the newly created website HampdenMA.myrec.com, where they can create an account and get information on upcoming programs.

Moving forward, tickets for programs will be released strictly on the website. Blanchard explained the department “is really trying to get away from paper.”

“It’s really critical that people sign up for the website and have a presence there in order to be involved in our programs,”



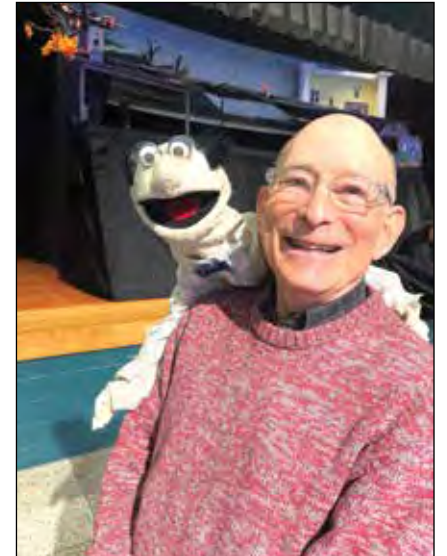
Robin Erlandsen, of the Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers at TWB.

he said.

Following the puppeteers’ performance on Nov. 19, Blanchard was pleased with the feedback, noting that people leaving the show told him they enjoyed it.

“In my eyes, it was a pretty big success,” he said.

At the end of December, the Parks & Rec Department will offer Hampden Night Out at the Springfield Thunderbirds. Anyone from Hampden or Wilbraham, or who has the link, can get discounted tickets to the Thunderbirds hockey game and get discounts on food



Rich Seldow with a puppet at TWB on Nov. 19.

as well.

“We’re just trying to keep the ball rolling and keep ourselves active in communication with the town and the surrounding towns where we’re just providing them with outlets of opportunities to do,” Blanchard said.

SENIORS



What do you see when you look in a mirror?? Hopefully a vibrant and mature version of yourself! Next time look in a mirror, look closely and your skin. It is probably a bit different than what you saw at age 20, or 40. Your skin changes with age. Overall, it becomes thinner, loosens layers of fat beneath the surface and probably isn't as smooth as it once was. Take heart and take care, there are things you can do to make it look and feel better!

According to the National Institute on Aging, dry skin and itching can be a problem, especially as the weather gets colder. Patches of rough and scaly skin are often found on the lower legs, elbows and lower arms. There are many reasons for this. The simplest are:

Not drinking enough liquids

Being in very dry air, particularly with hours spent in heated indoors

Lose sweat and oil glands which is common as we age

Stress, smoking, use of too much soap, antiperspirants and perfumes, spending longer times in hot showers and baths can also make dryness worse. Even

some medications side effects can cause dry skin. Seek the advice of your primary care providers if your skin is causing you to scratch to the point of distraction, or bleeding.

Ways to help dry, itchy skin:

Use over the counter (otc) moisturizers like lotions, creams or ointments every day

Take fewer baths or showers; use milder soap

Avoid long periods of time in hot water; warm water is less drying to your skin

Be careful with bath oils, they can sooth your skin, but create slippery surfaces in your tub or shower area

Consider use of a humidifier in a room where you spend the most time in the winter months

In the future there will be a part 2 of this article that will deal with bruising, wrinkles and skin spots! Until then, protect the skin you're in!!

As always, feel free to send questions/ comments to seniorinfo2021@gmail.com or leave a voicemail at 596-2800 ext. 315.

Linda Tatko Cooper RN for Wilbraham Senior Center Building Committee

Hampden Senior Trips

A bus trip to the Lancaster, PA area is scheduled for **April 23-25, Tuesday - Thursday**. Stay for two nights at the Eden Resort, enjoy two buffet breakfasts, two dinners (one at an Amish family home), the play "Daniel" at Sight 'n' Sound Theater, Kitchen Kettle Village and much more. \$539pp dbl; optional cancellation insurance avail. Full payment deadline March 15.

On Wednesday, **July 10** we Self-Drive to the Log Cabin for a great tribute to *Jimmy Buffet* by "Changes in Latitude". Your choice of either Prime Rib or Twin Lobsters for lunch. Cost is only \$92pp; full payment deadline June 14.

The Newport Playhouse will offer "Nonsense", a side-splitting musical about misadventures at a nunnery. On Monday, **Aug. 26**, a great variety awaits on an all-you-can-eat buffet for lunch, the hilarious play and a cabaret, all for \$125pp. Full payment deadline Aug. 7.

