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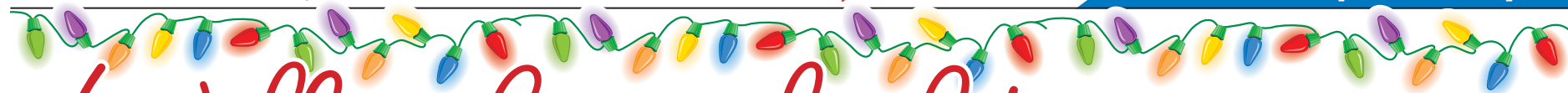
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Wilbraham lights up with Annual Tree Lighting

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The community came out to Gazebo Park on Dec. 8 to light up the tree at the town's Annual Christmas Tree Lighting.

The event was hosted by the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden, with attendees enjoying hot chocolate, candy canes and cookies served by LUSO Federal Credit Union--also an event sponsor--sleigh bells, more treats and a snowball throwing game from Landmark Realtors--another event sponsor--and a visit from Santa Claus, who arrived in style on a fire truck with the fire department.

Also, the nativity scene relocating from Crane Park to Gazebo Park, set up by Boy Scout Troop 359.

Attendees also presented donations of hygiene products to support the Community Survival Center.

The event was made possible with support from many other people and organizations including Heidi and Mark Pafumi of Pafumi's on Main, Derek Biermann of Biermann Services, Bobby Ward of The Guilty Grape, David and Lisa Gomes for the sound system, the police and fire departments, Home Depot for lights and decorations, Jason Dominick, Kayla Slessler and Thai Bui for decorations and Facilities Manager Sam Boyd.

The Times once again was the media sponsor.

After welcoming attendees, President Peter Salerno highlighted the club's history and how they support the Community Survival Center, provides dictionaries to children in the schools and gives out scholarships to local students.

"Today, we're here to serve the kids. The kids of our town are most important. They bring everything to us and they are our future. So, on behalf of the Rotary, God bless you all," Salerno said.

Select Board Vice Chair Michael Squindo welcomed attendees to the event.



Members of the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden and Santa Claus pose once again for a group photo under the gazebo at Gazebo Park in Wilbraham at the Annual Tree Lighting on Dec. 8.

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

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Macy Felt performs act of kindness through 'Macy's Mission'

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - A Wilbraham student has recently performed a fantastic act of kindness for others.

Fourth grade student Macy Felt organized a birthday fundraiser, which would later be known as "Macy's Mission," to help get books for underprivileged children.

What originally started out as a small idea to collect books and donate them for her birthday with donations from a small group of friends and relatives suddenly erupted in popularity as her father, Adam Felt, made a post on social media, where many people started to share Macy's idea and goal. She was able to raise \$2,300 in donations for books for people who wanted to read.

The donations from "Macy's Mission" went various places. One of the destinations was for the older books that were donated. Those went to Big Brother Mouse, a literacy center in Laos.

The younger books for those in kinder-



Photos courtesy of the Felt Family

Macy Felt with the donations of books to give to others who are interested in reading through "Macy's Mission."

garten to second grade went to elementary schools. They were delivered by Macy's grandmother, Beth Jones, and family friend Jeanie Marsh, who went to various

Please see **MACY**, page 19



Members of Minnechaug Regional High School's Key Club gather around for a group photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus at this year's Children's Holiday Party at Hampden Free Public Library.

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

HPL gets in holiday spirit

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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HAMPDEN - Families stopped by the library on Dec. 7 to get in the holiday spirit during this year's Children's Holiday Party.

The festivities included visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus in the Rochford Reading Room, followed by a variety of

holiday-themed crafts to games from a Grinch ring toss to color-themed tic-tac-toe with colorful white, red and green balls in the Town House Auditorium.

The activities were overseen by members of Minnechaug Regional High School's Key Club, while the refreshments were donated by the Friends of the Hampden Free Public Library.

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Selectboard hosts Municipal Meeting on building utilization, capital projects

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Selectboard hosted a municipal meeting on Dec. 5 to discuss building utilization and capital projects.

The meeting included members of the Advisory Committee, Treasurer Richard Patullo, Accountant Cliff Bombard, members of the Senior Center Building Committee, members of the Fire Department Building Committee and department heads.

After this meeting, it was decided the group would meet again on Jan. 7.

The highlights included overviews of building assessments, studies and consultant recommendations, a discussion on the utilization of Thornton W. Burgess Middle School, funding options and more.

The Purpose

Chair Don Davenport explained for quite some time, the town talked about "the need to address our municipal buildings."

"In some cases, they have become inadequate and too inefficient to provide the necessary required present and future services. In some cases, they're out of code in certain areas. In some other cases, potentially unsafe working conditions exist," Davenport said. "And in other cases, they just need sprucing up and need maintenance."

Davenport said, "It's past time we address these issues in some way," noting since Fiscal Year 2022, Hampden has spent \$316,755 on grants, ARPA money, town meeting appropriations and studies, building assessments, consultants and ar-

chitects.

"Our residents understand where the town is in regard to this. As was demonstrated at town meeting, they clearly are not willing to give out a blank check to any particular project," Davenport said. "It's clear from the town meeting discussions on the senior center and Thornton Burgess that taxpayers want and deserve answers and they want to have confidence their elected and appointed officials are presenting them with a well-thought-out, reasonable, sound and responsible building and an affordable financial plan that will serve the town of the needs in the years to come."

Davenport outlined his goals of the meetings would be creating a priority plan for projects, timelines and "a definitive, reasonable, affordable funding strategy for the projects to present to town meeting."

The buildings to be addressed are the following.

Academy Hall: constructed in 1850, assessed value of \$364,300

Town House: constructed in 1932, assessed value of \$1,462,200

Highway Garage: constructed in 1938 with additions in 2021, assessed value of \$278,900

Green Meadows Elementary School: constructed in 1957 with additions in 2000, assessed value of \$8,033,100

Fire Station: constructed in 1963, assessed value of \$462,100

TWB: constructed in 1967, assessed value of \$8,340,700

Memorial Park: constructed in 1970, assessed value of \$441,000



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

The Selectboard held a municipal meeting on building utilization and capital projects on Dec. 5.

Senior Center: constructed in 1999, assessed value of \$893,300

Police Station: constructed in 2016, assessed value of \$1,376,900

Utilization of TWB

After discussing building assessments and guess cost estimates for the fire station, senior center and TWB, Town Administrator Brian Domina focused on the utilization of TWB.

"The town offices need to go somewhere. The likely options seem, to me, to be renovate this building and stay here, move to Thornton Burgess or to build something new, and I'm talking long-term options for the town those seem to be," Domina said. "Now short-term, it's my opinion that this building has such deficiencies that need to be addressed soon, the biggest one being accessibility. So, in my mind, Thornton Burgess seems like whether it's a long-term solution or short-term solution, it seems to be a good short-term solution. Regardless of what happens long-term and, when Don and I talked about this idea, I thought it was a good idea to start the discussion because, within those options, there's lots of pluses and minuses for each option."

Domina said he's unsure how to proceed.

