

SENIORS
Metalsmith workshop at library
Page 2

SPORTS
Chaug begins winter season
Page 15



A group photo of Santa Claus with members of the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden during this year's Christmas Tree Lighting at Gazebo Park.

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

Superintendent Provost presents at the Country Club

Speaks on strategic plan, district reconfiguration and regional agreement

By Dalton Zbierski
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Photo courtesy of Charles F. Bennett.

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District Superintendent Dr. John Provost (center) took part in a public forum with Rotary Club host Chris O'Connor (left) and Program Coordinator Peter Salerno (right) Nov. 29 at the Country Club of Wilbraham.

Community comes together for annual Christmas Tree Lighting

The event was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
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WILBRAHAM — Evening rain showers did not stop residents from coming to Gazebo Park on Dec. 3 for the town's Christmas Tree Lighting.

The annual event, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden, which will be

celebrating 50 years in 2024, had attendees enjoying hot chocolate and treats served by LUSO Federal Credit Union, also an event sponsor, watching this year's tree light up with Christmas lights and a visit with Santa Claus, who arrived at Gazebo Park via fire truck with the fire department.

Additionally, attendees dropped off hygiene products including shampoo, liquid soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, combs and more for the Rotary Club to donate to local area organizations to support the homeless population.

The event was made possible

with support from many people and organizations including Heidi and Mark Pafumi, Robert Ward of RH Ward Construction LLC, Country Bank, David and Lisa Gomes for entertainment, the police and fire departments, Home Depot for lights and decorations, RH Ward Construction employee Mike Zwirecki, Jason Dominick, Kayla Slessler and Thai Bui, Sam Boyd for technical assistance and support and the Parks & Recreation Department for lighting assistance.

The Times was the media sponsor for this year's event.

Please see **TREE**, page 4

WILBRAHAM — The Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden hosted Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District Superintendent Dr. John Provost at the Country Club of Wilbraham during its meeting on Nov. 29.

The club promoted Provost's appearance, and the public was invited, as a roomful of Hampden and Wilbraham residents listened to the superintendent speak about the progress of the strategic plan, district reconfiguration possibilities and amendments to the regional agreement.

Provost began by sharing his credentials, noting he has worked in education for almost 30 years, holding the positions of paraprofessional, teacher, supervisor, director of special education and superintendent of schools. He also worked in higher education as a research assistant at UMass-Amherst and was a lecturer at Smith College.

This is Provost's third superintendency; he spent three years as superintendent of North Brookfield

Please see **PROVOST**, page 5

Hampden library is holding Mitten Tree, Pajama Drive and Food Drive

The drive runs through Dec. 20

By Kristin Rivers
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HAMPDEN — The library is giving back this holiday season through its annual Mitten Tree, Pajama Drive and Food Drive.

The fundraising drive supports the Community Survival Center and ends at 5 p.m. on Dec. 20.

Throughout December, residents can donate new mittens,

gloves, scarves and hats to the mitten tree, including new handmade items. The library's knitting group also lends its support by making mittens, hats and scarves for the tree.

For the pajama drive, donations of new child-sized pajamas will be accepted, with people receiving a raffle ticket for each pair to win a LEGO set. The raffle drawing will be held on Dec. 21 at 6 p.m. during the library's Holiday Movie Night.

The food drive, meanwhile, accepts nonperishable food items.

Library Director Ellen Mori-

arty explained the library holds the drive every year and, this year, they are also collecting quarters to buy a case of goat milk soap from Sage Meadow Farm that will also go to the Community Survival Center.

"It's really wonderful to see the generosity of our community over the course of the next couple weeks. The hallway will be filled with all kinds of donations from our very generous patrons, and it just warms my heart to think of how generous our community is," Moriarty said.

Please see **HAMPDEN**, page 23



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

Ivy Harrigan donates a pair of children's pajamas to the Pajama Drive to support the Mitten Tree, Pajama Drive and Food Drive at Hampden Free Public Library.

Teens create copper holiday ornaments in metalsmith workshop



Metalsmith Heather Beck observes Nolan blacken his copper holiday ornament during the Teen Copper Ornament Metalsmith Workshop.



Metalsmith Heather Beck oversees teens working on the next step for their copper holiday ornaments during the Teen Copper Ornament Metalsmith Workshop.



Teens hard at work hammering and drawing on their copper holiday ornaments.



A close-up shot of hammers and nails teens used to create their copper holiday ornaments during the Teen Copper Ornament Metalsmith Workshop.



Tim Euber and Caroline Euber smile for the camera as they work on their copper holiday ornaments during the Teen Copper Ornament Metalsmith Workshop.



A shot of some of the copper holiday ornaments teens made during the Teen Copper Ornament Metalsmith Workshop

By Kristin Rivers
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WILBRAHAM -- Teens designed copper holiday orna-

ments on Nov. 28 during a Teen Copper Ornament Metalsmith Workshop at the library.

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

The workshop, led by Metalsmith Heather Beck, taught teens about the structure of copper, how to create drawings in metal and use letter stamps to create textures and words on the ornaments.

It additionally taught them to use a patina liver of sulfur water station to blacken ornaments and steel wool to remove the top layer of the blackening copper, using brushes to shine them.

Beck travels to libraries throughout the state, including Wilbraham,

to teach the class, having taught it at libraries for nearly eight years.

"My roommate in college actually took a metals class, and I was kind of obsessed with the project that she came up with and I took metals the next semester, fell madly in love with metalsmithing, majored in it," Beck said. "I graduated in 2006 from UMass-Dartmouth and I've been teaching and working ever since."

Aiden Larson created a Saw-themed ornament for his cousin, saying his mom heard about the event and signed him up.

Larson said "it's pretty fun" and it was his first time taking part in the workshop, adding he enjoys the different activities the library offers teens.

"I just enjoy, like, how fun it might be, how exciting, how cha-

otic it might be. That just makes me feel excited and makes me want to go," Larsy said.

Larson said everyone did a good job on their ornaments.

"It's a long process," Larsy said.

Brielle Bailey made a Christmas tree and engraved "2023" on her ornament, enjoying the opportunity to learn how to make things with copper.

"I liked how we could be creative and create whatever we wanted," Bailey said. "You can do anything with your imagination, and you can learn about new things while creating things and taking them home."

Bailey enjoys the teen programs for the opportunity to do things with friends or individually.

Please see **METAL**, page 5

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Hampden Selectmen hold tax classification hearing with Board of Assessors

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
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HAMPDEN -- Principal Assessor Kelly McCormick and Board of Assessors Chair Norm Charest met with the Board of Selectmen on Dec. 4 for a tax classification hearing.

McCormick said the purpose of the hearing was to provide information to the Selectmen regarding the tax rate options available to the town under the property tax classification.

"First, I'd like to give you a quick overview," she said. "All our fiscal year 2024 values for real and personal property have been approved by the Department of Revenue, and the town's valuation has increased by over \$75 million. The new town value is \$877,611,088."

McCormick reported that the value of the average single-family home in Hampden has increased from \$346,000 in fiscal year 2023 to \$377,000 in fiscal year 2024, representing a 9%, or \$31,000, increase.

Although the tax rate has not been approved or set by the Department of Revenue for fiscal year 2024, McCormick anticipates that it will be much lower this year because of the increase in values.

"As you know the fiscal '23 tax rate was \$16.87. For fiscal '24, the current estimate is \$15.66, which is a reduction of \$1.21. That is still subject to change until we get it set by the Department of Revenue," McCormick said.

Board of Selectmen Chair John Flynn replied that the significant decrease in the tax rate doesn't relate to the tax bill because one must also factor the values in.

"Give us the bad news," he said to McCormick.

McCormick replied, "It's actually not such bad news. For the average taxpayer in Hampden who

owns a single-family home, their bill would increase this year by \$66.80, which is a 1.14% increase."

The Selectmen were then given the opportunity to vote on determining the share of the levy for each class of property. The first vote was taken on a single versus split tax rate.

Adopting a minimum residential factor of one would result in a single tax rate and adopting a minimum of less than one would result in a split tax rate, meaning there would be one rate for residential properties and a higher rate for commercial, industrial and personal properties.

"It's been quite a few years since we've had a shift," McCormick said. "This year, because we've had new residential properties and new parcels, we're now at an 86% residential and 14% for all the commercial, industrial and personal property combined."

McCormick said the board could opt for a 125% shift or a 150% shift, the maximum, which would lower the average annual single-family tax bill by \$493.87 but increase the average commercial, industrial and personal property bill by \$6,718.14. For a 125% shift, it would decrease the residential bill by \$248.82 but increase the commercial, industrial and personal property bill by \$3,363.36.

"With a smaller number of commercial, industrial, personal properties, I'm not sure if that'd be a benefit," McCormick said.

Charest agreed and recommended a single rate with no shifting, noting that most of the businesses in town are owned by Hampden residents.

"So, really, they're just getting a different bill a different way because really a lot of the residents own the businesses. Because there's so little of the commercial, industrial, personal property, it's a big shift for them to a little gain on the other side.

I think in the past we've recommended a one, and I don't see a reason to be any different," Charest said.

Ultimately, the Selectmen voted unanimously to adopt a single tax rate and minimum residential factor of one.

The second vote involved the open space discount. The Selectmen took no action on the item because the town currently has no properties classified in open space.

The third vote regarded the residential exemption and shifting the burden from the residential class onto higher priced and non-owner-occupied properties. McCormick said the shift has been adopted in several communities that have a large number of vacation homes.

The Selectmen unanimously voted not to adopt the residential exemption.

The final vote involved the small commercial exemption and shifting the burden from qualifying businesses to other commercial, industrial properties.

"Out of the 40 commercial properties, fewer than 10 may qualify for exemption. For a few properties, one who would directly benefit would be owner of qualifying properties and not the businesses themselves," McCormick said.

The Selectmen unanimously voted not to adopt the small commercial exemption.

On Monday evening, it was made known that there is a vacancy on the Board of Assessors. Charest said that the current board members are experienced and can bring along a new member.

"It's just if they have an interest and if it's important to them," he said. "There's a lot of math involved with it and knowing a little bit about construction maybe or value, but if you came in with none of that, I think you could still learn those skills."

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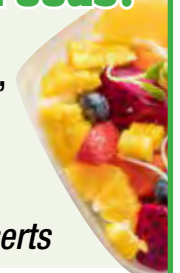
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Residents watch as this year's Christmas tree is lit up during Wilbraham's Christmas Tree Lighting festivities at Gazebo Park.



Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden Vice President Chris O'Connor provides remarks during Wilbraham's Christmas Tree Lighting at Gazebo Park on Dec. 3.



Families line up to meet Santa Claus during Wilbraham's Christmas Tree Lighting festivities at Gazebo Park on Dec. 3.



Santa Claus waves after he arrives at Gazebo Park for Wilbraham's Christmas Tree Lighting festivities. Santa received a special escort from the Wilbraham Fire Department.



Families gather at the LUSO Federal Credit Union tent to grab hot chocolate and festive treats during Wilbraham's Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 3.

TREE from page 1

Rotary Club Vice President Chris O'Connor provided remarks to kick off the event as attendees gathered by the tree.

"It's wonderful to see all the families and friends who have gathered out here for the Annual Tree Lighting," O'Connor said.

O'Connor explained the Rotary Club supports many projects in the community and beyond including the Dictionary Project, teaming up with 24 other Rotary Clubs across the country, Canada and Central America for clean water and sanitation initiatives, opening a children's library at the YWCA's domestic violence women's shelter and providing scholarships to local students.

"Our global network of 1.4 million neighbors, friends (and) leaders volunteer their skills and resources to solve problems and address some of the needs that we have. We're always working on educational and charitable projects to support children, families and needy individuals to better their lives," O'Connor said.

Rotary Club Secretary Brad Sperry and Jim Robinson, a longtime member of the organization, were excited to hold the tree lighting, explaining the event has gone on for many years.

The tree lighting was originally at Crane Park before moving to Gazebo Park.

Robinson and Sperry shared how much the community support to help bring the event to life every year means to the club.

"We were overwhelmed, really, by the reaction," Sperry said.

"It's our livelihood to support the community. We try to help. It's a two-way street helping the less fortunate," Robinson said.

Sperry and Robinson were happy about the turnout despite the weather.

"They appreciate the hard work, you know. The work



Santa Claus asks two children what they want for Christmas during Wilbraham's Christmas Tree Lighting festivities at Gazebo Park.

that we do. It's time-consuming, and they're giving back to us with anything," Robinson said. "A lot of people help."

"This is the town's tree lighting. We host it, we sponsor it, we coordinate it," Sperry said.

Robinson and Sperry said the club is always looking for new members and they meet twice a month, again

expressing gratitude to the community for their support.

Sperry added residents can reach out to him at 413-537-4171 to drop off hygiene products if they weren't able to during the tree lighting.

"There were so many people involved in helping out here and they stepped right up," Sperry said. "It really is the town's tree lighting."

The Rotary Club shared this message.

"Have a good holiday season! Thanks for your support and it's just nice to see (everyone)," Sperry said.

"Thanks for coming out!" Robinson said.

To learn more, visit the Rotary Club's Facebook page.

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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.

PROVOST from page 1

Schools and eight years as superintendent of Northampton Public Schools.

"You may know all that because it's available online, but what you may not know is I was familiar with this community long before coming to (the district) because I grew up in Palmer, and when I was in high school, I learned there was a place where you could make \$5.25 an hour. At the time, minimum wage was \$3.75, so that was pretty good. That organization, just down the road over there, is known as Bennett Turkey Farm," Provost said.

Provost then embarked onto the strategic plan discussion, noting that the process of creating a plan began in 2021 and was finished not long after he arrived in the district in 2022. He said the work was completed by a 34-member steering committee and included input from more than 800 individuals in both communities.

"It's extremely comprehensive in nature and includes 100 action steps and five domains," Provost said.

Five of the steps pertain to district reorganization and include items such as assessing disabilities in the district, determining if the built environments can be used more effectively and efficiently and for work involving building utilization to be guided by a planning committee, including members of the School Committee and Select Board members from each town.