The above is a partial list of '24 possible trips; a minimum of 40 travelers needed for any trip to run. Flyers available at the Hampden Senior Center.

All prices incl taxes and driver's tip; any questions call Bobbi @ 566-8271 or email bobbi_jg2@charter.net.



By Barb Turcotte

I never know when or where I'll meet the person who will be the next Random Act of Kindness story. I actually met Barbara Lyon at a gathering after the funeral of a mutual friend. We'd never met but when we started chatting it was as if we'd know each other forever, and I heard so many things she and her husband Lee had done and do, I just knew I wanted to know more and share their story.

Barbara and Lee have been married for 22 years with 17 of those being Wilbraham residents. As their parents aged and their health declined, they felt it would make more sense for everyone to be under one roof and found a spacious ranch that fit that concept perfectly. Unfortunately, two of the parents passed before the move was completed and the third really loved her home and wanted to stay there so she never lived with them either.

Barbara and Lee were educators; she worked in the both the Westfield and Enfield school systems while Lee was an educator in the Wilbraham schools at the elementary level for 31 years. They were always very involved with their church where he was the director of religious education and she taught high school CCD classes, both for 20 years. Within her classes, she always tried to reinforce the importance of being a good and kind person, trying to show them by example.

Barbara and Lee were never blessed with children of their own, yet they helped so many children in their years as educators. They helped these youngsters with things that far

exceeded their paid responsibilities and instead offered many things that money can't buy, one by simply being there for them.

Barbara shared how one young man had come from a rather rough background not having much support at home and she worked for a few months with him one on one before gaining his trust. When she finally did, she was instrumental in him acquiring his driver's license by paying for his test each time until he passed it. He continues to stay in touch with her knowing he has her as an advocate. What a rewarding feeling for her, but more importantly, the difference she made in this young man's life by giving him self-confidence to become a productive and upstanding member of society.

Generally, I like to allow an hour to visit with someone when writing a story but when we checked the time, we'd chatted for almost three hours! It was wonderful as I learned so many incredible things she and her husband have done and continue to do for others. Barbara is a wonderful neighbor to one of the young moms in the neighborhood by taking care of her little one so mom can just go run errands easily or just have a little mom-time. She and Lee both value and recognize the hard work of others and feel that people give when in both lack and in abundance. One she mentioned recognizing their hard work was her hairdresser, appreciating that this woman not only listens to each customer as if she was a therapist but also stands on her feet all day.

We'd all like to support every charity out there, but generally we have to pick and choose our preferences. Lee and Barbara have chosen three established local organizations to support, Q99.7 which is a Christian radio station, the Springfield Rescue Mission and the Cancer House of Hope.

However, they now have one more they support called the "Laundry Love" ministry. Rich and Cathy Sypek from Westfield established the first local chapter then just last month Barbara and Lee established the second one in Western Mass, which the Sypek's fund through Sypek Law & Insurance. They believe everyone deserves the dignity of clean clothes so on the last Thursday of the month (*exception-holidays*) from 9 - 11 a.m., Barbara and Lee go to Laundromat Express located at 700 Sumner Avenue in Springfield and pay for as many as possible doing laundry while visiting with them.

Though they contribute to the above-mentioned charities, they treasure the joy in finding individuals that they feel would be the most impacted from their giving. What a beautiful way to live life, helping others!

Doing Random Acts of Kindness creates such positivity it almost becomes addictive, but in a good way. Just reach out and help a fellow being, I'm sure you'll feel the gratification not only for yourself but guaranteed the recipient of your kind gesture will as well.

If would like to tell me a story about a Random Act of Kindness please contact me at bdt514@aol.com or 413-788-7514. You don't need one, but if you'd like to have a pre-designed flyer to include with your next gesture, let me know. It's a way to keep the memory alive long after the gesture is done. Who knows, you might see your story in this column, 'Just Cause' you witnessed, did or received something nice being done. See you next month with another Random Act of Kindness!

WPL thanks participants for their pink scarves donations

WILBRAHAM -- The library accepted donations of 80 hand-knit or crocheted pink scarves that breast cancer survivors wore during the Rays of Hope walk on Oct. 22. Thirty were contributed by the knitters at Grace Union Church, and the rest came from individuals in the community.