"I agree there's a lot of questions that need answers and until those discussions happen, it's difficult to know which path to pursue," Domina said. "Or maybe we pursue multiple paths at the same time, but without any sort of direction, it's hard to move forward."

Referring to the earlier discussion on the fire station, senior center and TWB, Domina believes "that needs to be done in an affordable way."

"And how do we prioritize those I'm not sure, but I'm pretty certain discussions need to start happening as to how we go about it," Domina said.

Gary Weiner, chair of the Senior Center Building Committee, added the committee was looking for direction as well

and committee members agreed to stay on if the Selectboard wanted to keep them moving forward and the committee would probably look at renovation and an addition for the senior center.

"Do they want the committee to go forward or does someone in town want to handle taking bids for the new roof or taking bids for the renovation or HVAC system? I mean, that's where we are at this point," Weiner said.

This led to Peter Hatch asking Weiner this.

"Would the senior center be proposed into moving into Thornton Burgess full-time? It would solve a lot of issues and you have more space, less money," Hatch said.

John Matthews Jr. said they can't speak to that now, adding "we're kind of in a flux."

"Once you get a determination in that we're going to move forward with Thornton Burgess, then at that point I think we all can have a discussion about how to utilize Thornton Burgess for all the parties involved. In other words, senior center, library and town hall," Matthews said. "I believe we know we're not going to move the fire department there. So, really, we need some positive input as to what we're going to do with Thornton Burgess."

After Weiner said it's a good question to consider and brought up the space aspect, Patullo said how things are zoned would also play a role.

"I agree with you that's not a question that can be answered yet--Peter's question--but it's just one more zone that would have to be accommodated," Patullo said.

He mentioned the three choices regarding the Town House: fix, sell or tear it down, adding he does not see them selling it.

"I certainly don't want to see us maintaining another white elephant we don't need. We can't afford to keep this place up if we're not utilizing it or if it's not required for our needs," Patullo said. "So, that's something we're going to have to face."

Selectboard Member John Flynn said Hatch's and Patullo's points were good and stressed there will be more meetings.

"This is stuff that has to be flushed out. All ideas are welcome right now and then you put them up on the board and you grade them all, put points to them and say what works out the best," Flynn said.

After reviewing the timeline for TWB after the school district vacates on July 1, 2025, and when things can start being evaluated along with further discussion, the group agreed to meet again for another meeting.



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Selectboard holds Budget Kickoff meeting

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Selectboard held a State of the Union/Budget Kickoff meeting with town department heads and committees on Dec. 9.

After explaining the suggested changes for the next Annual Town Meeting, Chair Don Davenport said he wanted to see where departments were in their first six months of the fiscal year and the challenges they foresee for the next six months.

"Later this evening, the Selectboard's going to discuss setting dates for opening and closing of the warrant and the budget deadline as well as procedures for filing citizen's petitions," Davenport said. "And our goal is there, three-fold. We want to provide a clear procedure with firm deadlines for citizen's petitions so we don't run into what we've done the last couple of times. I want to give the Advisory Committee and the Planning Board if they have to hold hearings plenty of time to get the hearings done before the town meeting and we want to get as much warrant and budget information out to the hands of the taxpayers early enough so they can be informed for the Advisory Committee and town meeting and planning on appearing."

Throughout the nearly hourlong discussion, the board heard from the schools, the Highway Department, the library, the Cemetery Commission, the Water Commission, the Planning Board and many more.

On the schools, Superintendent Dr. John Provost said, "things have

been trending positively for us financially" and the main hiccup has been the resignation of former Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Aaron Osborne. This has since been resolved with the selection of Douglas Slaughter, who will take over in January.

"Looking at the next six months, I think that the current fiscal year looks like it's in good shape. I would just say for FY26, we have greater uncertainty than we do in a lot of years because we have contract negotiations going on," Provost said. "So, that will have some impacts."

Advisory Committee Chair Doug Boyd said he didn't have a schedule as of yet for meeting dates but will put one together.

"In addition to the schedule, I'll get together bullet points. I'm sure similar to the previous years, I'll be asking for level service. Level service means maintaining the same level of service that is being provided...ours is the primary measure of the service. If there's any deviation from that, please make a note for that and that will be in the budget sheets," Boyd said.

On any increases or decreases, Boyd added for those to be noted as well along with any anticipated capital projects in the near future. Also, for salary lines to be kept at current rates as opposed to placeholders.

"So rather than put in a placeholder and generate numbers which end up just leading to confusion before getting to the real adjustments, please just carry the current salary forward at the current rate," Boyd said.

If contracted or a known figure, Boyd clarified it can be put in.

After The Parks and Recreation Department and Building Commissioner Cliff Bombard provided brief updates, Highway Department Superintendent Mark Langone said he was also positive on his budget.

"I don't foresee any major expenditures. I'll just be keeping an eye on service fees for contractors. Those seem to be going up and up and up and utility bill fees," Langone said. "But I think those are kind of stable right now, might even go down a little bit. But I think currently we're in really good shape."

Meanwhile, Police Chief Scott Trombly said the police department will keep an eye on their budget and noted a new contract was signed in July.

Two reserve officers have resigned, with one related to medical leave.

"So, that's a concern. We're down to four active reserve officers that are filling in for our full-timers when they go on vacation. We've been exhausting our 40-hour week with our full-timers and several full-timers that do get it are at much higher increased pay due to the negotiation we have," Trombly said. "So, there are definitely concerns as we look into the next six months."

Trombly hopes to look at more training, including working with the fire department, police and EMS for area communities and active shooter training, for the newer fiscal year.

For more highlights, view the Selectboard's meeting recording on YouTube.

Hampden Police Association and Hampden Fire Department Toy Drive

HAMPDEN - The Hampden Police Association and the Hampden Fire Department are taking donations to support local families and Brightside for Families and Children. New unwrapped toys can be dropped off at the Hampden Police Station, the Hampden Fire Department, or Monson Savings Bank beginning December 2, 2024, through December 14, 2024.

There will be a Stuff the Cruiser / Fill the Firetruck Toy Drive Event Dec. 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. in the parking lot of Bethlehem Church 123 Allen Street, Hampden. Santa will be there from 2 to 3 p.m.



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Wilbraham United 14th Annual Holly Fair!

WILBRAHAM - The 14th Annual Wilbraham United Church Holly Fair kicks off on Saturday, Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Free entry. The popular holiday fair will host over 60 local artisans and crafters throughout the three floors of the church.

Be sure to fill a box with homemade cookies for \$30 at the Cookie Walk, stop by the Holly Cafe, check out the raffle baskets, enjoy the Ring and Sing with our choir, purchase gift cards for retail stores and get a photo with Santa.

The Old Post Road Orchestra will also be performing holiday music throughout the day.

Theater Guild holding auditions for 'Jerry's Girls'

HAMPDEN - The Theatre Guild of Hampden will hold open auditions for the musical "Jerry's Girls" on Sunday Dec. 29 at 2 p.m. at the Hampden Town House on Main Street.

For more information, call Mark Giza at 413-204-5333.