The team formed this past January, consisting of School Committee Chair Michal Boudreau, School Committee Vice Chair Sean Kennedy, Donald Davenport of the Hampden Board of Selectmen and Theresa Goodrich of the Wilbraham Select Board.

The strategic plan was adopted by the School Committee in September 2022.

This past February, Provost said the Planning Committee toured each of the district's schools to better understand the existing challenges.

"Overcrowding is noted at Mile Tree (Elementary School), Stony Hill (School) and Wilbraham Middle School," Provost said. "At all three of these schools, students and staff are working in spaces that are not intended to be classrooms or work areas. These include closets being used as offices, offices being used as classrooms, and at the middle school, the entire library has been converted to classroom and testing space."

Provost then informed the audience that unused space was found at Minnechaug Regional High School, Green

Meadows School and Thornton W. Burgess School, which currently has only 15 transitional students.

During this process, the Planning Committee asked Provost to revise how the district would be reconfigured.

"I started by listing all the possible reconfigurations," he said. "There were more than 100 options on the original list, many of which admittedly were not educationally sound, but we wanted to start by not excluding any possibilities from the outset."

Through a series of meetings, the Planning Committee developed five goals to guide their work, including improving the quality of education in the district, eliminating overcrowding, reducing student transitions, maximizing the use of space available in the schools and exercising fiscal responsibility.

The committee was then able to narrow the list to the 10 most viable reconfiguration possibilities. During March and April, committee members met with various stakeholder groups such as parents, staff and elected officials to evaluate the 10 options, gaining feedback that allowed it to narrow the list to four.

"Let me emphasize, the Planning Committee is still considering all four options. No decisions have been made at this time," Provost said.

All options would send all eighth graders to Minnechaug and all Kindergartners and first graders to Mile Tree. All students in PreK or fifth grade would attend Green Meadows.

Two models would send students in grades two through five to Stony Hill School, one would send students in grades two through three to Stony Hill and another would see Stony Hill School unused.

Two models would send second through fifth-grade students to Soule Road School, one model would send fourth and fifth graders to the school and another would send students in grades one through five to the school.

In two models, TWB would close; in the other two, students in grades six and seven would be educated there. In two models, students in grades six and seven would be educated at WMS, in one model, students in grades one through five would learn there and in another model, the school would close.

Cost estimates for each of the four models have been developed by Aaron Osborne, assistant superintendent of finance, operations and human resources.

To reconfigure, the district would have to amend its regional agreement. Accord-

ing to the Department of Early and Secondary Education, if any modification is made, the district must also make other changes to the regional agreement to comply with changes in law, regulations and policy that have gone into effect since its adoption.

A legal review was completed in mid-September and DESE informed the district of 39 items that must be addressed in an updated regional agreement.

"The first version of that draft (of the regional agreement) is expected to be ready sometime next month," Provost said.

Provost also spoke on the acceleration of transfers from Green Meadows to WMS; currently, 110 of the 116 Hampden middle school students have transferred to WMS, and with almost no students to teach at that grade level, some teachers at Green Meadows left the district for other opportunities.

"Green Meadows staff explained at one of their stakeholders' meetings that due to the small numbers of both students and staff, removing middle school from Green Meadows should be prioritized in the reconfiguration," Provost said.

When asked why all four models involved moving eighth graders to the high school, Provost said that other options had been eliminated because they called for "one grade schools," where a lone grade would inhabit a school building.

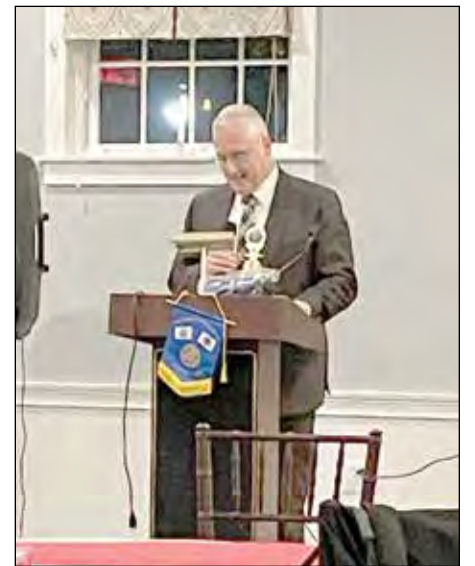
"Since there was already a concern about the number of transitions in the district, the thought of creating a school that had just one grade seemed like a step in the wrong direction," Provost said.

Last month, members of the Planning Committee visited Barnstable High School, Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School and Monomoy Regional High School, all of which include the eighth grade.

"Each one did it a little differently so we at least could look at some ways of doing it, talk to staff, students and parents about what they saw as some of the advantages and disadvantages to different models," Provost said.

Throughout the process, the district has worked closely with DESE because a revised regional agreement must be approved by the DESE commissioner after it is approved by the School Committee and each town's Select Board.

"We don't want to go through the entire pro-



Turley photo by Dalton Zbierski
Superintendent Dr. John Provost, pictured speaking at the Country Club of Wilbraham on Nov. 29.

cess of proposing something that passed through the towns and School Committee only to have the commissioner say, 'This isn't good enough; we need to make changes.' We want to make sure anything that goes forward has the changes he would require so we can get his approval in the end," Provost said.

Provost noted that if all goes according to plan, the 2024-2025 school year will be one of further planning and preparation. The major focus of that school year would be planning the logistics of the move so that everything could be in place for students and staff in September 2025.

At the end of the presentation, Provost made it clear he left nothing out, assuring the audience that he had been transparent.

"There's nothing I know that I haven't put in this talk. There's obviously a lot that I don't know, but now, consider yourselves in the know," he said.

METAL from page 2

"I really enjoy them, and I think that they're pretty cool," Bailey said.

Sadie Dossantos made a copper ornament with Christmas trees, snowflakes and the words "Merry Christmas."

"(I learned) that you could be creative with it and that it was really fun to do," Dossantos said.

Dossantos said the turnout showed the workshop was really popular and the teens enjoyed it.

"It's really fun doing the events here, and I really like it," Dossantos said.

For Alaina Bailey, she enjoyed

the opportunity to be creative and decide what she wanted to make for her ornament. She also learned a lot during the workshop.

"I thought it would be really fun and be useful," Bailey said.

Bailey encourages the community to check out the teen programs.

"They're very fun, entertaining and you can learn a lot from them," Bailey said.

Just like the teens, Beck also stressed the importance of creativity at these workshops, saying the ornaments are a "project heirloom" that will last forever.

"It's really important that libraries are creating spaces for students,

whether it's in my metals workshop or in a cooking workshop or origami or whatever other amazing crafting programs that librarians are putting together to create that space for creativity to flourish," Beck said.

Beck encourages residents to try her future workshops, adding she holds workshops for adults too.

"That's what I like to impart is the joy of play and trying something new and to really applaud the students for signing up for themselves to really take part in this and to try a new thing," Beck said.

To learn more, visit Heather-BeckDesigns.com.

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VIEWPOINTS

Seventy-five years and going strong

I was opening the curtains in my bedroom this morning to find that my Babci's Christmas cactus had burst into bloom!

How exciting for an indoor plant to live for seven plus decades, never mind that the last two have been under my care. It's no secret that I am not an indoor plant aficionado, but I do have my favorites, and this is one of them.

Read on to learn about this beloved plant, straight from the archives.

One horticulture related Christmas memory involves my mother's Christmas cactus. I remember the arching, woody stemmed plant on an iron stand in her bedroom; before that it lived in my Babci's house.

Every year, just in time for the holiday, it would flower, putting on quite a show, beautiful and exotic in hot fuchsia-pink.

Today, only five original branches remain. But if you look closely within the base of the plant, you'll see lots of new growth.

Perhaps if I follow the advice, I have outlined below this heirloom will be blooming in the home of my future grandchildren!

The Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) is an epiphyte, native to South America where it happily grows hanging from trees in the jungle. Inside, it prefers a location with indirect light. Positioning it in front of a north or east facing window is best.

During the summer months many people prefer to move the plant outdoors. I have had good luck placing it under the shade of a tree; too much sun will burn its leaves.

When night temperatures begin to dip into the forties it is time to bring the Christmas cactus indoors. Gradually acclimatize the plant to its winter home by increasing the number of hours spent inside each day.

It is very important that the Christmas cactus be planted in a well-drained growing medi-



um. For this reason, either coarse sand or perlite should be added to any homemade potting soil.

A recipe that combines equal parts of either of these along with garden loam and leaf mold or compost should work out just fine. Christmas cactus like to be somewhat pot bound, but if the plant has been growing in the same pot for several years its soil is likely exhausted of nutrients.

Repot by gently teasing away some of the soil from the plant's roots. Replace it with the new soil mixture. Choose a pot that is a single size bigger than the existing root ball, or reuse the old pot.

Many people hear "cactus" and think that the plant is drought tolerant. With the Christmas cactus this is only partly true.

Although its leaves are succulent and can retain a fair amount of water, it is not a true cactus. As a general rule you should water Christmas cactus when the potting soil is dry to the touch.

Adequate moisture is especially necessary during the spring when it begins its growth and once buds are set. A diluted amount of liquid fertilizer can be added then as well, especially if the soil hasn't been refreshed in many years.

When the plant is done flowering, it will go into a period of rest; almost no water is

necessary for nearly two months. Just prior to bud set it will rest again but this time the soil shouldn't dry out completely.

Two environmental factors are responsible for coaxing a plant into bloom. The first is temperature and the second is light.

If temperatures at night range between 55 and 60 degrees for a six week period, the plant will set buds regardless of day length. If temperatures run higher than that, thirteen hours of uninterrupted darkness will bring about buds.

Simply put the plant to bed each night from 6 p.m.-8a.m. until buds form. My luck has been temperature related; because I leave the plants outside until early fall its temperature requirements are met and I am delighted with blooms come Christmas time.

If your plant sets buds and then drops them prior to full bloom it is likely due to overwatering or exposure. For this reason, keep it away from drafty windows, doorways or radiators.

If you don't already own Christmas cactus, consider purchasing one this holiday. Better yet, start a plant.

Simply get a leaf - no longer than two or three segments, from a friend. They are easy to root in regular potting soil.

Two or three of these per four inch pot is perfect. By year two you should be delighted with some beautiful flowers and maybe the start of your own family tradition.

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.



About the fairness of WEP and GPO

Dear Rusty

I was married to my ex-husband for 30 years. For 14 of those years, I was an unemployed mom and community volunteer. After my sons were grown, I began teaching in California and earned a teacher pension. That teacher pension eliminates all the spousal benefits my husband paid for. How can that be justified? I, like a number of my retired friends, rent out rooms in my house to be able to live on a small teacher's pension and get none of my earned spousal benefits.

Signed: Frustrated Teacher

Dear Frustrated Teacher

I can only say that your frustration is shared by many retirees from public service in States, which do not participate in the federal Social Security program, that is, neither the employee nor the State contribute to the federal Social Security program. There are about 26 states including California, which exempt at least some of their employees and themselves from paying Social Security payroll taxes, but those states are obligated to provide retirement benefits robust enough to offset the loss of Social Security benefits, which will occur later in life after the employee retires.

As controversial as these laws - the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset are, they have withstood legal challenges since they were enacted four decades ago. Because you have a "non-covered" pension from your state employment, WEP reduces any personal Social Security retirement benefit you may have earned elsewhere and, to your specific point, the GPO has eliminated the spousal benefit you might

otherwise have been entitled to from your ex-husband.

Like you, many who are affected believe this to be unfair, but Congress has steadfastly failed to enact legislation to repeal these provisions or even to soften their impact. The likely reason is that Congress has evaluated the fundamental premise of the provisions and concluded they appropriately equalize the way benefits are paid to all Social Security beneficiaries.

It might help to think of it this way: in normal circumstances, if one spouse has a personally earned Social Security retirement benefit, which is more than 50% of their partner's Full Retirement Age amount, no spousal benefit is paid (the spouse benefit is offset by the recipient's own SS retirement benefit).

The GPO, the provision which affects SS spousal and survivor benefits) applies that same logic for a spouse who has a "non-covered" pension earned outside of the Social Security program, their spousal benefit is offset

by the amount of the person's own "non-covered" retirement pension. The one difference is that the GPO offset is actually a bit smaller (2/3rds of the non-covered pension vs. 100% offset for a spouse with their own SS retirement benefit).

Both WEP, which reduces SS retirement benefits and the GPO, which reduces spousal or survivor benefits, are consequences of working for a State which has chosen to not participate in the federal Social Security program, and those states are obligated to inform their employees of those consequences. I know that doesn't make your situation any less frustrating, but Congress "justifies" these provisions as being necessary to equalize how benefits are paid to all Social Security beneficiaries.

There are about 2 million beneficiaries affected by WEP and over 700,000 affected by the GPO, most of whom share your displeasure.

Please see **SOCIAL SECURITY**, page 20



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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.

Events & announcements schedule

Richard R. Green Insurance Agency toy and supply drive

Initiative is in its 18th year

HAMPDEN -- Richard R. Green Insurance Agency, Inc. is doing its 18th annual collection of toys for children and supplies for veterans' gift bags. This year, the toys will benefit the I Found Light Foundation located in Springfield. The gifts for veterans will be brought to the VA Center in Leeds.

For our veterans, the wish list for women includes clothing sizes 6-18, shoes sizes 9-12 and feminine products. For men: new socks and undergarments. Also, especially important for both men and women: gift cards to local stores, deodorant, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream, shampoo, conditioner, soap, lotion, body wash and blankets.

The insurance agency will be collecting new, unwrapped toys and veterans' gifts through Dec. 13 and is collecting at the Hampden office located at 32 Somers Road and Monson office located at 128 Main St. This year, the insurance agency will match the first \$500 in collected items FOR BOTH THE CHILDREN AND THE VETS. Please call 566-0028 for more information.

Christmas Tree Festival on display Dec. 10

WILBRAHAM -- The Christmas Tree Festival at the Old Meeting House Museum at 450 Main St. will be held for a second Sunday on Dec. 10 from 2-4 p.m., and 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. On both dates there will be a total of nine Christmas trees on display decorated by various local organizations. The Gift Shop will be open.

For more information about

the Old Meeting House Open House, email president@wilbrahamatheneum.org.