Others donated hats and a blanket to be given to the D'Amour Center for Cancer Care at Baystate.

"We've been so impressed by the generosity of the community over the years," said Assistant Director Mary Bell.

Baystate has announced that this will be their final collection of pink scarves for the Rays of Hope walk, as their participation has been down, and



Photos courtesy of Mary Bell, assistant library director

many survivors now have multiple scarves. Those interested in donating, however, can make scarves and hats of any color for cancer patients and bring them to

the hospital.

More information on Rays of Hope can be found at http://bayhf.convio.net/site/TR?fr_id=1060&pg=entry.

Ryan Bernsten to lead virtual Wilbraham library presentation Dec. 6

WILBRAHAM -- The Wilbraham Public Library will offer a virtual presentation with author and podcaster, Ryan Bernsten, on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 6 p.m.

Ryan Bernsten traveled through all 50 states interviewing residents on their views

of American democracy and the state of the nation. He will share his experiences searching for the answer, and participants will have the opportunity to ask questions. Please register on the library website, www.wilbrahamlibrary.org to receive the Zoom link.

Meatloaf dinner at Ludlow Lodge of Elks

LUDLOW - In conjunction with the Ron Stephenson Memorial Fund, the Ludlow Lodge of Elks will prepare a delicious meatloaf dinner that will be available for pick-up, drive up, or take out on Thursday, Dec. 7 from 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner includes meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetable and salad. The price of

the meal is \$10 per person or a family meal for four is available for \$35. All proceeds will benefit the Ron Stephenson Memorial Fund and Elks Veterans programs. For tickets or reservations call 413-636-1527 or 413-893-8800. Meals may be picked up at the Lodge of Elks, 69 Chapin St., Ludlow.

SPORTS

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Ray signs letter of intent to play at Seton Hall

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—While most high school seniors are finalizing their college decisions, Minnechaug Regional senior Kylie Ray has known where she'll be attending college since last year.

Ray recently signed her National Letter of Intent to join the women's soccer team at Seton Hall University. A signing ceremony, which was attended by members of Ray's family, teammates, classmates, and coaches, was held at Minnechaug on Nov. 17.

"I committed to Seton Hall University over a year ago and it's very special to finally make it official," said Ray following the ceremony. "Everything about Seton Hall checked my boxes. I love the head coach, the players on the soccer team, and the location."

Seton Hall, which is a Roman Catholic School in South Orange N.J., is a member of the Big East Conference. The head coach of the Pirates women's soccer team



Kylie Ray plays for Minnechaug during the 2023 season.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

is Joshua Osit.

Besides playing for the Lady Falcons varsity team, which is

coached by Nundi Goncalves, during the past four years, Ray has also played soccer for the

FC Stars, which is coached by Shawn McDonough.

"My club coach knows

coach Osit and he introduced me to him," Ray said. "I really like his coaching style a lot and his personality. He's very similar to coach Goncalves."

Coach Osit is looking forward to having Ray join his soccer team next year.

"I'm hopeful that Kylie will have a great career and overall experience here at Seton Hall."

Kylie's parents (Laura + Jay) were very impressed with coach Osit during the recruiting process.

"Kylie made a very good connection with coach Osit when we visited Seton Hall," Jay Ray said. "He invited us down for a weekend and it's just a great fit for her. I'll be trading in my Minnechaug green for Seton Hall blue."

The Pirates finished the 2023 campaign with a 6-7-5 overall record.

The members of this year's Seton Hall women's soccer team are from 13 states and five countries.

Three of their players are from New England. They are

Please see **RAY**, page 16



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Zoey Cardano looks to pass.



Claire Poindexter stops the ball before making a shot.



Minnechaug was represented by Claire Poindexter, Kylie Ray, Lylah Jeanotte, and Zoey Cardano.



Kylie Ray gets around an opponent as she passes mid-field.

Despite holes to fill, Falcons turn in excellent season

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—Following a very successful 2022 season, longtime Minnechaug girls' varsity soccer Nundi Goncalves had a lot of starting positions to fill entering the 2023 campaign.

"We basically only returned four starters from last season," Goncalves said. "Before the start of this season, I told my wife, Ann, that we would probably have a lot of inexperienced players on the field."