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Santa Claus was excited to meet with families, including this mother-daughter duo.



Santa meets with children, asking what they would like for Christmas.



Attendees enjoy hot chocolate and other goodies served by the folks at LUSO Federal Credit Union.



A full shot of this year's Christmas tree fully lit at Gazebo Park in Wilbraham at the Annual Tree Lighting.



Ellie holds a fake snowball next to a pile of presents at a fun display from Landmark Realtors at the Annual Tree Lighting.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

Santa Claus and Peter Salerno, president of the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden, pose for a festive photo.

LIGHTING from page 1

"On behalf of the Select Board, I just want to wish everybody a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hannukah, a joyful Kwanzaa and a wonderful New Year. So, thank you very much for coming out tonight for this community event," Squindo said.

After Santa arrived and led the countdown to light up the tree, Salerno was excited to see the children's eyes light up in anticipation of seeing Santa, thrilled with the turnout.

"Santa brings a lot of joy to a lot of different people. We love doing that as a member of the Rotary Club. We will continue to do that as long as we're able to do it," Salerno said.

On the manger, Salerno explained a Rotary Club member asked if there was something they could do to give it more visibility, so they met with the Select Board and presented their request to them, which was then unanimously approved.

He added there's more to come.

"We're going to have the Menorah for our Jewish compatriots put up near Christmas. So we're going to do that as well. We think this is a part of an inviting experiment for our town," Salerno said.

Timothy Tracy, the branch manager at LUSO's Wilbraham branch, is also a Rotary Club member.

"We love to sponsor local events and we've done this for a number of years now. It's great to help the community," Tracy said. "It's great to see everyone here supporting the community, having a little bit of fun."

Tracy said he and the team enjoy taking part in community events.

"Definitely seeing all the people. Sometimes they're new, sometimes they're the same one, but everyone's welcome," Tracy said. "Just to see everyone hang out and get to know them."

As for Rotary, Tracy enjoys the events he, also, gets to do through them, adding LUSO's Wilbraham branch will have a box for hygiene donations to the Community Survival Center for anyone unable to make the tree lighting.

"Even if it's a couple weeks from now, we'll make sure it gets to somewhere good," Tracy said.

Salerno expressed his gratitude to the community for their support, stressing the Rotary Club is here for them and they want to give back.

"We're very proud of Wilbraham, we're very proud of Hampden, we're very proud of the area and I'm very proud of the people. I've been in town for 53 years. For 53 years, I've enjoyed being a part of the community. I am not the community, I am part of the community," Salerno said. "This is what community is. To reach out to the people next to you, saying, 'I'm with you. No matter what I am, I'm with you.' I don't want anybody to be selfish, I want us all to be loving."

To learn more, visit the Rotary Club's Facebook page or contact Secretary Brad Sperry at 413-537-4171 or Salerno at 203-214-7954.

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Patrick Renna selected as next director of Veterans Services

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Patrick Renna has been selected as the next director of the Department of Veterans Services.

Renna was unanimously chosen by the Select Board during their Dec. 9 meeting and was among three candidates, with Tina Brohman, who currently serves as Veteran Services Officer for the town of Palmer, and Jamie Shepard, a 23-year veteran of the Massachusetts National Guard and who formerly worked with the Department of Corrections in Connecticut, also vying for the position.

Each candidate had worked with and/or knew former Veterans Services Director Jered Sasen, speaking highly of him during their interviews.

After Select Board Chair Sue Bunnell asked Paula Dubord, director of elder affairs, and Barbara Harrington, social services coordinator, for their thoughts, both agreed it was a great group of candidates but one stood out above the rest.

"I think we had a great group. I think the three folks that were here today, one of them could fill this job. Like we've all said, they're big shoes to fill," Dubord said.

Harrington noted the heart.

"As we know, those shoes are going to be hard to fill from Jered, but I think this individual that we all agreed upon is going to fit in nicely. It feels almost like that interview with Jered. There was just something about that individual that yeah, no question. He's going to be a great fit for us," Harrington said.

Who is Patrick Renna?

Renna, a Monson resident, is a father of two daughters and his wife had served in the Peace Corps. in Ukraine, with a girl who was in her host family later coming to live with them.

A 24-year Air Force Veteran who served as a logistics planner, an elevated Chief Master Sergeant and a senior enlisted leader for a district squadron and later working for the Air Force as a civilian, Renna had met with Sasen three years earlier and was blown away by the position after their meeting.

"I thought what an awesome job to be able to help people out. He was so helpful, he was so nice and so informative right out of the gate. It was wonderful and that really kind of piqued my interest in it and I just thought that would be a cool job to have someday," Renna said.

Renna said he worked through the disability process himself and understands the challenge of sharing your story.

"I've had a lot of experience over the years kind of dealing with and being a person people came to and felt comfortable talking to and always held their information in confidence," Renna said. "I think I would be that guy for the veterans that come and they have a disability claim or they want to look into doing an education program, but they don't really know how to tell their story or how to say what they want to say and get it through so they get their benefits that they're due."

Renna said he doesn't feel like an outsider applying for the position as he has friends and family in Wilbraham--including veterans--and he's patronized local businesses and restaurants in town.

"I do already feel like part of the community and I know a lot of people in the community, so I don't feel like an outsider interviewing for somewhere I've never been before. I already feel like I'm kind of part of the team," Renna said.

On what he'd do in his first 30 days, Renna explained getting in the door and starting to make connections.

"Just kind of figuring out what I can do to get the ball rolling and just kind of get right into the action straight away, so I can pick up any slack that's been left over and anything that needs to be taken care of," Renna said.

For his goals, Renna would focus on spreading the word more about VSOs to people in active service.

"Just kind of spreading the word to that younger generation and ensuring everyone knows of all the programs that are out there. Because there's a lot of programs of employment to heating to almost anything you can think of, the help is out there and just making sure that people know these things are available to them," Renna said.

Renna's approval will now be contingent upon a satisfactory background check, CORI check and verification of veteran status effective on a date to be determined by the town administrator.

Wilbraham Men's Glee Club to Begin Rehearsals

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham Men's Glee Club, accompanied by Marcia Jackson and conducted by Ray Drury, will begin rehearsals for the 2025 concert season on Monday evening, Jan. 6, at Christ the King Lutheran/Episcopal Church at 7 p.m. Rehearsals will continue each Monday thereafter until 2 concerts in late April/early May.

While no audition is required, all interested should be able to "carry a tune" attend the majority of rehearsals, and be able to pay a nominal fee at the first rehearsal to cover the cost of sheet music.

Wilbraham Community Chorus to Present Concert

WILBRAHAM - The nearly seventy-voice Wilbraham Community Chorus, accompanied by Marcia Jackson and conducted by Ray Drury, will present a concert in early December. The concert will take place on Saturday, Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. at First Church of Christ, Longmeadow.

Drury has chosen a varied and compelling program including music of Haydn, Mozart, Vaughan Williams, Forrest and Whitacre as well as varied ar-

rangements of folk tunes, pop songs and seasonal music. Of particular interest will be performances by both Jackson and well-known local pianist Todd Rovelli offering selections of four-hand piano music, and additionally a chamber choir comprised of members of the larger group will also perform.