Wilbraham Community Chorus to present winter concerts Dec. 3 and 9

WILBRAHAM -- The Wilbraham Community Chorus will present the second of its annual winter concerts on Saturday, Dec. 9 at First Church of Christ, Longmeadow at 2 p.m.

The 70-voice Chorus is accompanied by both Marcia Jackson and Todd Rovelli and conducted by Raymond Drury. Drury has selected an intriguing and varied program consisting of choral masterpieces from yesterday and today, folk songs, pop tunes, Broadway classics and seasonal numbers from composers such as Vivaldi, Forrester, Gjeilo, Bernon, Blake, Berlin and others.

Of particular interest will be performances by Jackson and Rovelli of 4-hand piano music, and a small chamber choir selected from the larger group. The concert is open to the public and admission is free. A free-will offering will be taken. The concert is partially supported by The Longmeadow and Wilbraham Arts Councils.

Wilbraham Garden Club to meet Dec. 7

WILBRAHAM -- The December meeting of the Wilbraham Garden Club will be held on Thursday, Dec. 7 at noon, at St. Cecilia's Parish Center on Main Street in Wilbraham. A special Christmas luncheon will be served.

Once again, we will be entertained by the wit and wisdom of floral designer, Matt Flatow, from Flowers, Flowers on 758 Sumner Ave., Springfield. Matt will demonstrate and discuss his floral arranging techniques. He will be designing some beautiful arrangements for the holidays that will be raffled at the end of the presentation.

We will be extending invitations to area garden clubs, so come early, get

a good seat, sit back and enjoy this wonderful program.

Federated Community Church to hold Winterfest Holiday Craft Fair Dec. 9

HAMPDEN -- The Federated Community Church, located at 590 Main Street, is holding a Winterfest Holiday Craft Fair on Saturday, Dec. 9, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Breakfast with Santa will occur from 8-10 a.m.

St. Cecilia Women's Club's to meet Dec. 12

WILBRAHAM -- The St. Cecilia Women's Club's December meeting takes place on Tuesday, Dec. 12 beginning with Liturgy at 5:30 p.m. followed by a catered dinner accompanied by season music from one of our favorite performers, Freddie Marion! Reservations are required. For more information, please contact co-chair Dottie Paluck at (413) 596.8000. We are asking if you could please bring a sweater or sweatshirt to this meeting for children or adults in need. We greatly appreciate it!

Wilbraham Women's Club to meet Dec. 14

WILBRAHAM -- The December meeting of the Wilbraham Women's Club will take place on Thursday, Dec. 14 at St. Cecilia's Parish Center on Main Street in Wilbraham. The Social Hour will begin at 11:30 a.m. and the luncheon is at noon. At this meeting there will be many delicious "hot" dishes and desserts.

Join us for this fun-filled Christmas meeting. We will play some holiday themed games for prizes, and laughs.

Rick's Place celebrates selection as a Big Y Community Bag Program Beneficiary

WILBRAHAM -- Rick's Place has been selected as a beneficiary of the Big Y Community Bag Program for the month of December.

The Big Y Community Bag Program, which launched in January 2019, is a reusable bag program that facilitates community support with the goal to make a difference in the communities where shoppers live and work.

Rick's Place was selected as the December beneficiary of the program by store leadership at the Big Y located at 2035 Boston Road, Wilbraham, MA 01095. Rick's Place will receive a \$1 donation every time the \$2.50 reusable Community Bag is purchased at this location during December.

"We are delighted that Rick's Place has been chosen as the beneficiary for the month of December. We know how difficult the holiday season can be for families who are grieving a loss. This Big Y Community Bag Program helps us help others," said Therese Ross, executive director of Rick's Place. "A supportive community is pivotal for families and Big Y's dedication to sharing and caring truly makes an impact."

Rick's Place is a nonprofit based in Wilbraham, MA. Since 2007, Rick's Place has been providing free grief support to youth and their families in western MA and northern CT. Learn more about Rick's Place by visiting www.ricksplacema.org.

For more information on the Big Y Community Bag Program, visit bigy.2givelocal.com.

Heritage 'Pops' Orchestra Christmas Party Dinner and Dance

LUDLOW -- Celebrate the Christmas season with the big band sounds of the 19-piece Heritage "Pops" Orchestra with vocals by Ann Maggs on Dec. 15 at the Polish American Citizens Club on 355 East St.

The event includes hors d'oeuvres from 5:30-6:30 p.m., a grand buffet dinner by John Diotalevi at 6:30 p.m. and dessert. Music and dancing will occur from 7-10 p.m.

Advance tickets cost \$25 per person and are available at the PACC bar or by calling Bob at 413-636-7588 or calling Paul at 413-800-4164.

There will be a giant wood dance floor, a cash bar and a 50/50 raffle.

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 shanties.

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!

St. Cecilia Parish to present 25th Festival of Carols Dec. 10 at 4 p.m.

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.

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."



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OBITUARIES

Death Notices

Bonita M. Clavette, 42
 Died Nov. 29, 2023
 Services Dec. 7, 2023
 Lombard Funeral Home

Carol Ann (Doyle) Walker, 83
 Died Nov. 28, 2023
 Wilbraham Funeral Home

Bonita M. Clavette

1981-2023

MONSON — Bonita M. Clavette, 42, passed away suddenly, Nov. 29, 2023. She was born in Hammond, IN on July 30, 1981, to Thad and Valerie (VanAlen) Clavette. She was a high school graduate and a graduate of Northern Illinois University. Bonita has lived in Monson for over 10 years and has been a shift supervisor for the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services.



She enjoyed gardening, growing many types of flowers and vegetables. Bonita also had a musical talent playing the both the banjo and cello. She also had a love of animals and will be deeply missed by her cats, Squirrel, Putty Tat and Puffer Fish.

Bonnie leaves her loving parents, Thad and Valerie Clavette of Hampden; her sisters, Betsy Clavette and her husband, Justin Verville of Wilbraham, Brenda Clavette and her husband, Dan Matthews of Stafford Springs, CT.; her nieces, Casper Clavette, Willow Verville, Everly Verville and

nephew, Dylan Verville; her maternal grandmother, Bonita Green and maternal grandfather, Richard VanAlen; many aunts and uncles, Eric and Colleen VanAlen, Stacey and Karl Kindt, George and Georgina Mayer, Michael and Julie Clavette, Paul and Kathy Clavette, Jill Werderman, Patrick Clavette, Jim and Barb Clavette, John and Shari Clavette. Bonita was predeceased by her paternal grandparents Delbert and Jean Clavette and her uncle Dan Clavette.

Visiting hours will be held Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023, from noon to 2 p.m. at Lombard Funeral Home 3 Bridge Street, Monson, MA. In lieu of flowers please consider a memorial donation to Here Today Adopted Tomorrow Animal Sanctuary 180 Sturbridge Rd. Brimfield, MA 01010. For online condolences please visit www.lombardfuneralhome.com.

Carol A. Walker

June 4, 1940 – Nov. 28, 2023

WILBRAHAM — Carol Ann (Doyle) Walker, 83, died peacefully, after a battle with Alzheimer's, on Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2023, at home. Born in Hartford, CT to the late Parker and Beulah Doyle, she was raised in Middletown, CT through a young age, until they moved to Waterford, CT. Carol's father, Parker, was an Executive with the Boy Scouts for CT.

In her youth, Carol enjoyed assisting her father, due to his poor health, at his office and Boy Scout Camp. She attended school through her junior year in Waterford, CT. After her father's death in Waterford, CT, she and her mother Beulah moved to Sixteen Acres, a suburb of Springfield, MA, and Carol graduated from Classical High School in Springfield, MA.

A talented seamstress, Carol graduated from Tailor School and retired from Marshall's after 33 enjoyable years of service. On Jan. 12, 1985, Carol married Ken at First Congregational Church on Chicopee Street in Chicopee, and they resided in Wilbraham. Carol was a very caring and giving person and enjoyed vol-

unteering for many years at the USO at Westover Air Reserve Base.

In addition to her parents, Carol was also predeceased by her son Jonathon Everett. Carol will be sadly missed by her beloved husband of 38 years Kenneth Walker, her daughter Suzanne M. Croteau and her husband George, daughter in law Tammy L. Everett, grandchildren; Alyson Rose and Madyson Ann Everett and three stepchildren; Thomas K. Walker and his wife Cheryl, John A. Walker and his wife Denise and Brenda DeWilde and her husband Richard.

A private burial will take place in Hillcrest Park Cemetery, Springfield, MA. Wilbraham Funeral Home, 2551 Boston Road, Wilbraham, MA 01095 has been entrusted with the arrangements. Anyone wishing to send a condolence to Ken may mail it, in care of, Wilbraham Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to Holyoke VNA and Hospice Life Care, 575 Beech St., Holyoke, MA 01040, or call 413-534-5691 to make donations.

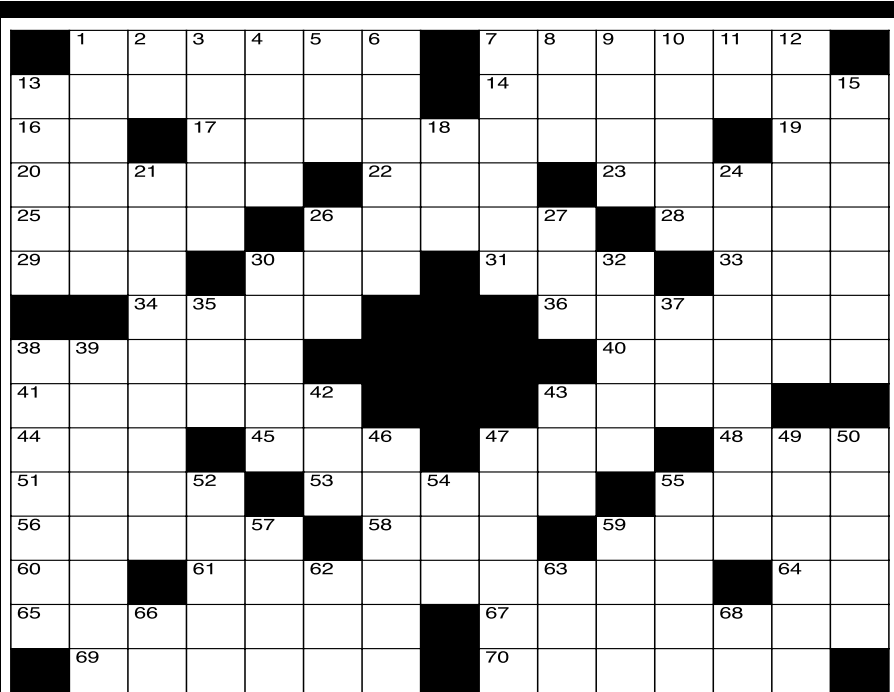
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| CLUES ACROSS | 44. A "place" to avoid | CLUES DOWN | yellow flower |
| 1. Spiritual leaders | 45. Cigarette (slang) | 1. Animal disease | 35. Fourteen |
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| 19. Government lawyer | 56. Yankees' slugger Judge | 7. In a way, sank | 46. Violent seizure of property |
| 20. Back parts | 58. Dickens character | 8. Post-birth brain damage (abbr.) | 47. One who supports the Pope |
| 22. 8th month (abbr.) | 59. More wise | 9. Lay about | 49. Anxiety |
| 23. Very willing | 60. Flash memory card | 10. Intestinal | 50. Body fluid |
| 25. ___ ex machina | 61. Exposing human vice or folly to ridicule | 11. The opposite of yes | 52. Phony person |
| 26. Satisfies | 64. Atomic #79 | 12. Caused to be loved | 54. Title of respect |
| 28. Quebec river | 65. Longtime Braves pitcher Julio | 13. Messianic in Islamic eschatology | 55. Chilean city |
| 29. A doctrine | 67. Humor | 15. Showing since conviction | 57. City in central Japan |
| 30. Popular pickup truck | 69. Shawl | 18. Not safe | 59. Silk garment |
| 31. Dekagram | 70. Preliminary assessment of patients | 21. The number above the line in a fraction | 62. Draw from |
| 33. Naturally occurring solid material | | 24. Yard invader | 63. Automobile |
| 34. Company officer | | 26. Pouch | 66. Man |
| 36. Villains | | 27. Swedish krona | 68. Legal bigwig (abbr.) |
| 38. Cricket frogs | | 30. Start anew | |
| 40. German founder of psychology | | 32. While white or | |
| 41. Endured | | | |
| 43. A female domestic | | | |

Christmas Tree Festival continues Dec. 10

WILBRAHAM – With a focus on youngsters in the community, Mrs. Claus will make a visit to the Old Meeting House Museum Christmas Tree Festival on Sunday, Dec. 10 from 3 – 5 p.m. She will read Christmas stories with the children but folks of all ages are welcome.

There will be nine Christmas trees on display decorated by various local organizations. The event is being coordinated by Atheneum Society Trustee Marriane Wagner. 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 Geaghan Photography, St. Cecilia's Women's Club, Wilbraham Art League, Wilbraham Children's Museum, Wilbraham Flowers, Wilbraham Garden Club, and Wilbraham United Church.

The program also features cookies and milk, crafts and a scavenger hunt for the children. Examples of clues from last year's Scavenger Hunt 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?"

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



(Atheneum Society photo)

Clipboard from last year's kids Scavenger Hunt features clues.

and hats with the name "Wilbraham" on it," said Karen Geaghan, the Atheneum vice president.

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

WFOL membership is a gift that keeps on giving

WILBRAHAM — The Wilbraham Friends of the Library would like to remind residents that a membership to the WFOL is a gift that gives back all year long.

Memberships start at \$15, fit everyone and don't end up in a closet waiting to be re-gifted. The funds collected from membership fees go to the Wilbraham Public Library to support programs for all ages, the popular museum pass program, furnishings and other needed library equipment. What does the gift recipient get from a

membership? Knowing that you care enough about the library they use to help support it. When they check out a museum pass, they will think of you. When they attend a musical or educational program, they will think of you. Maybe they will even invite you to join them! To purchase a gift membership, drop by the library or email friends@wilbrahamlibrary.org. A card notifying the recipient of the gift will be sent to them.