Things turned out a lot better than expected for Minnechaug, who finished the season with a 13-5-2 overall record. After losing to Coombs Division West Springfield in a penalty shootout in the Western Mass Class A finals, the Lady Falcons entered the Division 2 state tournament as the ninth seed. They defeated 24th-seeded Bishop Stang, 3-0, at home in the round of 32, before losing, 3-0, at eighth-seeded Hingham in the round of 16.

"We did have a lot of players step up and we had a much better season than I thought we would," Goncalves added.

Please see **FALCONS**, page 17

Four Falcons make all-star game

SPRINGFIELD — Last Monday evening at Pope Francis High School, the Senior

All-Star Games were held. Two games took place, with Class C and D playing in one game and

Class A and B playing in another. The games featured the best senior players from all Western

Mass. High School girls soccer programs.



Jim Dupuis directs traffic as cars line up in the Hampden Senior Center parking lot to pick up their Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinners on Nov. 22.



Submitted photo Diane Marino

(L to R) Caryn Greco, Cathy Albert, Karen Kologi and Gina Mauro smile as they prepare the grab and go meals for the Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinner event at Hampden Senior Center. This year, the senior center had over 200 dinners given out to residents.



Hampden Senior Center Outreach Coordinator Wendy Cowles checks her list after greeting a resident during the Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinner event on Nov. 22.



Submitted photo Diane Marino

Hampden Senior Center Executive Director Becky Moriarty and Outreach Coordinator Wendy Cowles work on the grab and go meals during the Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinner event on Nov. 22. This is the third year the senior center has done this event.



Caryn Graco hands a Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinner bag to a resident during the Thanksgiving Grab and Go Dinner event at Hampden Senior Center on Nov. 22.

SENIORS from page 1

Hampden Senior Center Quilting Group, Bethlehem Church, Polish National Credit Union, GreatHorse, Brodeur Campbell Fence Company, Bluebird Estates and The Reserve. Year include Monson Savings Bank, the Hampden Senior Center Quilting Group, Bethlehem Church, Polish National Credit Union, Great Horse and Brodeur Campbell Fence Company and more.

COA Program Coordinator Wendy Cowles helped prepare the meals alongside volunteers before residents arrived the day before Thanksgiving, explaining the event has been growing year after year and, post-pandemic, they kept it going.

"It's just turned into our community outreach. It's nice to be able to do that. People are so generous to us throughout the year, our volunteers, a lot of the sponsors in the community, so it's just nice to be able to give back," Cowles said.

Cowles was amazed by how many people come for the grab-and-go event, with this year giving out the most meals yet.

"It's amazing, honestly. It just makes you feel good at the end of the day, all of us. It takes a village to do this," Cowles said. "We're just happy to do it."

In addition to preparing the meals, which took place Monday through Wednesday, Cowles enjoys seeing the people arrive to pick up their meals and express their appreciation.

"It's nice to know that people need it, you know, a little bit of love, we're able to give it to them," Cowles said.

Tom Farrow and Jim Dupuis served as the traffic directors during the event, wearing festive Thanksgiving hats while directing cars into the parking lot and moving the lines along.

Farrow and Dupuis also volunteer regularly at the senior center.

"We like helping out; is what it is. Just volunteering; helping out. Becky's (Moriarty) a wonderful director, leader, wonderful person," Farrow said.

"It feels really good, you know, to help people out. A lot of these people don't get out on a regular basis, you know, so something like this where you're getting a meal for them and basically just handing it to them and letting them go, hopefully they'll have a great time on Thanksgiving," Dupuis said.

Farrow and Dupuis were thrilled with the turnout for this year's grab-and-go.

"We saw a lot of smiles, especially when they looked at our turkey hats," Farrow said.

"A lot of them thought they had to pay today because generally when we have these things you have to pay, it's a small amount. A couple of people asked. I said, 'No, they're free today' and they're like 'Free?' and then I explained people from the city, different businesses chip in," Dupuis said. "What everybody had to say is, 'That's really great that the town does that and that multiple businesses contributed to that,' and on top of it all the volunteers at the senior center."

Farrow and Dupuis encouraged the community to stop by the senior center to see what they're all about.

"Come out and see us, we're happy to have you. We need more (people)," Farrow said. "There's a lot more people that could benefit from coming here."

"There's a lot of activities that happen down here on a daily basis they should check out," Dupuis said. "It's a great place, great facility."

Cowles had this message for residents.

"Thank you for supporting us all year. We hope you enjoy your meal, and we just wish everybody a happy and healthy holiday," Cowles said.



The senior has committed to Seton Hall for next year.