While admission to each concert is free, a free-will offering will be taken.

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VIEWPOINTS

Rockefeller Center's Christmas tree helps Habitat for Humanity

By Brandice J. O'Brien

Marketing and Communications Manager,
Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity

WEST SPRINGFIELD -The season of giving is here and in true community spirit, many will say no one does Christmastime quite like New York City or Habitat for Humanity. Each year, a Norway Spruce is donated, decorated, and displayed outside of Rockefeller Center in Manhattan. After the tree is taken down in the New Year, the trunk is milled into lumber and donated to Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) where it will be used for a future build.

The partnership between Real Estate Company Tishman Speyer, which owns and operates Rockefeller Center, and HFHI formed the partnership in 2007. The collaboration inspired "The Carpenter's Gift," by David Rubel, a children's book that follows the journey of a young boy who wished for a decent home and how it comes true in an unexpected way. Books are available for \$10 each at Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) by calling (413) 739-5503.

"The heartwarming tale told in 'The Carpenter's Gift' brings together – through beautiful illustrations and a moving, multi-generational story – two great traditions: the Rockefeller Center tree and the neighbor-helping-neighbor program of Habitat for Humanity," said President James "Jimmy" Carter in a



Submitted photo

2024 Rockefeller Xmas tree in WStockbridge

previous interview. "The tree annually brightens the Christmas season for millions who see it. Habitat houses brighten the lives of families all over the world – for those who live in them and those who build them."

Since 2007, trees have been harvested from and used in Mid-Atlantic and New England states, with the exception of the first tree. That spruce came from Connecticut, and its lumber was used in Mississippi.

This year's Norway Spruce is 74 feet tall, 43 feet wide, and comes from West Stockbridge. The tree is topped with more than 50,000 multi-colored lights and 5 miles of wire wrapped around it. A three-dimensional star, designed by architect Daniel Libeskind in

2018, is perched on top. The star weighs approximately 900 pounds, has 70 spikes, and is covered in 3 million crystals.

"That's so cool," said Trina Winans, Greater Springfield Habitat volunteer and supporter. "I never knew that."

GSHFH intern Nate Shlosser agreed.

"That is a very kind and generous thing," he said. "I'm very thankful for it because it means another family will have the wood needed for a home."

The tree was found by Rockefeller Center head gardener Erik Pauze in July 2020 as he searched for future New York City Christmas trees. When he found the West Stockbridge Norway Spruce, he knocked on the property owner's door. Earl Albert answered and agreed to donate the tree in memory of his late wife Leslie, who died just days before Erik's visit.

"I consider it probably one of the greatest honors of my life," Earl said in an interview with NBC. Earl said he and Leslie planted the tree as newlyweds in 1967.

The tree was cut down Nov. 7 and arrived Rockefeller Center on Nov. 9.

The 2024 Rockefeller Center Christmas tree is lit daily from 5am to midnight until mid-January 2025 when it's turned off at 10 p.m. There are a few exceptions. On Christmas Day, the tree is lit for 24 hours. On New Year's Eve, it is lighted from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The last of the autumn questions for the Garden Lady



Lori, a reader of the column, wrote in with this question for the Garden Lady: "I put my garlic cloves in three weeks ago and they have sprouted! The variety is a German White hardneck. Will they come back in the spring?"

Thank you for your question! It is not uncommon for garlic to send up shoots when fall weather is warmer than normal, much like ours has been.

Typically, the shoots survive the winter just fine, and will resume growth come spring time. To be on the safe side, I would mulch around your plants with straw or chopped up leaves to provide some insulation.

Once spring arrives, pull back the mulch and provide some fertilizer that is nitrogen rich to give the shoots a boost. A sprinkling of

blood meal, fish emulsion, or composted manure would all do the trick.

Push the mulch back in place; it will help to keep weeds down. Garlic hates competition in this arena.

Early on, ample water and nutrients make the big fists of garlic we all want to see at harvest.

Hardneck garlic is typically the garlic grown in our area. Unlike softneck garlic, it needs the cold to complete its life cycle. It has fewer, but larger cloves.

Cloves from hardneck garlic are more pungent than softneck, but don't last quite as long in storage. Softneck don't grow stiff scapes as stems but have leaves that at harvest can be braided together to make a nice kitchen decoration.

Often you will see these garlic braids for sale at craft shows or in catalogs.

Michele, who gardens in Ware, has a question about tidying up her hydrangea bushes.

"The flowers at the tips of the branches of my blue hydrangea bushes have all browned and look unappealing. Some of the leaves are hanging on too. Altogether it's not a pretty sight. Can I cut down the branches to the ground? In effect, cleaning up the plant by the

easiest way possible? It will sprout again when spring arrives, of that I'm sure."

I know exactly what you are talking about. From where I am writing, I can see my own hydrangea and it looks just as "pretty" as yours sounds!

Rest assured that the leaves will fall off. The flowers, on the other hand, will stick around awhile. Wind and wet weather will eventually cause them to degrade and fall away from the plant.

If you don't want to wait that long, feel free to cut the flower heads, and just the flower heads off. You see, most hydrangeas bloom on old wood.

Newer varieties – those bred in the last 20 years or so, often bloom on both new wood and old wood, so you'd never really want to cut them all the way down because you would be missing out on an opportunity for flowers to form. In case you don't follow my logic, flowers can form on the new growth the plant puts out in the spring, and the old growth from the previous year. Lots of gardeners remarked about what an amazing year it was for hydrangeas. So many flowers!

Please see **GARDEN**, page 8

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Wilbraham-Hampden Times welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to Wilbraham-Hampden Times, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to krivers@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

For more information, call the editor at 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspaper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in Wilbraham-Hampden Times.



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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.

Melissa Kowalski James honored in basketball tournament



Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen
From the left, Linda Garvey, Norene Shea and Joanne Griffin sell raffle prizes.



(Left to right back) Dan Cohen, Shawn James, Peter Kowalski, Francesca Vanin, Michele Kowalski, Maureen O'Brien, (Left to right front) Mary Kate Bertke, and Amanda Vasta, all heped contribute to the Play for MKJ Tournament and nonprofit.

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The third day of the "Play for MKJ" Basketball Tournament commenced on Nov. 30, with a ceremony held at Minnechaug Regional High School to honor the life of Melissa Kowalski James, whom the tournament was recently named after.

The MKJ Tournament is a basketball tournament that was held at multiple locations around Wilbraham and Hampden including Minnechaug, Wilbraham & Monson Academy and Thornton W. Burgess Middle School. A total of 104 teams across Western Massachusetts participated in the tournament.

This year's jamboree was played to honor the life of Minnechaug basketball great Melissa Kowalski James, who led the girls' basketball team to win the state championship three times out of her four years at Minnechaug. She is also one of the few players to score 1,000 points during her high school career.

James, born and raised in Wilbraham, left an indelible mark on the world through her extraordinary basketball career. She quickly became a local legend, dazzling on the basketball court in the Middle School Suburban League and then later on Minnechaug's Varsity team.