For more information, contact the Friends at friends@wilbrahamlibrary.org.

Wilbraham Select Board discusses flag request and policies

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM -- The Select Board discussed on Dec. 4 a recent flag request and flag policies for the town.

The flag request came from a person representing the Pro-Life Legal Defense Fund, or PLLDF, who also asked the town clerk for information about flag-raising policies in Wilbraham.

Town Administrator Nick Breault explained he searched through the town clerk, by-laws and Veterans Service Director for any established flag-raising policies.

None were found.

"I can tell you that I don't recall a time in my tenure here that we received a request to raise a third-party flag, but that doesn't mean that we wouldn't raise 100%," Breault said.

This led to questions on how to proceed, with Breault providing his thoughts.

"The board could vote to deny it based on past practice and then see what happens and, you know, vote to have the policy in. But, the research and the things that I've seen indicate that if the board denies the request, it could be challenged," Breault said. "And then if the board is not prepared or has more questions and does not take action on policy tonight, then any third-party request that comes in between now and when the board does vote for one, then those would also have to be honored probably."

Select Board member Sue Bunnell was disappointed to hear a policy was not in place as the issue came up earlier on in her tenure, looking for clarification on what the motion should look like.

"I guess what I'm looking for is you mentioned that we can establish a length date of the flying and the duration, if I understood it correctly, for acceptance of the request, which might protect the town to some extent from being in violation," Bunnell said.

The motion to allow the Select Board to approve the flag request of flying the PLLDF flag for 24 hours on one specific day between now and the end of 2023 passed 2-0.

Following this, the board reviewed a flag policy for consideration for the town.

Chairman Theresa Goodrich reiterated what the



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

Select Board Chairman Theresa Goodrich and Vice Chairman Sue Bunnell reflect on how to pursue the discussion on a recent flag request and flag policies during the Dec. 4 Select Board meeting.

flag policy will be.

"Our flag policy is going to stipulate that we fly the flag of the United States of America, the official P.O.W. flag, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts flag or the Town of Wilbraham flag," Goodrich said.

Bunnell asked Breault about military flags.

"When you mention military flags on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Purple Heart Day, are those the individual branches of service flags?" Bunnell said.

Breault confirmed yes, with Goodrich clarifying they are designated United States military flags, wanting to make sure those are, also, stipulated in the flag policy.

Bunnell also mentioned other town department flags for the record.

"There's also flags of the Wilbraham Police Department, the Wilbraham Fire Department or any other flag emblematic of a town department would be allowed at the request of the Select Board or the Town Administrator or its designee as an expression of the town's official sentiments," Bunnell said.

The motion to adopt the flag policy as amended was approved 2-0.

Exit 7 Players presents
Irving Berlin's
White Christmas
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Select Board discusses ideas on guidelines for Citizens Open Forum

Boards and Commissions vacancies also presented

By Kristin Rivers
Staff Writer
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM -- The Select Board discussed ideas on Dec. 4 regarding guidelines for consideration for a Citizens Open Forum.

Selectman Michael Squindo was absent this week.

After Chairman Theresa Goodrich explained how this item needed to be addressed after the last few meetings, Town Administrator Nick Breault presented suggestions, including putting language on the meeting agendas on what citizens open forum is, considering how long residents could speak and any policy relative to measures to how the board should respond to questions, whether through the town administrator or through other town departments that might need to be included.

Goodrich recalled how measures were discussed before and the board agreed "that we would not have to answer or supply an answer that evening to any kind of questions posed by citizens during the open forum, and I think we kind of stuck with that."

Goodrich felt it was important for citizens to share their thoughts with the board.

"I think that, you know, we certainly want to encourage folks to speak up and talk to us and obviously we are of them and by them and for them," Goodrich said. "That's our whole purpose here; to help everyone in town enjoy our town as much as possible."

Goodrich said the idea of having a written format of the policy available during meetings would be helpful.

"I know for myself, I would find that helpful if I was coming to a meeting to ask a

question and didn't know town government format, policies, you know, all the rules that go along with it. I think that would be helpful," Goodrich said.

Select Board member Sue Bunnell confirmed the standard of practice for citizens open forum for a long time is basically "a one-way providing information and thoughts and concerns to the board."

Bunnell added the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District School Committee has their format on open forum printed in their agendas.

"I think it's a consideration that we should take a look at. Just a couple of lines that say 'citizens' remarks will be entertained during open forum and the general parameters are 'x'," Bunnell said.

Breault said he can return to the board with some guidelines.

Another highlight of the meeting was Boards and Commissions with vacancies.

Currently, there is one opening on the Finance Committee with two interested candidates, two member and one associate member openings on the Conservation Committee, two openings on the Personnel Advisory Board, one opening on the Economic Development Committee and one opening on the Community Preservation Committee, with an appointment to be completed through the Historical Commission.

Concerning the Finance Committee, the board will talk with Finance Committee Chair Kevin Hanks for his feedback and offer the candidates the option to interview with them.

Goodrich encouraged residents to contact the Select Board's office if they have questions about joining a board or commission.

"Everyone in the office is happy to give information on the committees and what they do and it's a good way to get your feet wet and step into town government so to speak," Goodrich said.

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Surviving your first holiday without a loved one

SPRINGFIELD -- There may be no "joy" in the holidays when facing them alone for the first time after the death of a loved one.

Looking at an empty chair at the table can bring a rush of emotions and it doesn't matter how long it has been, whether this year or in the past, since a family member or friend died. Grief never takes a holiday, noted Dr. Stuart Anfang, vice chair for Clinical Services, Psychiatry at Baystate Health.

"It's only natural to experience a range of emotions such as sadness, loneliness, and a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness as you navigate the hustle and bustle of the holidays alone. Those feelings of grief, especially during Thanksgiving and the December holidays, often become more intense for those preparing to spend these joyous occasions for the first time without a spouse, child or other beloved family member or friend by their side," said Anfang.

But, you don't have to suffer alone.

"Recognize that you are not

alone, and that mixed or sad feelings during the holidays are not uncommon. Do not suffer in silence and watch for the tendency to isolate or withdraw from others. Denying or bottling up your feelings--or self-medicating with alcohol or drugs---are worrisome signs," said Anfang.

Anticipation of the holidays can cause more stress than the holidays themselves.

Anfang noted that planning for the approaching holidays is the first step in developing your coping strategy, and there is no wrong or right way to deal with the holidays. Begin by making decisions that are comfortable for you and your family. Use your awareness that things are different to help you plan what makes sense. Holiday preparations, traditions, and family time may all feel less than normal. It is also important to remember that your emotions and energy level are strongly connected. Good self-care routines are important as you prepare and deal with the holiday season. Get plenty of rest and pay attention to healthy eating. Use alcohol in moderation. Plan self-care activities that will

feed your mind, body and spirit. Give yourself permission to take care of yourself.

Additional tips from the American Psychological Association for making a plan that works for you include:

- Are there some traditions you would rather not do because they are just too painful to relive? Why not introduce something new into your routine?

- Do you want to celebrate in the same place and be reminded of your loved one? Maybe you might want to consider traveling this season instead of staying home.

- Who are the people you want to be around? Enjoy their company when they invite you for a visit.

- Can you handle an all-day celebration? Be flexible with yourself and let the host know you may only stay for a short while.

The APA also reminds those grieving that once the holiday finally arrives, "just like any other day it only lasts 24 hours."

Anfang stressed that it's okay and not a sign of weakness to

ask for help, whether it's help preparing some holiday treats, decorating the home, shopping, or just a shoulder to lean on.

"If you wish, you can find a way of formally remembering your loved one who is not physically present with you. For example, serving their favorite dessert and reflecting on the joy that it brought to your loved one in the past. It is stressful to experience the holiday without your loved one, but you can find ways to honor and include them," he said.

Together you can share a holiday that is different but still meaningful and hopeful. As a family, you can add a memory ritual into your holiday by including a special activity such as looking at old photo albums, making or displaying a special holiday decoration with significant ties to the deceased.

Many people also find solace in giving as it is the "season of giving," noted Anfang.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons, "it's amazing how in times of grief, sometimes the biggest comfort is to give to others,"

whether it's a physical present or doing something nice for others in need or who are also hurting.

Many people volunteer during the holidays, such as serving meals at a local shelter or distributing toys to needy children.

Still, for some the holidays may offer a reprieve from sad feelings and you may find yourself caught up in the moment as you experience the joy of family and friends around you.

"If you are noticing more significant symptoms causing impairment at work, school or home---problems with sleep, low energy, dramatic change in appetite or weight, inability to concentrate, frequent crying, easy irritability, thoughts of hurting yourself or wanting to die---that may be time to seek some professional evaluation. A good place to start can be your primary care provider or a trusted clergy. Bottom line---help is available and do not suffer in silence," said Anfang.

Baystate Health launches \$70M Healthier Tomorrows: The Campaign for Baystate Health

Historic fundraising effort aims to bolster region's health

SPRINGFIELD -- Baystate Health has announced an historic \$70 million comprehensive fundraising effort. Healthier Tomorrows: The Campaign for Baystate Health is the largest fundraising goal in Baystate Health's history and focuses on raising money for three critical areas: capital needs, program support, and endowment development.

"This campaign changes the face of healthcare in our region," said Baystate Health President and CEO Dr. Mark Keroack. "Our vision is to improve the health of everyone in our community by recruiting top-tier medical providers, building cutting-edge spaces for them to practice in, enhancing our services to meet the changing needs of the people we serve, and ensuring Baystate Health is here to stay for the long haul."

The \$70 million goal funds several initiatives including a state-of-the-art surgical facility at Baystate Medical; renovated Family Medicine practice and teaching space at Baystate Franklin; a Center for Nursing Excellence at Baystate Medical; and support for the endowment, with the purpose of increasing fiscal resilience for the organization.

Community members and Baystate Health providers and staff gathered on the evening of September 18 to celebrate the campaign's launch. The event, originally planned to be held in the Bolduc Family Courtyard at Baystate Medical Center, was moved inside due to inclement weather. The courtyard was made possible by a recent gift from the Bolduc Family and their Hope for Youth & Families Foundation.

Lead donors have already contributed generously toward the \$70 million goal. In addition to funds for the Bolduc Family Courtyard, campaign support includes a grant from the Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation in support of the new Operating and Interventional Procedural Rooms at Baystate Medical Center, two named endowed clinical chairs, program contributions toward the Family Medicine Residency Program and mobile health, and support of annual giving and events which reach systemwide.

"Baystate Health has been providing high-quality, compassionate healthcare to this community since the 1880s," said Dr. Andrew Arstenstein, chief physician executive and chief academic officer at Baystate Health, and president at Baystate Medical Practices. "It is our sincere hope that our promise to advance care and enhance lives will continue for the next century and beyond. This campaign helps us secure our mission well into the future."

The \$70 million goal of Healthier Tomorrows:



Submitted photos

Left to right: Sheldrick Streete, Chief Operating Officer, Baystate Medical Center and Vice President, Hospital Operations, Baystate Health; Dr. Andrew Arstenstein, Chief Physician Executive and Chief Academic Officer, Baystate Health; Joanne Miller, Chief Nurse Executive, Baystate Health and Chief Nursing Officer, Baystate Medical Center; Dr. Mark Keroack, President and CEO, Baystate Health; Samuel Skura, President, Baystate Medical Center and Senior Vice President of Hospital Operations, Baystate Health; Scott Berg, Vice President of Philanthropy, Baystate Health, Executive Director, Baystate Health Foundation

The Campaign for Baystate Health is comprehensive, meaning all gifts made during the campaign count toward the historic goal.

"With roots dating to the founding of Springfield Hospital in 1883, Baystate has benefitted over the years from the generosity of community donors who have helped our organization to grow into the largest healthcare system in western Massachusetts," said Scott Berg, vice president of philanthropy for Baystate Health and executive director of Baystate Health Foundation.

"Today, every contribution, no matter the size and no matter what the donor chooses to direct it toward, matters in this campaign as Baystate continues its essential role in the health of the people in our communities. Everyone has a stake in Healthier Tomorrows. We are truly all in this together."

Baystate Health's last campaign concluded in 2012. The \$23 million raised supported building the shell of the Hospital of the Future wing, including space for a new emergency department and the Davis Family Heart & Vascular Center. Healthier Tomorrows: The Campaign for Baystate Health will help complete much of the shell space as intended to accommodate new technology and meet the growing needs of the community.

MiraVista introduces 'Top Talent Tuesdays'

HOLYOKE -- MiraVista Behavioral Health Center, a leading community-based provider committed to providing exceptional inpatient behavioral health care and outpatient substance use treatment is announcing the organization's launch of "Top Talent Tuesdays," an exclusive recruitment initiative designed to connect with top-tier nursing and mental health professionals.

"Top Talent Tuesdays" is a groundbreaking recruitment event hosted every Tuesday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at MiraVista's 1233 Main St. location now through Jan. 30.

The event offers a platform for talented Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Mental Health Technicians to engage directly with hiring managers, facilitating on-the-spot interviews and potentially receiving job offers right away. Attendees will have the chance to engage in meaningful conversations with our experienced hiring managers. This unique interaction will allow candidates to learn more about MiraVista and discuss how their skills align with the organization's mission.

According to Alicia Morel, talent acquisition specialist for MiraVista Behavioral Health Center, "Direct interaction with hospital leadership, touring our state-of-the-art facility and meeting face-to-face with our experienced hiring managers provides candidates with an unprecedented day-long, weekly opportunity to showcase skills, experience, and a passion for mental health care. We are committed to expediting the hiring process. Exceptional candidates may receive on-the-spot job offers, securing their place in our dedicated team of healthcare professionals."

Morel added that with MiraVista's planned expansion of new adult inpatient beds, "The timing career-wise is right for candidates to enhance their professional development and be rewarded for their dedication. Sign on bonuses of \$35,000 for RNs and \$10,000 for LPNs will be available for the right top talent. This is a tangible expression of our commitment to investing in our team."