RAY from page 15

senior Maille McDermott (Nashua N.H.), freshman Grace Lawler (Wrentham Mass.), and junior Natalie Tavana (Middleton Conn.), who's the 2023 Big East offensive Player of the Year.

Two of the Big East teams in New England are UConn and Providence.

"The one thing that I wanted was to be able to play a college soccer game close to my hometown," said Ray, who lives in Hampden. "I'm really looking forward to playing games at both UConn and Providence."

Ray was recently named as an All-New England Soccer Player for the second consecutive year. She's also an All-State player.

"I had a very good high school soccer career," she said. "I've really grown a lot both as a person and as a soccer player. Coach Goncalves and (assistant) coach (Lori) Poindexter have really taught me a lot about the game. They also prepared me for college."

Goncalves has coached many talented soccer players at Minnechaug during the past 28 years.

"Kylie ranks right up there with some of the best players that I've coached here. I could tell that she would become a very good soccer player when she was a freshman," Goncalves said. "I'm looking forward to following her collegiate soccer career. You can now watch the college soccer games online, which is great. Every coach dream's about having their players go on and play at the next level."

Ray was both a defender and midfielder during her high school career. She'll probably be a defender at the collegiate level.

"She'll most likely be an outside back in college," Goncalves added. "She has very good skills and will be able to run up and down the field. The scorer in any sport gets all the credit. The players who play defense don't get very much credit, but it's a very important position."

Ray enjoys being a defender.

"The defense is the heart of the soccer team in my opinion," Ray said. "You can't win a game if you allow more goals than your opponent."

The Lady Falcons only played eight matches during Ray's freshman season due to the COVID 19 pandemic. They finished with a 4-1-3 record.

"That was a really frustrating season with all of the restrictions," Ray said. "I knew that I had three more years of high school soccer remaining."

The only other freshman listed on the Lady Falcons 2020 varsity roster was Lylah Jeannotte.

"Kylie and I have been best friends since we were freshman," said Jeannotte, who was one of the six seniors on this year's squad. "I'm so proud of everything that she has accomplished during the last four years. It has been a lot of fun being teammates with her and I'm looking forward to going to watch her college games."

The postseason tournament format was changed in 2021.

The Minnechaug girls' varsity soccer team advanced to the round of 16 in the new MIAA state Division 2 tournament that season.

Ray and her teammates put together a very memorable season the following year.

After defeating Coombs Division rival East Longmeadow, 2-1, in the Western Mass. Class A finals, the Lady Falcons won three more games in the state tournament against Pembroke (2-0), Plymouth South (2-0), and Mansfield (2-1). Their season came to an end following a 1-0 loss to Silver Lake in the Division 2 semifinals.

"Last year was definitely our best season since I've been a member of the soccer team," Ray said. "We won the Western Mass. title, and we also made it to the final four. It was very exciting."

The Lady Falcons finished the 2023 season with a 13-5-2 record. They lost to Hingham, 3-0, in the round of 16.

Ray, Jeannotte, and Zoey Cardano were the Lady Falcons senior tri-captains.

"All of us have been waiting for this special day," Cardano said. "I've been playing on the same soccer teams with Kylie for a long time and it has been a lot of fun."

Ray isn't the first member of her family to play a sport at Minnechaug. Her older brother, Koby, who graduated in 2018, was a four-year member of the boys' varsity basketball team, which is coached by Mike Orzech. He scored 859 career points.

Her older sister, Kasi, didn't play a varsity sport at Minnechaug, but she does enjoy riding horses.

"We're a very big sports family," Ray said. "Since I'm the youngest, my parents will probably be coming to my college soccer games. They always push me to do the best that I can."

Ray's uncle, Bunty, is a high school soccer coach, boys' basketball coach, and baseball coach in Bristol Connecticut.



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Wilbraham gets in holiday spirit at Holiday Bazaar



(L to R) Kate Belsky, recording secretary, Deb Gormley, membership director, Liz Crivilli, Ann Marie Gaudette and Judy Cmero, director, of the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors pose for a festive group photo during the Holiday Bazaar at the St. Cecilia Parish Center on Nov. 18.



Judy Cmero, director, and Lee Tyrell, treasurer, of the Friends of the Wilbraham Seniors smile at the bake sale table during the Holiday Bazaar at the St. Cecilia Parish Center on Nov. 18.