As a Falcon, James led her team to numerous victories, with her hard work and skill inspiring her teammates and attracting countless spectators, all the while remaining humble and team oriented. Her talent earned her a full-ride scholarship at Northeastern University, where she gained a starting position on their basketball team.

Her passing in April has left a profound void on all that knew and loved her, but her impact lives on in the countless lives that she touched.

Melissa's family and the Play for MKJ nonprofit are currently hosting events and raising money to continue celebrating her, as well as providing scholarships to student athletes that embody



A picture of Melissa, her husband Shawn, and their four children is displayed at the tournament

James's qualities.

The ceremony involved various speeches from Maureen O'Brien, Melissa's cousin Dan Cohen, Melissa's father Peter Kowalski and Melissa's husband Shawn James, all of which whom reflected on the wonderful person they are so grateful to have known and has touched so many lives.

"She always wanted to do whatever she needed to do to get the W," Peter Kowalski said. "That's what she was most interested in. If she had to rebound, if she had to assist, if she had to play defense. Whatever it was for our team...She respected her role, enjoyed her role, and gave it an all out effort in doing that."

"For the last 19 years she has been the most impactful person

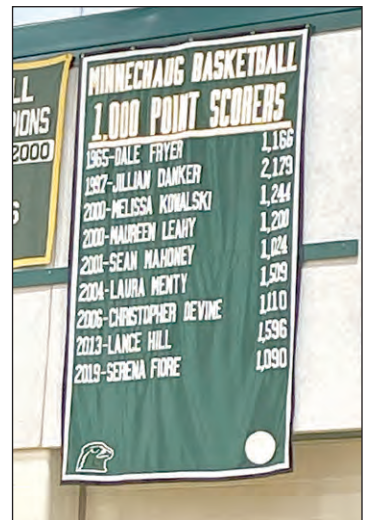
in my life. I felt that then and I feel that now. But to see this room filled, and to see the community come together in this way, it lets me know that her impact wasn't just on me or her family and friends. It was throughout: it was everyone she came across and they were able to bless each other with their presence," Shawn James said. "So tonight, so for Melissa, just speaking on her it's hard to reflect on her without saying the word

impact. Because she was that impactful. She was that loved. And she was that missed."

Maureen O'Brien played a key role in organizing the tournament, as she helped begin the Play for MKJ Foundation.

"I hope the players understand how much of a sport, where there be basketball or any sport or any real passion, how much that can contribute to your life on especially when it comes to the people that you meet," O'Brien said. "Melissa's life evolved tremendously through basketball. Friendships, her ability to be an excellent teammate. She met her husband, she was an incredible mom to her children as they began their basketball journey. So, I hope that everybody really continues to appreciate the game of basketball and sport in general for how much you can learn."

Along with O'Brien, Parks & Rec Director Bryan Litz also

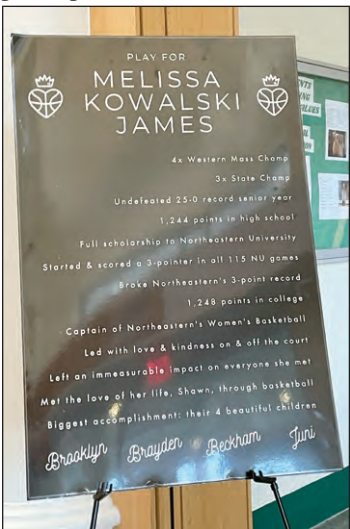


Melissa Kowalski's name is placed on the Minnechaug 1000 point scores basketball banner.

played a key role in the organization, including getting and scheduling the teams, referees and scorekeepers.

"It's a proud day, because you get to remember someone that meant so much to Minnechaug Basketball," Litz said. "The amount of work that goes into that and making sure everything goes off with as few issues as possible. It's a lot of behind the scenes which is awesome."

It was a great weekend for people to get together and play some basketball, along with celebrating the life of someone who made such a large impact on the community.



A board is set up to display all of Melissa's accomplishments.

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Happy Holidays!

Old Post Road Orchestra spreads Christmas cheer



Alexandria Black, Conductor and Musical Director, welcomes Concertmaster Fred Henle at the Old Post Road Orchestra concert on Dec. 6.



Concertmaster Fred Henle re-tunes the orchestra at the beginning of the second half of the concert on Friday, Dec. 6.

By Hannah Yeasley
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The majestic music of Old Post Road Orchestra echoed in the cathedral ceilings of St. Cecilia's Church at their first Holiday show of the 2024-2025 season on Friday, Dec. 6.

The concert, which began at 7:30 p.m., was free to attend and was sponsored in part by Berkshire Facial Surgery, Inc.

Raffle tickets were available to purchase 10 for \$5, with a wide variety of baskets to choose from, all the way from hot cocoa to a lottery basket to a very special prize (stay tuned).

Before beginning, Elaine Gernux, violinist and board member at large, gave a shout out to 102-year-old violinist Pauline Prince-Lamothe, who was not playing at this concert but was in attendance. Gernux then introduced Alexandria Black, conductor and musical director of OPRO.

Black came out in a cozy-looking pajama set, with a black bow in their hair to match.

They introduced the story of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" and then the music was off with a bang—of the timpani, that is.

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas" was a medley of recognizable music, with the melody passed around from instrument to instrument. The muted trumpets and trombones during "You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch" transported the audience right back to the 1966 cartoon.

There was a beautiful transition to the strings taking over with "Where Are You Christmas?", and the brass ringing out for the big finish was powerful enough to make anyone's hearts grow three sizes.

The second song of the evening was a traditional Hanukkah song called "My Candles." The wind instruments took a

break while the strings and percussionists took the audience on an eight-day adventure. With Black's fluid movements and clear cues, the transitions from quick, bouncy motions to long, smooth melodic lines were seamless.

Before the group started their next song, Black invited the pajama-clad audience members to sing along. Everyone knows Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen, so "Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer" had the hall filled with not just brass, strings, and percussion, but also with the voices of those in attendance.

In this song, Fred Henle's expertise as a concertmaster was especially evident. His body language and passion for playing led the rest of the strings with lots of holiday cheer through this very merry number.

While nostalgia was an inevitable focal point of the whole concert, the last song before intermission indeed did feel like we got to be home for the holidays. The "A Most Wonderful Christmas" Christmas medley was all holiday radio—without having to shout from the backseat for someone else to turn it up.

The whole orchestra began together, with a sweeping grand gesture from Black.

As the French horns took over the melody, the recognizable "Winter Wonderland" passed first from the horns to the strings, then to the oboe, trumpet and flute in that order. The French horn again featured heavily when the song shifted to "I'll Be Home for Christmas", filling the hall with such a warm tone that a smile was inevitable.

As the low brass is, rightly so, not to be forgotten, the tuba took the rest of the group into a jazzy rendition of "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town". As the trom-

bone and then trumpet joined, shoulders could be seen bouncing along.

The oboes magnificently entered with the melody for "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas", dancing with the violin section before passing it along to the clarinets, flutes and then trumpets.