Joel Doolin, Executive Vice President of MiraVista and its sister facility, TaraVista added, "At MiraVista Behavioral Health Center, we believe that our success is driven by the exceptional individuals who make up our team. Top Talent Tuesdays is our way of connecting with the best and brightest in the healthcare industry and inviting them to be a part of our mission to provide unparalleled patient care. With a focus on innovation and excellence, MiraVista is committed to attracting and retaining top healthcare professionals to ensure best possible patient outcomes."

To participate in Top Talent Tuesdays, interested candidates can RSVP by visiting <https://jobs.miravistabhc.care/miravista-0216-miravistagiringevent?icid=internal:career-site:miravistagiringevent:mlpnmht:popup:0216>.

Don't miss this opportunity to take the next step in your career journey. Candidates are encouraged to bring multiple copies of their resume.

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A COMMUNITY GALLERY



Pictured here is the Hampden Garden Club, which does an amazing job decorating the Hampden library every year for the holidays. Pictured left to right standing are Elizabeth Frederick, Mary Ellen Bickley and Judy Brewer, and pictured left to right in front are Paula Messier, Lil Fedora, Judie Gagnon and Nancy Salerno. Photo courtesy of Ellen Moriarty, director of the Hampden Free Public Library.

Life in & **WILBRAHAM-HAMPDEN**

Readers are encouraged to send in medium to high resolution photos for this page by e-mail to dzbiwski@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.



Children's Librarian Rachel Smythe took this photo at her monthly Craft & Play program on Saturday, Nov. 25. Photo courtesy of the Wilbraham Public Library.



Members of the Saint Cecilia Women's Club decorated a tree at The Old Meeting House in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals. Each year in October the church hosts a blessing of the animals. (L to R) Pat Tessier, Fran Perguidi, Madelyn Sheehan, Mary Manning, Marguerite Basile and Tess Girhiny. Photo courtesy of Sue Agnew.



Christian and Cody Erskine organized a food drive with Soule Road School and donated 291 pounds of food. Thank you so much for your generosity! Photo courtesy of...

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Community Bulletin Board

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Grammy, and Grampy.*



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Ice carving on a rainy day . . .

Ice carver Joey Almeida starts work (left) on carving an angel out of a 300-pound block of ice at the Old Meeting House Museum Christmas Tree Festival on a rainy day Dec. 3. Eventually (right) he needed an umbrella to keep it dry.
Photo courtesy of Charles F. Bennett.

Historical Christmas Sprit . . .

Marty Lyman, trustee of the Wilbraham Atheneum Society's Old Meeting House Museum, stands with the Christmas Tree decorated by Karen Geaghan Photography at the museum's Christmas Tree Festival Dec. 3. The festival continues on Sunday, Dec. 10 at 2 p.m. Photo courtesy of Charles F. Bennett.



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PET OF THE MONTH

Meet Molly!

Molly was a rescue over a year ago from a local shelter. She's about 5 and a border collie mix. She like to dig holes, play with her toys and her BFF Buster, my brother's dog, and loves to be petted and rubbed! She chases our chickens and has a comfy spot on our bed to sleep. A great companion for my disabled Vet husband. (Susan Blake of Ludlow sent us their beloved Molly.)



PET PAGE

READERS!

Send in your pet picture for our "Pet of the Month" and receive a free weekend get-away or spa package for your pet courtesy of Porter Road Pet Care. Email your photos to: jwalker@turley.com. Please include your name and your pet's name.



5 Holiday Plants to Keep Away from Your Pets

- **Poinsettias:** mildly toxic to dogs and cats, can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- **Lilies:** every part of this plant is toxic to pets, especially cats, including pollen and flowers.
- **Holly:** the spiky-edged leaves and holly berries can cause varied symptoms when eaten, from drooling and vomiting to excessive head shaking when large amounts have been ingested.
- **Mistletoe:** when consumed in large quantities, the chemicals found in mistletoe berries can result in incoordination, abnormal heart rate, and low blood pressure.
- **Amaryllis:** can negatively impact blood pressure and lead to seizures.
- **Christmas trees:** pine needles can cause irritation in the mouth and upset stomach if chewed, because of the oils that will be released.



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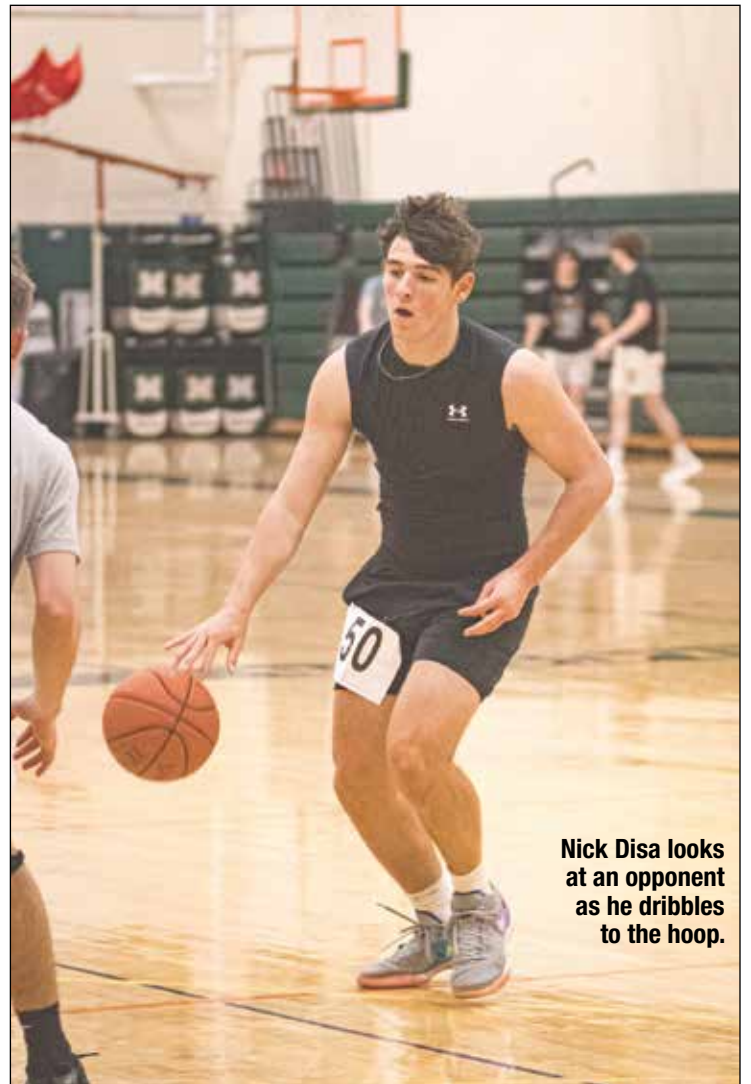
Caden Duke goes for an underhand layup.



Jomar Feliciano fakes and then drives to the hoop.



DJ Johnson dribbles around the perimeter



Nick Disa looks at an opponent as he dribbles to the hoop.



Ian Angelica gets ready to shoot.

Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande

Falcons looking for tourney berth this season

WILBRAHAM – After missing out on the state tournament against by just one win, the Minnechaug Regional High School boys basketball team is looking to up its game this season. The Falcons faced Bristol

Eastern in a scrimmage this week as it gets ready for the season opener. Minnechaug opens up its regular season Wednesday, Dec. 13 against Wahconah Regional at 7 p.m.

Girls seeks another state tournament appearance

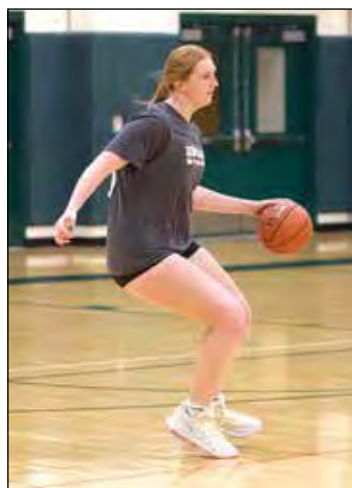


Mia Bolduc dribbles lows during drills

Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande

WILBRAHAM – The Minnechaug Regional High School girls basketball were part of both the Western Mass and Division 2 state tournaments last season, though they never ex-

perienced any competition from out of the region. After falling in the semifinals of Western Mass. against Amherst last year, the Falcons faced Holyoke in the opening round of the state tour-



Lylah Jeannotte works during practice last Wednesday.



Ainsley Holden watches her dribble during a drill last week.



The players trying out for Minnechaug girls basketball watch a demonstration from their coach.

ament, falling in that matchup. This year, Minnechaug hopes a year of experience will move them forward as they open up

the regular season. The Falcons are next set to play on Tuesday, Dec. 12 against Northampton at 7 p.m.

PVSOA presents year-end awards

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent



Turley photos by David Henry
www.sweetdogphotos.com

Kylie Ray was the Large Schools MVP.

LUDLOW—The Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association (PVSOA), which was formed in 1946, held its annual banquet at the Polish American Citizens Club in Ludlow on Dec. 1.

Please see **AWARDS**, page 17

Minnechaug 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Wahconah	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Home	Agawam	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Away	Taonic	7 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Away	Tantasqua	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29	Home	West Springfield	12 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Home	Northampton	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 8	Home	Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Home	Commerce	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Chicopee Comp.	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 18	Away	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Home	Westfield	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Pittsfield	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Away	Commerce	7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1	Home	Chicopee Comp.	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Home	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 9	Away	Pope Francis	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 13	Away	Amherst	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Friday, Dec. 8	Home	Monson	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 12	Home	Northampton	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Away	Holyoke	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Away	Central	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	Tantasqua	12:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29	Away	Agawam	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 2	Home	Belchertown	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Away	SICS	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Home	East Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Home	Pittsfield	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 18	Home	Chicopee Comp.	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Away	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Away	Pittsfield	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31	Home	Westfield	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 5	Away	Chicopee Comp.	7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Home	Chicopee	6:30 p.m.

Ice Hockey

Thursday, Dec. 7	Home	Longmeadow	8:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 9	Home	West Springfield	2:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 16	Home	Belchertown	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Away	Ludlow	8:40 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Away	Auburn	2 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 30	Away	Westborough	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Away	East Longmeadow	8:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6	Home	Marlborough	12 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Away	West Springfield	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 13	Home	Algonquin	12 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Amherst	6 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 18	Away	Longmeadow	8:40 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 20	Home	Wachusett	4 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 25	Home	Westfield	8:40 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 27	Away	Greenfield	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3	Away	Northbridge	4 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Home	Taonic	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 10	Home	East Longmeadow	8 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 13	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.

Boys and Girls Swimming

Friday, Dec. 8	Away	Northampton	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 9	Away	Deerfield Academy	2 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 12	Home	West Springfield	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Home	Holyoke	4 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29	Away	Amherst	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 2	Home	Central	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Home	Chicopee Comp.	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Away	Agawam	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Home	East Longmeadow	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	Belchertown	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Away	Westfield	5 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Home	Longmeadow	6 p.m.

Wrestling

Saturday, Dec. 9	Away	Bears Invitational	9 a.m.
Thursday, Dec. 14	Away	West Springfield	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Away	Simsbury	9:30 a.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Away	Agawam	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Away	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Central	7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 20	Home	Concord-Carlisle	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Putnam	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	Home	Ludlow	7 p.m.

T-Birds grab OT win over Penguins

WILKES-BARRE, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds (11-8-2-0) got the last laugh in a wild, back-and-forth game, 4-3, over the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins (10-8-3-0) in overtime on Saturday night inside Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza.

As was the case in each of the first two games in the season series, the first period came and went with goaltenders remaining perfect. On this night, Vadim Zherenko and Joel Blomqvist turned in all the stops, with Zherenko the busier of the two with nine first-period stops, while Blomqvist stopped six. Zherenko had the two best saves of the frame in two minutes, denying both Sam Houde and Jagger Joshua with the leg pad on in-tight scoring chances.

Each team also had two power plays in the first period, but the man-advantage units could not generate much offense, and the 0-0 deadlock remained into the intermission.

After quiet opening periods, the power plays came to life in the second, and it took the Penguins just 1:14 to get on the board first. Sam Houde got his stick on a loose puck in the slot and bounced a fluttering shot toward Zherenko's cage, getting a helpful tip from Peter Abbondato for the game's opening goal, which doubled as Abbondato's first as a Penguin.

Despite the deficit, the T-Birds rallied on a chance of their own after two penalties in a 1:16 span were called against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton. With the 5-on-3 advantage, rookie Zach Bolduc took advantage, rifling home a one-time slapper through Blomqvist, tying the game at 7:49. Calle Rosen and Hugh McGing earned the helpers on Bolduc's fourth goal of the season.

After the equalizer, both teams had more power play chances to take leads, but the penalty killing strengthened, along with continued good work from Zherenko and Blomqvist.

The game took on a truly chaotic feel in the third period. After the T-Birds failed to convert on two separate power play chances, it was the fourth line that got Springfield its first lead. Mathias Laferriere deked around a fallen defender and took a shot from the left circle that plopped down behind Blomqvist. Drew Callin was in the right place to tap it across the line for his third of the season, giving the T-Birds the 2-1 lead at 4:31.

Unfortunately for the T-Birds, it was just the beginning of a see-saw 20-minute period, as the Penguins equalized during a delayed penalty just 1:05 later, as Valtteri Puustinen rammed home a loose puck after Zherenko and the defense made two sprawling saves earlier in the sequence.

With the game back even, 2-2, the T-Birds faced their toughest challenge of the night when Hunter Skinner was ejected and given a match penalty for a hit to the head of Penguins' forward Sam Houde. Wilkes-Barre/Scranton had three minutes of uninterrupted power play time, but could not solve the PK nor Zherenko.

After surviving the major, the T-Birds then got their power play chances as the Penguins took a too-many-men minor, as well as a tripping call to Jack St. Ivany. With time waning on the club's 8th power play of the evening, the T-Birds finally broke through as Matthew Peca snapped a wrist shot through Blomqvist at 16:38 to make it a 3-2 game.

Once again, though, the Penguins had a rebuttal, as Abbondato scooted into the slot, took a pass from Will Butcher, and slipped it through Zherenko's legs to tie the game, 3-3, with just 1:39 to go in regulation, setting the stage for the second overtime in as many nights between the division foes.