Nancy Jez shows off her embroidered creations during the Holiday Bazaar at the St. Cecilia Parish Center on Nov. 18.

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers



Linda Courtney of Wreaths & Crafty Creations smiles at her vendor table of festive crafts during the Holiday Bazaar at St. Cecilia Parish on Nov. 18. Courtney was joined by her sister, Lorraine, for the event.



Leon and Doris Gaumond of D & L Creations display their creative crafts and novelties for sale during the Holiday Bazaar at St. Cecilia Parish on Nov. 18.



Residents browse and check out raffle items during the Holiday Bazaar at St. Cecilia Parish Center on Nov. 18.

The event supported the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM -- Residents came out bright and early on Nov. 18 for the 13th Annual Holiday Bazaar at St. Cecilia Parish.

The event took place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church's parish center with 25 crafters, a bake sale, meat-



The Hill Family, consisting of Megan and her sons Christopher and Jason, takes a family photo with Santa Claus during the Holiday Bazaar at St. Cecilia Parish on Nov. 18.



Sofia holds up her gift from Santa Claus as they take a photo during the Holiday Bazaar at St. Cecilia Parish. The children's gifts were sponsored by the Hampden VFW.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD23P0593EA
Estate of:
Robert L Sweeney
Date of Death: 06/20/2022
CITATION ON PETITION FOR REMOVAL

To all interested persons:
A Petition has been filed by: David R. Sweeney of Indian Orchard, MA requesting that Susan A McCoy of Springfield, MA be removed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate.
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 pro-

ceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before 10:00 a.m. on 12/13/2023.

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 date, action may be taken without further notice to you.

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: November 15, 2023

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
11/30/2023

ball grinders for sale, raffle prizes and more.

Additionally, Santa Claus stopped by to give out gifts and candy canes. The gifts were sponsored by the Hampden VFW.

Ann Marie Gaudette oversees the Holiday Bazaar, explaining the proceeds will go towards building the new senior center. She was also a vendor, selling handmade greeting cards through A.M.G. Creations.

Gaudette was ecstatic at the turnout, pointing out the huge crowds in attendance shortly after the event opened.

"This is fabulous. We were really shocked as they start coming in the door. I mean, they really came in a lot at a time, which is wonderful for my crafters. So, they'll be able to sell their things," Gaudette said. "Being a crafter, I like to do good for them also."

Leon and Doris Gaumond of D & L Creations were selling their homemade clocks created with books and records and homemade ornaments, tissue boxes and storage boxes.

The Gaumonds are members of the Friends and have done this event for many years.

"It's been a really nice day for people to come out and buy some nice things for the holidays and get some good bargains," Doris Gaumond said.

The couple also appreciated the turnout, explaining it shows people love homemade items.

"It supports the vendors and supports people who do this," Doris Gaumond said.

"People like to come out and buy homemade items. That's the big thing. Especially unique items," Leon Gaumond said.

Nancy Jez did the event for the first time, selling embroidered items including table runners, quilts and pillows.

"I'm doing very well. It's very crowded today,

it's really good," Jez said.

Jez appreciates the opportunity to give back while showcasing her creations to residents.

"It's for a good cause. That's why I do it," Jez said. "I'm retired so it also gives me something to do in my spare time. I enjoy sewing. I've been sewing since I've been six years old."

Linda Courtney and her sister, Lorraine, of Wreaths & Crafty Creations make wreaths for many different occasions, ornaments and more.

Courtney said this is the sisters' second year as a vendor.

"It's nice to see the foot traffic because you get to talk with people and the time goes by faster. You get to meet a lot of nice people," Courtney said. "A lot of people have a story, and it's kind of nice to be out with people."

Santa Claus was excited to meet the children and their families, asking what they wanted for Christmas and taking pictures. Also, adults and seniors stopped by to meet Santa and take a photo with him.

"Like I said, children are children of all ages. There's no age where you can't come and sit and tell Santa what you'd like for Christmas," he said. "It's good to see this showing of community."

Santa Claus wants the community to know he's always watching and loves to see residents come together and support each other.

"That's what makes Santa's heart fill with joy, and that's always my Christmas present every year," he said.

Gaudette encourages residents to support the senior center.

"If anybody would like to join the Friends, we could use more help. We'd love for anybody to come. There's no charge to join it," Gaudette said. "We're all like family, which is nice."

NOTICE

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**Hosted by
The Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden**

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