The percussion section, always an essential part of any group, had fun with the "Jingle Bells" melody, using bells that really made it sound like Santa's sleigh had just pulled in.

The whole group brought in a big finish with "It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

After a brief intermission, the audience was brought back in with "It Feels Like Christmas" from "The Muppets Christmas Carol," which featured Sue Spies, Linda McNamara, and Elaine Gernux on violin, as well as Karen Pery on viola and Jenny Peters on cello. Their cohesion as musicians gave the experience that they were just as good of a team as the Muppets themselves.

For the next song, "Christmas Sing-Along", lyrics were provided in the program, though most did not need them. The song started with "Joy to the World", then moved to "O Come, All Ye Faithful", then "Hark The Herald Angels Sing", finishing with "Silent Night."

The strings and winds took turns with the melodies for each part of the sing-along, with many brass players even singing along while the strings played "Silent Night." While the low strings and eventually brass played harmonies and even counter-melodies, one would have thought the audience had rehearsed their singing parts beforehand.

The ending chord hung high in the air, broken only by applause.

"Hebrew Holiday" was another bouncy, fun song. The tambourine helped

bounce everyone along, and the runs passed around the higher winds were especially fluid.

The penultimate number of the night, "A Rhapsody on Christmas Carols" was another medley, this time featuring solos from different instruments. The thunderous timpani brought in the song as a clarinetist and then bassoonist played a low and long solo. Sarah Campbell deserves special mention for the solo on the trombone; the tone and accuracy was incredibly smooth and especially pleasing to listen to.

Other melodic solos passed around the other sections, with the piccolo at the end reminiscent of sleigh bells, tremolos in the strings and long, dramatic chords from the winds culminating in a big finish.

Before beginning the final piece of the night, "Sleigh Ride", the last raffle winner was drawn. Once the number was called, trumpeter Rachel Kellner's daughter, Ginny, came running up the aisle and was handed a conductor's baton.

Black showed her how to conduct, and then Ginny remained at the front to lead the orchestra through the finale.

The joy in the room was palpable as the song compelled audience members to bounce and tap along. The percussion section had to have an especially good time with this one; who doesn't love a good wood clap?

The standing ovation that followed was no surprise to anyone in the audience, and was incredibly well deserved!

This family-friendly concert is family-fun indeed, and can be seen one more time this holiday season on Sunday, Dec. 15 at Mary, Mother of Hope Church in Springfield at 2 p.m.



Elaine Gernux serenades an audience member with "Happy Birthday" during intermission while Alexandria Black sings along.



Alexandria Black (right) shows trumpeter Rachel Kellner (left) and her daughter and raffle winner, Ginny, how to conduct the final song of the night, "Sleigh Ride".



Elaine Gernux (right) poses with Pauline Prince-Lamothe (left), a 102-year-old violinist who sometimes plays with OPRO.

Turley photos by Hannah Yeasley

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GARDEN from page 6

We attribute that to a mild winter last year and ample rainfall. I'm uncertain what the droughty fall will do, if anything, to next year's show.

I also wonder if hydrangeas put on a banner year one year, if the fol-

lowing year will be sparser because they are in recovery mode? I know it happens that way for fruit trees, my Asian pears for example, but not certain if it works the same way with flowering shrubs.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Ag-

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

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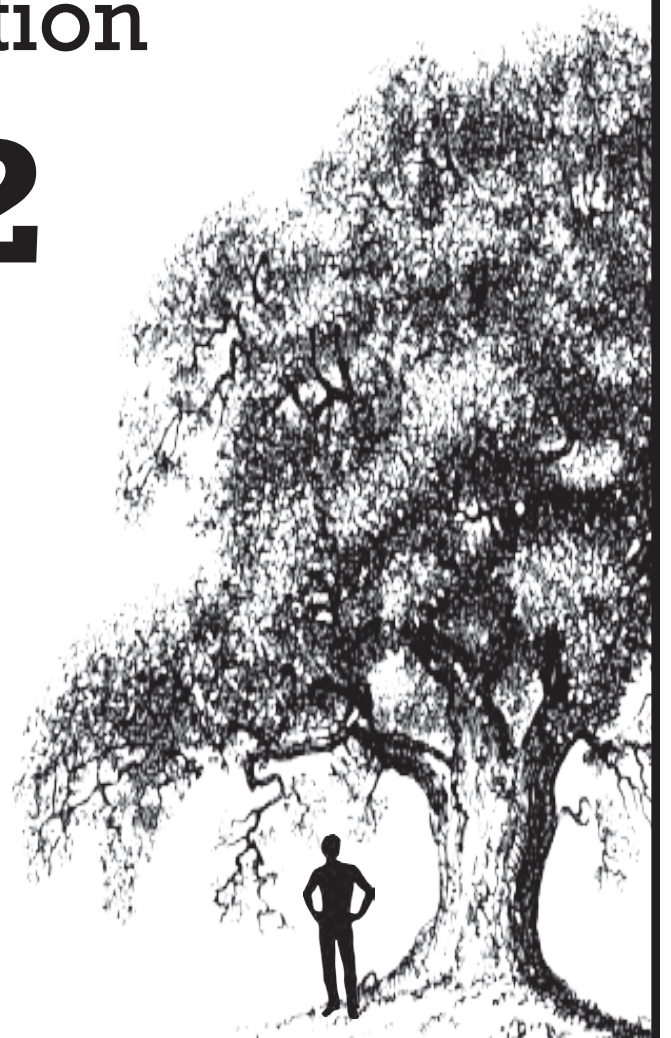
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Scout Troop 359 holds Wreath Sale



Submitted photos and caption Lorna Lawrence



Members of Scout Troop 359 held a Wreath Sale on Dec. 1 in the St. Cecilia Church parking lot from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. The wreaths were decorated with pinecones and berries, with all proceeds going towards camping equipment and materials. Scout Troop 359 extend their thanks to the community for their generous support.

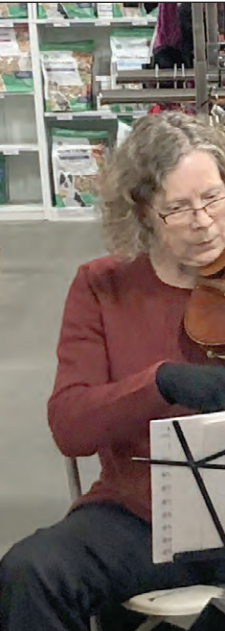


Life in &

WIL HAM

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

Old Post Road Orchestra gives back during holiday season



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WFD responds to Boston Road Fire



Submitted photos and caption Elaine Gernux



Photos and caption courtesy of Wilbraham Fire Department

On Dec. 2, Wilbraham firefighters responded to a commercial property on Boston Road for a leaking 1,000-pound propane tank. Firefighters, along with members of the District Hazardous Materials Team, were able to successfully stop the leak and ensure the safety of the area.

Members of the Old Post Road Orchestra (OPRO) volunteered their time on Saturday, Nov. 30, to provide holiday music for A.W. Brown's "Small Business Saturday" event, getting shoppers and their pets into the holiday spirit! Pictured are Elaine Gernux, the Spies, Linda McNamara, Karen Pery and Elizabeth Gittens.