Overtime was a riveting, back-and-forth affair with both goaltenders answering the bell on multiple occasions. Adam Gaudette had a breakaway with the game on his stick, only to see Blomqvist turn him away, while Ty Smith had perhaps the Penguins' best chance with the T-Birds' defense out of sorts, but Zherenko had the denial.

At last, with less than a half minute left separating the teams from a shootout, Laferriere circled the offensive zone to the right side before slipping a puck near the crease. Matt Kessel had moved up on the play and put himself in the perfect position to get a piece of it and beat Blomqvist, giving Springfield the 4-3 overtime triumph. It was just Kessel's second goal of the season, and it gave the T-Birds their first home win since Oct. 29.

The T-Birds get some time to rest before a rare single-game weekend next Saturday as they welcome the Bridgeport Islanders to the Mass-Mutual Center for the annual Teddy Bear Toss.

Railers fall in physical battle

WORCESTER – The Railers played a spirited game here Friday night but it had a dispiriting result, another loss on home ice.

Worcester was beaten by the Norfolk Admirals, 5-2, with the last opposing goal coming into an empty net. The Railers had a 40-29 edge in shots on goal and had leads of 1-0 and 2-1 they could not protect as the Admirals scored four goals in the third period.

The difference was special teams. Norfolk converted three of nine power plays while Worcester was 0 for 6.

Referee Austin O'Rourke was unusually busy, calling 21 minor penalties. Some of them were double minors for roughing that, a few years ago, would have been fighting majors.

Nowadays, if a player has a pulse after engaging in a bout, the penalty is roughing, not fighting.

There was plenty of roughing. Seven of those penalties were called and Railers' rookies Artyom Kulakov and Riley Piercey were both involved in some serious jousting.

To no avail, as it turned out.

Worcester got goals from Ashton Calder and Keegan Howdeshell. Norfolk was paced by Carson Golder's two goals. Simon Kubicek, Danny Katic and Mathieu Roy had the other Admirals goals.

Calder's goal was his 10th of the season. It came in Worcester's 19th game. The last Railer to score 10 goals in the first 20 games of the season was Jordan Smotherman, who did it at the beginning of the 2021-22 campaign.

The Railers were constantly thwarted by Norfolk goaltender Thomas Milic, who had 38

saves. A lot of them were good ones. Worcester had reams of good chances that wound up with shots on net, but only two shots in net.

Calder put Worcester ahead at 11:44 of the first period by beating Milic with a quick wrist shot from between the circles. The Railers were still ahead, 1-0, with the game more than half over but the Admirals changed that with their first power play goal.

Kubicek got it at 15:06 of the second period. He drilled a low slap shot through traffic and past goalie Tristan Lennox for his third of the season.

Worcester responded well, though, and retook the lead before the period was over. Howdeshell got his second of the year at 17:38 via a snap shot from about 20 feet out. He was set up by a fine pass from the right wing by Joey Cipollone.

Norfolk regained the momentum early in the third period, however, with two goals just 52 seconds apart, both by Golder, both on the power play. The first one was a rebound at 3:54, the second a tap in from just outside the crease at 4:42.

The first power play came with Jake Pivonka in the penalty box for high sticking. The second happened when Worcester was called for two roughings, Norfolk one, on the same altercation.

Piercey was involved at the beginning then Connor Welsh wound up getting a minor as well.

The Railers had power play chances after that and eventually pulled Lennox but could not beat Milic. In those final 20 minutes, Worcester had 14 shots on net and no goals. Norfolk had eight shots and four goals.

Wilbraham Middle School Honor Roll

The following students received Honor Roll status for the Term 1 marking period at Wilbraham Middle School. Distinguished Honors is all A's in all subjects; Honors is all A's and/or B's in all subjects.

Distinguished Honors – Grade 8

Peter Appleby, Rama Awkal, Bryce Bekel, Gavin Clark, Irelyn Coffey, Joseph Comes, Anna Dennis, Caroline Euber, Nora Fletcher, Emmy Foisy, Devon Fortenberry, Mario Garcia, Corrine Gates, Nicholas Gencarelli, Eliza Gloss, Danika Haygood, Daniel Heinold, Keira Horne, Kelsey Jennings, Genevieve Johnson, Brooke Johnson, Tia Kayrouz, Emma King, Ashlyn Landry, Peyton Lee, Savannah Lee, Dylan Lesure, Adriana Lopez, Yman Ly, Hunter Markham, Dominic Mascaro, Olivia Maserati, Isadora Maurice, Clare McMahon, Frank Morin, Tess Morrow, Dylan Niznik, Liam O'Brien, Sophia O'Connor, Youngsun Oh, Patrick O'Toole, Owen Petit, Kendall Placzek, Brenan Rost, Jillian Rumpalik, Ryan Semanie, Riley Senecal, Lillian Sergienko, Alysandra Serju, Sofia Shores, Audriana Stasio, Joseph Sullivan, William Szpakowski, Anna Taylor, Jillian True, James Wadzinski, Joseph Woytowicz

Honors – Grade 8

Owen Antaya, Addison Baldyga, Cole Balog, Aidan Bean, Seth Bee-

be, Henry Bernard, Ellianna Brodeur, Nicholas Capen, Jayden Carattini, Annalectia Carlo, Maximus Cayo, Nathaniel David, Colin Devanski, John Dickson, Ryan Donovan, Maxwell Fergus, Lucas Ferreira, Chase Folli, Gianna Fusco, Jackson Gagner, Olivia Gates, Mya Gierlich, Brennan Glesman, Hayden Gloss, Madison Guertin, Parker Hoey, Demetrius Holmes, Mason Howard, Isabella Jimah, Tony Kayrouz, David Kim, Emma Lacoste, Rose Langone, Edwin Long, Cameron Lowe, Jacob Luttrell, Ryan Mackie, Elijah Mathias, Daizy McDonald, Elie McRobbie, Mylie Mittler, Juliana Mooney,

Adrienne Moretz, Ryan Mullen, Lucy Nolan, Nicholas Nordstrom, Gianna Nowicki, Geoffrey Ohemeng, Tristan Oliveira,

Kirk Pagoaga, Demetri Papanikou, Madeline Pastore, Ella Peabody, Alexis Powers, Lucas Raiche, Domenic Roach, Caden Russ, Hussein Saleh, Jonathan Santiago, Hailey Sclipou, Ava Secor, Zachary Senecal, Arianna Soler, Gabriel Solowinski, Michael Sullivan, Keyan Tiderman, Ormandy Velazquez, Juliana Washington, Alexander Wawrzonek, Calvin Webster, Adelle Williams, Olivia Zheng

Distinguished Honors – Grade 7

Teddy Acquah, Alison Aucoin, Sireen Awkal, Margaret Babbs, Thomas Brogle, Benjamin Butts, Jason Cao, Nolan Carney,

Charlotte Castellano, Juliana Coffey, Nolan Costello, Nathan Demetri, Sadie Dos Santos, Liam Doyle, Grace Falzone,

Dina Ferrentino, Charlotte Fitzgerald, Eva Gagliarducci, Aviana Gomez, Nicole Grabowski, Teaghan Haluch, Elle Hersman, Lauren Hoar, Tyler Hoskinson, Jackson Hulseberg, Alexandra Jaslanek, Aurora Kirton, Jillian Lajeunesse, Willis Lam, Christie Lang, Daniel Lareau, Johanna Lewis, Ashley Manning, Michael Murray, Ethan Nunlist, Karina Ocampo, Ava O'Connor, Owen Piquette, Megan Pronovost, Logan Richard, Sierra Rocha, Colton Rogers, Jackson Rust, Quintis Savienovong, Kayla Smith, Ian Stratton, Nathaniel Tirabassi, Maya Usher

Honors – Grade 7

Goudy Abuata, Zakaria Ardolino, Evan Barcome, Nicholas Bretta, Aurora Broussard, Nolan Burke, Xavier Catellier, Emilia Connors, Kailah Cox, Ryan Criscitelli, Oliver Cunha, Madelyn D'Amore, Brynn DeForest, Amelia DePace, Ellen DiNino, Kayla Dooley, Owen Downey, Keeley Doyle, Jack Ford, Kathryn Fulton, Evan Gilmartin, Mason Gomez, Olivia Goodrow, Judah Gunn, Benjamin Harpin, Max Harrigan, Kate Holt, Ted Holt, Isabel Horne, Ethan Johnson, Elizabeth Jourdain, Kaitlyn Labadorf, Aubrey Lafield, Sophie Laliberte, Lucas Lawrence, Griffin Litchfield, Owen Lucarelle, Jackson McCullough, Madelyn McNabb, Joy Mendonca, Noah Metzger, Gavin

Meunier, Logan Middleton, Louis Morin, Adalyn Murray, Cohen Nelson, Evan Niemi, Hannah Palmer, Jack Parastatidis, Olivia Parent, Cameron Powers, Mason Quintana, Camden Rodrigues, Annelise Roszko, Liam Shattuck, Adrielle Sheridan, Joseph Simmons, Abigail Stachowicz, Kyle Stebbins, William Stromwall, Peyton Sullivan, Liam Sutherland, Stepan Syrota, Mason Waskiewicz, Caitlyn Wetherbe, Shannon Wietecha, Jacob Zanetti

Distinguished Honors – Grade 6

Cassandra Alvarez, Aubrey Appleby, Dylan Bean, Reid Blanchard, Madelyn Boudreau, Brenna Bryan, Rose Christensen, Maggie Comeau, Cooper Donovan, Emery Dyer, Maycie Eldridge, Timothy Euber, Peyton Eusebio, Cody Feit, Nora Fontaine, Gavin Hisgen, Jasper Hulseberg, McKinley Jaeger, Nicholas Kennedy, Andrew Kmelius, Chloe Lawless, Madeline Lee, Jackson Long, Adeline Look, Julia Magee, Siobhan Mahoney, Sophia Mazzaferro, Vivian McIntyre, Zahra Minhaj, Joseph Montano, Maeghan Morris, Andrew Mullen, Emily Mumper, Mia Newman, Desmond O'Brien, Sunmi Oh, Mya Pafumi, Abigail Patterson, Logan Pryor, William Roberts, Christopher Romano, Grace Romano, Greta Rust, Jake Salemi, Natalia Savlick, Jamie Sclipou, Louise Shaughnessey, Madelyn Smith, Lucas Tassinari, Cole Thomas,

Marcus Tiderman, Samuel Webster, Ashley Wetherbe, Carter Witruk, Brenna Woytowicz, Kylie Zamorski

Honors – Grade 6

Mason Axiotis, Alaina Bailey, Brielle Bailey, Kegan Bailey, Emily Baldyga, Molly Baroni, Lillian Blair, Dante Bontempi, Madeline Britt, Abigail Britton, Abigail Cadieux, Thomas Campbell, Jack Christofori, Zoey Coburn, Rilynn Conway, Emma Cristino, Jacob DeGray, Isabella DePace, Leo Deziel, Joseph Dickson, Julian Dugan-Costa, Jeremiah Fraser, Isabella Fusco, Martin Garcia, Kyleene George, Alaina Giombetti, Wyatt Hall, Oliver Hart, Giselle Henrichon-Arena, Kareem Ibrahim, Yvette Jimah, Jacob Johnson, Rieland Kearney, Bree Kiernan, Delaney Kinsman, Aiden Kirsch, Allie LaCoste, Jack Lapalm, Jason Lemus, Emma Lewis, Micah Long, Therese Mathias, Nevaeh Mercolino, Ryan Minns, Vivian Mirisis, Kristina Monteiro, Sebastian Morales-Garcia, Ryan Nichols, Grayson Nowakowski, Shana Oguku, Michelle Ohemeng, Kennady Raymond, Declan Reidy, Kaylie Ritchotte, David Roberts, Garrett Roberts, Alexandra Robles-Blasenak, Jaxson Rogers, Wyatt Sackrider, Epi Sanchez, Oskar Schmidt, Hayden Senft, Jackson Shanley, Katelyn Sheehan, Jessica Soukup, Bennett Steele, Clara Steele, Maxwell Sylvester, Liam Szymczyk, Alanna Thoun, Dylan Verville, Jaxson Walker, Caitlin Weichselbaumer, Owen Wright, Emily Zheng

AWARDS from page 15

One of the highlights of the evening was the buffet catered by Tony & Penny's Restaurant.

There was also an awards ceremony.

Ludlow junior Thomas Wadas is the 2023 George E. Russell Award (Boys Large School MVP award) winner.

"Thomas falls in line with all our former Ludlow players who have won the George Russell Award," said longtime Ludlow boys soccer coach Greg Kolodziej, who won his 200th career game this fall. "He's a very talented player who has worked extremely hard to get what he has achieved."

Wadas is the 24th Ludlow boys' soccer player to receive the Russell award, which is named in memory of the former Ludlow High School principal, since 1965. The first Ludlow boys' soccer player to win the prestigious award was Bob Duarte.

Wadas, who's a three-year varsity starter, didn't attend this year's PVSOA banquet because the Ludlow High School soccer banquet was held on the same night.

In his first three seasons as a member of the varsity soccer team, Wadas, who's a midfielder, scored 15 goals and 15 assists. He also helped the Lions (18-2-2) capture the Western Mass. Class A title for the third consecutive year. The Lions also competed in the Division 1 state tournament.

Pathfinder Tech senior Riley Sanderson received the Henry O. Holly/Dave Grieve (Boys Small School MVP award).

"I received an email from my soccer coach (David Wilson) telling me that I had been selected for the MVP award for small schools," said Sanderson, who led his team with 11 assists this past fall. "We weren't able to win any banners this year, but this is a nice way to cap off my high school soccer career."

Sanderson, who missed his junior season due to an injury, also scored 11 goals as a senior.

"Riley has an outstanding right foot, and he could've taken a lot more shots on goal for us, but he would always pass the ball to one of his teammates," Wilson said. "He always plays the game very



The Falcons, as a team, received the Large Schools Sportsmanship Award.

hard and I'm very proud of him."

Junior Evan Costa led the Pioneers with 34 goals.

The Pioneers, who qualified for the vocational, Western Mass. Class C. and Division 5 state tournaments, finished the 2023 campaign with a 15-5 overall record.

The only other boys' soccer player from Pathfinder Tech to receive the MVP award was Josh Sikorski in 2010.