HPD hosts Coffee with a Cop



Photo and caption courtesy of Hampden Police Department

On Dec. 4, members of the Hampden Police Department hosted a Coffee with a Cop event at Vantage Care in Hampden. A good time was had by all.

AS A COMMUNITY SERVICE BY:

Join Us
NEW YEARS EVE!
Regular Menu & Delicious Specials
Live Music with Dee & Rich 6:30-9:30pm
Dinner & music and still get home early!
Open New Year's Day, Jan. 1st.
Serving 11:30am-9pm

2341 Boston Rd.,
(Rt. 20) Wilbraham
413.279.2020



route20barandgrille.com

Serving: Tuesday-Wednesday 4-9pm
Thursday-Saturday 11:30am-9:30pm
Sunday 10:30am-8pm

with EXTENDED BAR HOURS EVERY NIGHT
CLOSED Christmas Eve & Christmas Day



OBITUARIES

Women's Club Christmas Luncheon Meeting

WILBRAHAM – The Wilbraham Women's Club will be holding their Christmas Luncheon Meeting on Thursday December 12, 2024.

11:30 a.m. for Social followed by Noon Lunch at the St. Cecilia Parish Center.

Holiday Floral Arrangements with Bob Whitney too! Bob will design six holiday arrangements to be raffled off at the end of his presentation.

Area clubs will be invited. There will be a guest fee of \$5 for this program.

Judith E. (Callahan) Tyburski

April 10, 1951 – December 8, 2024

WILBRAHAM - Judith E. (Callahan) Tyburski, 73, of Wilbraham, passed away peacefully on Dec. 8, 2024 surrounded by her loving family. Judy was the daughter of the late James A. Callahan and Katherine A. (Gilmartin) Callahan and upon high school graduation, she attended North Adams State College. Judy then worked for

many years for Mass Mutual Insurance Company from where she retired, but her greatest joy in life was spending time with her family. Judy was the beloved wife of 50 years to Eric E. Tyburski; a loving mother to Caitlin Tyburski of Lowell, VT, Colin Tyburski and wife Jess, of Winooski, VT; a devoted grandmother to Owen; a dear sister to Kathy Callahan, of Braintree; and also leaves many loving extended family members and

dear friends. Visiting hours for Judy will be held on Friday, Dec. 13 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at Ludlow Funeral Home concluding with a funeral home chapel service at 6:30 p.m. Additional services will be held privately by her family.



Death Notices

Judith E. (Callahan) Tyburski, 73
Died Dec. 8, 2024
Services Dec. 13, 2024
Ludlow Funeral Home

'Tis the Season for Giving Back! A Local Charitable Giving Guide

The Local Table-n-Tap Restaurant

2039 Boston Road, Wilbraham
(In front of Big Y)

Collecting Food & Personal Care Items
To Benefit the Community Survival Center donations can be dropped off at The Local throughout the holiday season.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Food Items: | Personal Care Items: |
| • Peanut Butter | • Toothpaste |
| • Corned Beef Hash | • Soap |
| • Breakfast Cereal | • Shampoo |
| • Chunky Soups | • Feminine Hygiene Products |
| • Canned Stews | • Toilet Tissue |
| • Canned Ham | • Deodorant |
| • Canned Tuna | • Dish detergent |
| • Spam | • Laundry detergent |
| • Shelf Stable Milk | |
| • Pasta Sauce | |

Route 20 Bar & Grille

2341 Boston Rd, Wilbraham
(The Wilbraham Shops)

Annual Stuff the Truck Event!
Saturday, Dec 14th 11:30am - 5:00 pm
Collecting NEW warm winter coats, hats, gloves, etc
And NEW unwrapped toys for kids ages 5-15.
Donate and receive a FREE pasta dinner!
(Donations can be dropped off anytime up until Dec. 14)

Hampden Police Association and Hampden Fire Department

3 locations:
Hampden Fire Dept- 19 North Rd., Hampden
Hampden Police Dept- 100 Allen St., Hampden
Monson Savings Bank- 15 Somers Rd., Hampden

Toy Drive to support local families and Brightside for Families and Children
Taking donations of new unwrapped toys now through December 14, 2024.

Stuff the Cruiser / Fill the Firetruck Toy Drive Event
December 14th from 1pm - 4 pm
Parking lot of Bethlehem Church 123 Allen Street, Hampden.
Santa will be there from 2-3pm!

Spartan Auto Care Center

2714 Boston Road, Wilbraham
12th Annual Toys for Tots Campaign
New, unwrapped toys can be dropped off in their waiting room now through mid- December.
Toys will be distributed to local charities and local families.

Luso Federal Credit Union

Two Locations:
599 East Street, Ludlow
1 Crane Park Drive, Wilbraham

Annual Holiday Coloring Contest

For students in grades Pre-K through 8. If you would like a chance for your child to win one of our prize-filled holiday gift bags, please have them complete the coloring sheet for their grade level (Pre-K to 8th Grade). Then return the coloring sheet entry to the credit union by Saturday, December 14, 2024. One winner from each of the different grade levels will be selected on Wednesday, December 18, 2024. Coloring sheets may be picked up at our branch locations or downloaded from our website. Students may drop off their coloring entry to a LUSO staff member on your school banking day or bring the entry to either branch location.

Holiday Toy Drive

Collecting new, unwrapped toy donations for children in need within our community. Drop off your toys at either of our branch locations by Saturday, December 14th. In the spirit of the season, for each toy donated, you will receive an entry to win a gift card wreath valued at \$150.

Pioneer Valley Financial Group

535 East Street, Ludlow

Ludlow Teachers Supply Drive

We have partnered with the Ludlow VFW to collect classroom supplies to help teachers in the second half of the school year. Drop off supplies now through January 3rd.
PV Financial Group
535 East St, Ludlow
Ludlow Veterans Center
487 Holyoke St, Ludlow

Classroom supplies:

- Colored copy paper
- Colored & white card stock
- Sharpies
- Expo Markers
- Index cards
- Pre-sharpened
- Ticonderoga pencils
- 2 pocket folders
- Gift cards to Amazon or Staples

Cleaning supplies:

- Cleaning/disinfectant wipes
- Alcohol wipes
- Baby wipes
- Paper towels
- Hand sanitizer
- Liquid soap
- Microfiber cloths

PV Financial Annual First Responders Appreciation Dinner

Inviting all law enforcement officers and first responders, current and retired veterans to attend a fun night of dinner, games, and prizes.
January 9, 2025 at the Gremio Lusitano Club, 385 Winsor St, Ludlow.

Richard R. Green Insurance Agency, Inc.

2 locations:
32 Somers Road, Hampden
128 Main Street, Monson

20th Annual Collection for Children and Veterans.

Collecting new, unwrapped toys to benefit the "I Found Light Foundation". Also collecting gifts for veterans, a project we are working on with the Hampden Senior Center. For our veterans project we need individually wrapped snacks, cookies, crackers, granola bars, hard candy & chocolates, mini hand sanitizers, hot chocolate packets, and word search /puzzle type books.