Minnechaug senior Kylie Ray received the John Kalloch Award (Girls Large School MVP award).

"This is a very special award, especially from the referee's association," said Ray, who'll be playing college soccer at Seton Hall University next year. "I was teammates with Reighan Demers, who received this award last year. It's nice to join her and the other previous MVP award winners from Minnechaug."

Ray is the seventh Minnechaug girls' soccer player coached by Nundi Goncalves to be selected for the MVP award since 2005.

"I've been fortunate to coach many talented soccer players at Minnechaug," Goncalves said. "Kylie is one of them."

The Lady Falcons, who qualified for the Western Mass. and state tournaments, finished their season with a 13-5-2 overall record.

Pope Francis senior Isabella Mead-

ows, who didn't attend the banquet, received the Robert C. Smith/ Stan Bernatowicz Award (Girls Small School MVP award).

Minnechaug Regional also received the Bob McIntyre Sportsmanship Award (Girls Large School).

The Lady Falcons have only received two yellow cards during the past two seasons.

"It always feels good when your teams gets recognized for doing something well," said Minnechaug sophomore Ava Kearney. "Coach Goncalves never wants us to get a yellow card during the game."

Palmer High School received the John Kurty/Benny Santos Sportsmanship Award (Girls Small School)

"It feels very nice to receive the sportsmanship award from the referees," said Palmer senior Grace Burke. "We're always very respectful to the referees and to our opponents."

Burke attended the banquet with teammates Nyela Dupre, Vaness Baer, and Jordan Bigda, who are also members of the senior class.

It was the first time that the Palmer girls' soccer team has received the sportsmanship award.

"I was very surprised when I was informed that my soccer team has been selected for the sportsmanship award," said



Peter Manolakis, of Wilbraham, was given the Paul Bogan Service Award from the PVSOA.

Palmer head coach Celso Sandoval. "We only had a couple of yellow cards this season and I'm very happy that the soccer officials recognized us. We had a great season and I'm looking forward to doing it all over again next year."

The Lady Panthers (12-8-1) defeated Granby, 3-1, in the Western Mass. Class D finals.

The Pathfinder boys' squad, which co-ops with Palmer, received the Carl Erickson Sportsmanship Award (Boys Small School).

The Bruno Rumpal Sportsmanship Award (Boys Large School) was given to Westfield High School.

The MISOA PVSOA inductee is Alex Goncalves, who's from Ludlow.

The Paul Bogan Service Award was given to Peter Manolakis, who's from Wilbraham.

The Jimmie Downie Award recipient is Tomasz Ludkiewicz, who lives in Granby.

The Larry E. Briggs Award winner is John Voight, who currently lives in East Longmeadow, but grew up in Hampden. He graduated from Minnechaug Regional.

Former Ludlow girls' varsity soccer coach Jose Anselmo, along with Chris and Diane Kolodziej, who do an outstanding job of running the Pioneer Valley Summer Soccer League, received Letters of Commendations.

The association is always looking for new referees.

BBB Tip: Healthcare scams are after your personal information

Healthcare scams are as varied as just about any con out there, according to the Better Business Bureau. The fraudster often poses as a government authority to persuade you to provide personal information related to your Medicare or Medicaid account for identity theft. In other cases, the con artist is after your health insurance, Medicaid or Medicare information to submit fraudulent medical charges.

How the scam works:

The scam typically starts with an email, text message or phone call that appears to be from a government agency. Con artists use a variety of stories. In one common version, the "agent" tells you that he or she needs to update account information to send a new medical card. In another version, the scammer asks for your account number in exchange for free equipment or services. A third version involves a threatening robocall purporting to be from HealthCare.gov or the Health Insurance Marketplace. You're told you must buy health insurance or face a fine. Sure enough, you're soon asked to provide personal information. A more recent version has reported Medicare recipients receiving notices that new Medicare cards with microchips will be sent out and further verification is required.

Tips to avoid this scam:

Don't trust a name or number. Con artists use official-sounding names or mask their area codes by spoofing to make you trust them. Don't fall for it.

Hang up and go to official websites. You can enroll or re-enroll in Medicare at Medicare.gov or a marketplace health plan at Healthcare.gov.

Never share personally identifiable information with someone who has contacted you unsolicited, whether over the phone, by email, or on social media. This includes banking and credit card information, your birthdate, Social Security or Social Insurance number, and, of course, your health insurance number.

Guard your government-issued numbers. Never offer your Medicare ID number, Social Security number, health plan info, or banking information to anyone you don't know.

Know the signs. Medicare will never contact you via email, text message, or phone, asking you to verify personal information.

This Week in Rec

Bryan Litz

Parks & Recreation Director

It takes a village, as the old adage goes. Such is the case with all our programs that we oversee. This certainly holds true for any of our special events. One such special event that just took place was the Turkey Day Jamboree. This year we set a record with enrollment, 100 teams (99 actually but 100 just sounds so much better!). All those teams with 10 – 12 kids per team, coaches, managers, parents, grandparents, siblings, traversing to Hampden or Wilbraham for some post-Thanksgiving hoops!

Why do I say it takes a village? A tournament of that size would not be a success without a lot of helping hands. The biggest thank you goes out to the Hampden Wilbraham School District for usage of Minnechaug Regional H.S., Hampden Recreation for usage of Thornton Burgess and Wilbraham Monson Academy for usage of their gym. All told, we had three sites going and four courts to house all those teams.

In addition to the facilities, we had countless other volunteers step up to make the weekend a success. The WPRD staff donates their weekend overseeing the sites, MRHS boys and girls basketball players donate their time to score keep, along with many adults to staff the concession stand.

Countless times over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend I heard stories of patrons visiting local establishments for breakfast, lunch or dinner while in between games. Makes you realize the immense indirect economic benefit such a tournament has to the local Wilbraham businesses.

Thank you to all for making the event a success!



Painting by Beverlee Corriveau: oil on canvas, 16x20.

Wilbraham Art League Show at Wilb. library

WILBRAHAM -- The Wilbraham Art League will be showcasing original artwork in the Brooks Room of the Wilbraham Library from Dec. 2 – 29. Over 40 paintings in a range of styles and sizes will be on display. The League has over 50 members from various towns in the area, who work in watercolor, acrylic, oil, pastel, graphite and other media. They have held shows in numerous local venues with many of their members winning awards for their work.

One of the pieces on display is by Walt Damon, graduate of Minnechaug High School in 1965, a lifelong resident. He served on the Wilbraham Finance Committee and Open Space Committee for several years. He started painting as a child with miniature figures.

"I only started painting on canvas upon retirement a decade ago," he said. "I paint in either acrylics or artist oils on canvas or canvas board."

His painting in the show is titled "The Pan".

"It is my interpretation of a darker Peter Pan in Neverland (with its two moons) standing on the edge of Neverwood, contemplating a mischievous adventure against the pirates partying on the Jolly Roger. Meantime, the Lost Boys are safely sitting around the fire in a cave high up in the mountain," Damon said.

The painting is in acrylics on canvas board. A two-dimensional metal figure of Pan has been applied to the painting.



The library is located at 25 Crane Park Drive in Wilbraham. The hours

Painting by Walt Damon: oil on canvas board.

are Mon-Wed 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Thu-Fri 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. You can call the library at 413-596-6141 to confirm that the room is open.

The Art League was founded in 2007 and continues to meet the second Tuesday of the month, except for July and August, at the Wilbraham (YMCA) Senior Center at 45 Post Office Park. It is an opportunity to meet other artists, exchange ideas and encourage one another. Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and most include an art-oriented program. Any interested non-member is welcome to attend. In addition to supporting each other the group seeks to bring art to their local communities. At their meeting in November, the group cut and folded paper to produce ornaments for a tree to be displayed at the Atheneum Society's annual festival of trees.

For more information about the Wilbraham Art League visit their website at <https://wilbrahamartleague.org/> or their Facebook page.

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR WESTOVER AIR RESERVE BASE AIRFIELD IMPROVEMENTS WESTOVER AIR RESERVE BASE, MASSACHUSETTS

Description: Interested parties are hereby notified that a Final Environmental Assessment (EA) and Final Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) have been prepared for the Proposed Action described below. The Draft EA was made available for review during the public comment period from September 28, 2023, to October 28, 2023. No comments were received.

Authority: This notice is being issued to all interested parties in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code 4321, et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), and the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process (32 CFR Part 989).

Proposed Action: The United States (U.S.) Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) proposes to construct airfield improvements at Westover Air Reserve Base (ARB) to better accommodate training capabilities and airfield operations in support of the 439th Airlift Wing's existing C-5M aircraft. The improvements include two primary activities: 1) construction of a paved training apron, and 2) extension of the existing Taxiway Golf (G). The paved training apron and associated stormwater feature would be constructed within the Dog Patch Training Area. Construction of the paved training apron would create approximately 1.2 acres of impervious surface, and a 0.3-acre stormwater feature (bioretention basin) would be constructed to the north of the paved training apron to collect runoff. The Taxiway G extension would involve constructing a new concrete taxiway surface between the existing Taxiway G and Pad 5 within the Westover ARB airfield. This extension would create approximately 16.1 acres of impervious surface. Stormwater management options are anticipated to include installation of new drain lines and surface grading in areas adjacent to the runway extension, while existing underground utilities at the site would be relocated or abandoned in place. The ARFC is considering two alternatives: the Preferred Alternative, which would implement the Proposed Action; and the No Action Alternative, which would not implement the Proposed Action but provides a comparative baseline for potential impacts as required under CEQ regulations.

The Final EA evaluates the potential impacts on the environment from implementing the Proposed Action. The evaluation concludes there would be no significant impact, either individually or cumulatively, as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would include compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including consultation and permitting and routine best management practices.

Availability: The Final EA and FONSI are available at the Westover ARB 439th Airlift Wing website at <https://www.westover.afrc.af.mil/About-Us/Resources/Environmental-and-Noise/>. Printed copies of the Final EA and FONSI are also available to the public at the Chicopee Fairview Branch Library, 402 Britton Street, Chicopee, Massachusetts 01020.

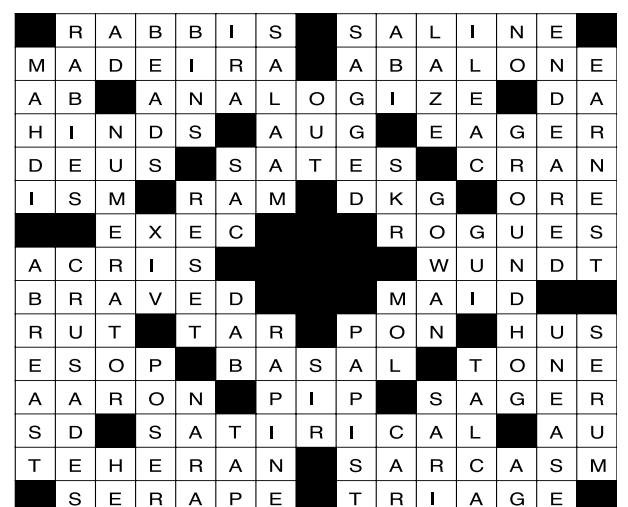




Photo courtesy of Country Bank

(L to R) Jodie Gerulaitis, Vice President of Community Relations at Country Bank, Lauren Baker, Former First Lady of Massachusetts, Founder and CEO of the Wonderfund and Shelley Regan, Senior Vice President of Marketing at Country Bank.

Country Bank supports the Wonderfund with \$20,000 in support during its annual Season of Difference Campaign

Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving Central and Western Massachusetts, recently announced its partnership and \$20,000 in support of the Wonderfund of Massachusetts. The Wonderfund helps kids and teens served by the Department of Children and Families to enjoy childhood's magical moments during the holiday season. The Wonderfund organization is an ordinary group of people on an extraordinary mission to bring the magic and meaning of childhood into the lives of children who have been impacted by trauma, abuse, and neglect.

Join the Wonderfund and Country Bank in making magic this holiday season for kids in foster care by donating a new unwrapped gift at any of its banking centers until Dec. 15.

Country Bank's team will shop for

gifts to join in the efforts, and donations will be delivered to DCF Offices in Springfield and Worcester to be distributed throughout Western and Central Mass.

"We are delighted about this partnership with the Wonderfund and the opportunity for our team and our communities to help us make a difference for children by putting a smile on so many faces," said Jodie Gerulaitis, vice president of Community Relations at Country Bank.

In addition to the toy drive, Country Bank donated over \$100,000 to 17 local food pantries and \$42,000 to local senior centers to support food insecurities, homelessness and elders in its local communities during its annual Season of Difference Campaign.

If you would like to help make some magic, please visit <https://wonderfundma.org>.

LUSO FCU in Ludlow, Wilbraham, collecting toys for families



Photo courtesy of LUSO Federal Credit Union

(L to R): Ana Parrelli, VP of Business Development; Jennifer Calheno, president & CEO; Celia Fernandes, community relations/executive assistant and Jennifer Lopez, marketing director, volunteering to cook "Meals from the Heart" at the Ronald McDonald House in Springfield last month.

LUDLOW -- The holidays are here, and LUSO Federal Credit Union's holiday elves are hard at work to bring some holiday cheer to Western Massachusetts with a Toy Drive to benefit Ronald McDonald House of Springfield. Now through Dec. 16, drop off your new, unwrapped toy at a LUSO Federal Credit

Union branch in Ludlow or Wilbraham, and you'll be entered to win a holiday gift card wreath valued at \$250. For more information about LUSO's upcoming holiday events (including a visit with Santa Claus on Saturday, December 9th), visit www.lusofederal.com/events.

health & wellness NETWORK

NEW FORMAT MAGAZINE SIZE

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DEADLINE
January 31, 2024

PUBLICATION DATE
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June 5, 2022
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Deadline for photos and forms is Friday, December 8, 2023

Simple ways communities can combat bullying

Stand for the Silent, an organization helping to stop school bullying, helps communities address the issue

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK -- It has been known that bullying around the country is a big problem. The statistics point to the fact that something needs to be done. People mostly look to the schools to handle the issue of bullying, but perhaps it is time for the whole community to take the issue on. With the community on board, addressing the issue to dismantle it, the schools and all areas will benefit. Tapping into how to get the community on board to combat bullying is a powerful method for creating a kinder world.

"We work with schools and communities around the country. We know how important it is to get the whole community on board with stamping out bullying," said Kirk Smalley, co-founder of Stand for the Silent. "It's really a team effort

to address the issue, and we are happy to be at the forefront of helping people to make a difference."

Bullying is a common issue at school, with one in five high school students reporting being bullied on school property, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But it doesn't stop once kids leave the school campus. The CDC reports that one in six high school students are cyberbullied, which takes place online, through texting, etc.

While we tend to think that bullying is a problem only for our youth, one look at the statistics surrounding workplace bullying proves otherwise. The CDC reports that up to 59% of workers in America say that they have felt bullied in the workplace, while up to 15% globally have felt bullied, and 12% have witnessed others being bullied.

With youth and adults having bullying issues around the nation, it's time for communities to address the issue as a whole. Here are ways for communities to combat bullying:

Guest speaker. Stand for the Silent has a mission of traveling the country to speak with

schools and communities about bullying. Inviting them to the community or school to talk is a significant first step toward making a change and setting a new tone.

Make the commitment. The community needs to commit to the idea of addressing bullying. Coming together to share in the mission of tackling the issue will be more successful if those involved are 100% on board with making it a consistent part of the community discussion.

Raise awareness. The more people talk about bullying in the community, including what it looks like, the damage that it does, and what to do to address it, the more it takes the power away. When people are aware of the issue in their community, they will become more active in helping not to tolerate it.

Partner up. Community groups working to eradicate bullying can partner with other local resources, including groups, organizations, sporting teams, etc. That way, the message is being reinforced at every corner.

Get people involved. To get more community members engaged in addressing the issue, hold community events, have

guest speakers, forums, question and answer sessions, etc. People need the facts and how to handle it, and they can get the answers at these events.

"Your community will feel the difference it makes once you get started addressing the issue together," adds Smalley. "Our youth doesn't live in a bubble, they are part of the community, so it's time for us to all stand together on this issue."

Some signs may signal a child is being bullied, such as having sudden changes in school attendance, having difficulty concentrating, lacking the ability to be self-assertive, having injuries without an explanation of where they came from, a loss of appetite before going to school, etc. If a parent or teacher suspects a child is being bullied, the

issue should be investigated and remedied immediately.

Smalley and his wife, Laura, started the organization following their 11-year-old son ending his own life due to bullying. They turned their pain and loss into a mission of helping others. He travels the country giving presentations about bullying to schools, providing bullying prevention, giving out scholarships, offering intervention strategies, and more. Those interested in getting involved can start a chapter of the group in their area, obtain a free K-2 bullying prevention curriculum, host a presentation at their school, and donate to help support the cause. To get more information, visit the site at: <https://standforthesilent.org/>.

Girl Scouts kick off Cookie Season with Thunderbirds at Mass Mutual Center Dec. 9

HOLYOKE -- Three hundred plus Girl Scouts and their families will gather at the Mass Mutual Center on Saturday, Dec. 9 from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. to kick off "Own Your Magic", which reflects the Girl Scout Cookie Program theme for the 2023/2024 season.

Girl-planned activity stations will be set up throughout the Mass Mutual concourse as well as community partner-planned stations including:

Miss America, Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts, Girls on the Run, Forest Park Zoo, Meet and Greet with the Thunderbirds team

The activity stations reflect the cookie season theme and are designed to build business savvy skills to help girls run and manage their Girl Scout Cookie businesses online and in person. The "cookie rally" begins at 3:30 PM and then at 6 PM Girl Scouts and their families join Boomer and the Springfield Thunderbirds for an action-packed hockey game.

During Girl Scout Cookie season, each girl sets out to sell delicious cookies while also building entrepreneurial and business skills that are imperative for leadership and future success.

Girl Scout Cookie order taking begins Dec. 13. Community booth sales begin Jan. 19 and continue through March 17.


Frozen Polish Food sale to occur in Indian Orchard Dec. 9, 16

INDIAN ORCHARD -- There will be a FROZEN POLISH FOOD SALE (Pierogi, Golabki, Kapusta) at Immaculate Conception Church Hall 25 Parker St. Indian Orchard, on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, and on Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. You can also call Jane Wurszt at 413-543-2835 to arrange a different time. All are welcome to come and purchase.

SOCIAL SECURITY from page 6

sure. Nevertheless, Congress has so far maintained both these provisions as originally enacted. If you wish to add your voice to those who believe WEP and GPO are unfair, you may wish to contact your federal Congressional Representatives to express that point.


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.



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The 2023 Career & Education edition publishes **the week of January 10th-12th**
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Turley Publications, Inc. is offering a great resource for the communities it serves by showcasing the career & education opportunities available locally.

Roca and DoorDash partner to offer local communities resources and support

By Dalton Zbierski
Editor
dzbierski@turley.com

HOLYOKE -- Roca, Inc., a Massachusetts-based nonprofit organization dedicated to disrupting incarceration, poverty and racism by promoting hope and driving change, has partnered with DoorDash to provide support for residents in need across the state.

Through its Community Credits Program, established in 2021, DoorDash has committed to donating Roca \$3,000 in gift cards to support its programming and community engagement. This represents Roca's first corporate funding partnership.

Roca works to achieve its mission by engaging young adults, police and the systems at the center of urban violence in relationships to address trauma and make an impact. Roca has five sites in Massachusetts, including Holyoke, Springfield, Boston, Chelsea and Lynn; it also has a location in Baltimore, MD.

The Holyoke site is located at

384 High St.

Roca currently serves 103 young women in Western Massachusetts and 126 young men in Holyoke alone, said Chris Judd, Roca's vice president of individual and corporate giving.

"Having these community credits is a gamechanger," Judd said. "I think it's important I emphasize that our young people, not only being at the highest risk, are also very transient population. A lot of times, a lot of young mothers are in shelters, or, for young men, they're couch surfing and not always in a great living situation."

Roca can use the community credits to encourage young people to visit the facilities and attend programming. To make a difference, Judd said it is important to first get people through the doors.

"Sometimes, having these tokens will give them some incentive as well," Judd said. "We can say, 'Hey, your next meal is on us,' instead of them having to worry if their baby has (enough to eat)."

DoorDash launched its Com-

munity Credits Program to help empower local organizations such as Roca and work with those in need. DoorDash Public Engagement Manager Darrel Davis said his team met with Roca earlier this year to learn more about the organization's mission and the communities it serves and left impressed.

"Just hearing from Roca, we were able to understand that these gift cards can definitely help them make a greater impact on the folks they interact with directly," Davis said. "From our perspective, this was really about how we could come together to support a really great community organization that's doing amazing work across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

Davis said community is at the heart of everything that is done at DoorDash, which has been able to partner with more than 200 local, state and national organizations to help enhance programs.

Davis said recipients have informed DoorDash that the gift cards help promote youth develop-

ment, entrepreneurship, workforce development programs and even vaccinations. He said that year after year, DoorDash has seen the program continue to grow in terms of the number of partners it unites with and supports, as well as understanding the needs of communities.

"We're trying to fine tune different ways to keep our Community Credits Program top of mind for organizations, but we're really proud to be supporting organizations across the commonwealth, including Roca, because it just means so much to the participants of their programs," Davis said.

Judd said that if she was being honest, she wishes DoorDash could offer more credits, but expressed great appreciation for the donation Roca will receive. She knows it will be significant.

"We'll be able to give young men and women these credits and say, 'Here you go. Set yourself up,'" she said. "For a nonprofit that is working with a population that is hard to engage, this is a valuable partnership."

Government Study Committee to hold forum

HAMPDEN -- The Hampden Government Study Committee invites you to our Community Forum. The Committee is interested in hearing your thoughts on Hampden town government; what you think works and doesn't. The forum is Tuesday, Dec. 12 from 6:30 - 8 p.m. in the Town House Auditorium.

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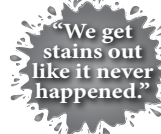
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This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development " HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

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Senior & Veteran Tax Work-Off Abatement Program seeks applicants for 2024

WILBRAHAM -- The Town of Wilbraham is accepting applications for 44 positions under the Senior Citizen & Veterans Tax Abatement Program. Senior Citizens and Veterans selected under this program will work during calendar year 2024 to receive an abatement on their property tax bill for fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).

Basic requirements are that taxpayers must be an assessed owner of property in Wilbraham and must have owned and occupied a home in Wilbraham for at least five years. To be eligible for the Senior Citizens program the resident must be over 60 years of age. To be eligible for the Veterans program the resident must be a Veteran defined by MGL (a copy of your DD 214 is required).

The current compensation is calculated at \$15.00 per hour, and the maximum allowable abatement is \$1,500.00 per property. Abatement workers will need to work 100 hours to receive the full abatement of \$1,500.00 (less federal income tax and Medicare deductions).

The 44 positions being offered are:

- Clerk's Office: three Office Assistants
- Treasurer/Collector's Office: two Office Assistants
- Public Access Television: five Production Producers
- Library: four Library Pages
- Library: one Local History Assistant
- Senior Center: 12 Office Assistants
- Senior Center: one Building Assistant/Substitute Van Driver
- Senior Center: two Fitness Room Monitors
- Select Board Office: one Office Assistant
- Parks & Recreation: five Assistant Gym Supervisors
- Building Department: one Office Assistant
- Facilities: two Facilities Laborer/Helpers
- Facilities: three Gardeners
- Engineering: one Engineering Assistant
- Fire Department: one Office Assistant

Hours are flexible and will be worked out on an individual basis between the department director and the abatement worker but must be completed by Nov. 30, 2024.

This program is beneficial for both senior and veteran residents and Wilbraham taxpayers. Seniors and Veterans have an opportunity to lower their property tax bill, and taxpayers are benefitting from the superior talent and work experience these individuals bring to the job at a very low cost to the town.

Interested residents can pick up applications and information packets at the senior center, library, or Select Board Office, or print it from our website: www.wilbraham-ma.gov. Applications should be submitted to the Select Board Office no later than Dec. 15, 2023.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD23P1682EA
Estate of;
Mary Lee Russell
Date of Death: 02/12/2005
CITATION ON PETITION FOR SALE OF REAL ESTATE BY A PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Sale of Real Estate has been filed by: **Robert W. Russell of Wilbraham, MA** requesting that the court authorize the Personal Representative to sell the decedent's real estate at a private sale.

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 12/27/2023.

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

WITNESS, Hon. **Barbara M. Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: November 24, 2023

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
12/07/2023

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.

Visiting Angels approved to provide free in-home care to eligible veterans

REGIONAL — Visiting Angels West Springfield has recently been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide non-medical home care for eligible veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

VA benefits offer financial assistance for home care to veterans through several programs.

The VA Aid and Attendance program helps to provide access to homecare for veterans and their spouses who need help with daily tasks or who suffer from a disability

or illness. Through Visiting Angels West Springfield, veterans who require help with daily living from another individual can receive help with everyday tasks in their home such as bathing, eating, cleaning, and memory care.

The Homemaker and Home Health Care Aid program helps veterans to receive assistance with everyday tasks with the help of a homemaker or home health aid. Visiting Angels West Springfield helps eligible veterans with in-home tasks

which allows those who prefer to stay in their homes rather than live in a separate facility.

Visiting Angels West Springfield is offering in-home care for veterans who meet specific service, disability, income, and asset criteria in order to be eligible for these VA programs. To figure out if a veteran is eligible to receive assistance from these programs, they can contact the Visiting Angels West Springfield office at (413) 733-6900 for more information and assistance with the application process.



(L to R) Renee McBride, Carol Collins, Anne Marie Matzko, Phebe Niccum, Mary Haseltine and Caryn Greco pose for a group photo as they work on knitting items for the Mitten Tree to support the Mitten Tree, Pajama Drive and Food Drive at Hampden Free Public Library. The women are all members of the Hampden Free Public Library's Knitting Group.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

A photo of the food drive bin for non-perishable food item donations to support the Mitten Tree, Pajama Drive and Food Drive at Hampden Free Public Library.



Submitted photo Ellen Moriarty

A throwback photo of Hampden Free Public Library Director Ellen Moriarty and her daughter, Hannah, with a mitten tree to support the Mitten Tree, Pajama Drive and Food Drive at Hampden Free Public Library.

HAMPDEN from page 1

Moriarty added she enjoys supporting the Community Survival Center and local organizations.

"They serve Springfield and the surrounding towns, including Hampden, so they're wonderful over there. They do a really good job of distributing the donations, so it's been wonderful to partner with them," Moriarty said.

Moriarty stressed the importance of giving back, especially during the holidays, and having the library be a place to hold fundraising drives so everyone can participate.

"I love giving them the opportunity to have a place to donate to because sometimes there might be seniors who aren't able to drive places to donate things so that covers it for them. They can donate whatever they like, and I'll take care of it for them," Moriarty said.

Moriarty enjoys seeing the children and teens get involved too, including how some come back to volunteer at other events.

"I want the little kids and the teens to know how good it feels to help others so that they can carry that with them throughout their lives to be kind and generous," Moriarty said.

Looking ahead, Moriarty expressed excitement for upcoming events including the Children's Holiday Party on Dec. 9 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Teen Volunteer Council holding their First Annual Free Gift-Wrapping event on Dec. 16 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and a Holiday Movie Night on Dec. 21 at 6 p.m.

"Everything at the library is always free, so I want people to know that they can come here and take advantage of all the programming that we have," Moriarty said.

Moriarty encourages the com-

munity to support the drive and to also consider a simpler approach to celebrating the holidays, with books.

"To simplify things so that the kids aren't overwhelmed and the parents aren't overwhelmed. Just sit down and read a book," Moriarty said. "So, take time to make sure that you sit down with your family, especially the littles, and read a lovely book and, you know, maybe start a new tradition of reading a holiday story that they look forward to each year."

Also, come check out the library during the holidays.

"Come on down! We got tons of Christmas books, videos, movies, CDs to put you in the spirit," Moriarty said.

To learn more, visit www.hampden-library.org, call the library at 413-566-2151 EXT 112 or check out their Facebook page.

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