Cash Donations for the Monson Senior Center

We are collecting cash donations to benefit the Monson Senior Center. We will match up to the first \$1,000 in donations!
Collecting gifts for all three through December 15th.
Please call 566-0028 or 267-3495 for more information.



HasBeen Collectible Toys & Comics hosts Holiday Toy Drive



Mike Bolduc, owner and runner of Lunch Money Comics YouTube channel, poses with just some of the early donations.



Aaron Archer, long time toy designer and the day's special guest, sits behind his table. Stickers, paintings, and character cards were just some of the items available for purchase.



Two young local comic book creators, Sam (left) and Jack (right) stand behind the raffle prize table, showing off the Lunch Money Comics T-shirts, which were also prizes or available to buy.



From the left, Casey Alvarez, Maddie Alvarez and Allana Alvarez pose, dressed as Santa's Helpers, behind the food and drink station, offering fresh coffee or hot cocoa to shoppers and donators alike.



From left to right: A Christmas Polar Bear, Santa, and an Elf all visiting from the North Pole wave to drivers outside the store.

By Hannah Yeasley
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The first annual Holiday Toy Drive at HasBeen Collectible Toys & Comics in Wilbraham kicked off at Noon on Sunday, Dec. 8, with owner Rik Alvarez partnering with Lunch Money Comics owner Mike Bolduc to host the event.

The drive, which lasted from Noon to 4 p.m., aimed to collect unopened toys to donate to local children in need as well as raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Rik Alvarez, long-time Wilbraham local, just opened HasBeen in March and jumped at the opportunity to host a community-oriented event this holiday season.

"I love my town," Alvarez said. "So, the fact that these gifts are mainly going to local families is so special."

The donated items are picked up by the police department, sent out to families in the area, and then the remaining items are sent to a church in Ware to be more largely distributed.

Along with bringing their own items, donors had the opportunity to buy toys from HasBeen and donate them. One item brought got an attendee one raffle ticket, while anything bought on site and donated could earn as many as 15 raffle tickets.

Raffle winners could choose from a plethora of comics and memorabilia provided by Lunch Money Comics [LMC], including t-shirts donated by a local shirt maker with their logo on them.

LMC is a local comics YouTube channel that has been running for years and has 16.5K subscribers.

Owner Mike Bolduc has been a close friend of Alvarez's and decided to partner on this year's event.

"We both love comics, and we both wanted to help other people out, especially local children," Bolduc said. "So, the decision to throw an event like this was incredibly easy."

Not only was it a Toy Drive, but Bolduc wanted to extend be-

yond that and send money to charity.

"Any additional monetary donations from today are going to the Muscular Dystrophy Association," Bolduc said. "So, it's nice to be able to kind of do two things at once today."

In preparation for this event, Bolduc released a video on his YouTube channel as a promotion for it. It was viewed almost 7,000 times, even if not everyone was local.

One viewer did attend, making the drive from Londonderry, New Hampshire.

"Me and my dad watch every video that he makes," Michael Hegarty said. "We saw the video for this event, and figured it would be cool to check out. It was definitely worth the drive."

While attendees shopped, chatted and drank hot cocoa, they could also visit with special guest Aaron Archer.

Archer worked as a toy de-

signer and character creator at Hasbro, designing characters and toys for brands like G.I. Joe, Batman, Jurassic Park and Transformers.

"At Hasbro I would do a thorough build of a character," Archer said. "Imagining what it looked like, if it had any powers or weapons, drawing it and even adjusting prototypes to figure out how it would actually function as a toy."

While Archer worked on many different brands over the years, his favorites are Batman and Transformers, even working as a creative partner for all things Transformers: films, toys, video games, rides and animations.

Original Archer art and commissions were available at his table during Sunday's event.

Alvarez also worked at Hasbro toys for many years as a Toy Designer and Creative Manager, never losing his love for all things Transformers.

"I'm going for the Guinness

World Record of most Transformers items owned," Alvarez said.

The current record is 10,568 items, but Alvarez has at least one thing that the current record holder is missing: a large, original Optimus Prime statue.

Local artist and metalworker Lars Johnson was commissioned to create a statue of Optimus Prime that could be a permanent fixture outside of HasBeen.

Johnson made the statue out of flat sheet metal and other various parts that were found, bought or collected from scrap yards. The Prime statue can be seen right outside HasBeen's front door, holding their flag and currently festively decorated with a Santa hat.

The HasBeen and LMC team are looking forward to making this holiday toy drive an annual event.

In the meantime, one can turn to the famous words of Optimus Prime:

"Autobots, transform and roll out!"

PUBLIC NOTICES

TOWN OF HAMPDEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, (MGL CH 131, S 40), it's implementing regulations (310 CMP 10.00) and the Town of Hampden's Wetlands Protection Bylaws, the Hampden Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 6 PM at the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, for a Notice of Intent, (NOI), submitted by the Town of Hampden for Bridge Repairs: South Road over Ballard Brook (H-04-007). Additional information relating to this request is on file in the Conservation Commission office and available for review by the public by contacting the Commission. Anyone interested in or wishing to be heard on the request may appear at the time and place designated.

Hampden Conservation Commission

12/20/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758

Docket No. HD24P2350EA
Estate of:
Matthew Phillip Metzler
Date of Death: 02/22/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by John E Pearson of Greenfield, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: John E Pearson of Greenfield, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 12/31/2024. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the

Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: December 03, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
12/13/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD24P2498EA
Estate of:
Jacqueline Steele
Also known as:
Jacqueline Kittridge
Date of Death: 01/22/2024
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL

ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by William A Steele of Wilbraham, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: William A Steele of Wilbraham, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 01/03/2024. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you

fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)

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

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.
Date: December 02, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
12/12/2024

POP Orthodontics opens its doors in Post Office Park



An exterior shot of POP Orthodontics in Post Office Park in Wilbraham.

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - POP Orthodontics has officially opened its doors in Post Office Park, providing orthodontic care to the community.

Stepping inside the space at 75 Post Office Park #7507, you will find a waiting room space, art curated by local artist Kim Carlino, clinic and consultation rooms, office space for staff and more.

Their services include comprehensive treatment through traditional braces or Invisalign and a range of specialty appliances for limited treatment.

POP Orthodontics is open most evenings and a few days during the week, with some Saturdays open as well. They accept most insurances and provide flexible payment options for patients.

Anyone interested can visit mypoortho.com to schedule a free consultation.

Ana Serrenho, the owner of POP Orthodontics, has an extensive background, having worked as a dental hygienist and a clinical hygienist through the Boston University Goldman Dental School, previously working at Lawrence Braces, PC and also--and still works--at Holyoke Health Center. She has professional memberships in the American Dental Association, Massachusetts Dental Society, Valley District Dental Society, American Association of Orthodontists, the Northeast Society of Orthodontists, the Massachusetts Association of Orthodontists and the World Federation of Orthodontists.

She also was the Massachusetts Dental Society 10 Under Ten recipient in 2017 and a recipient of the Massachusetts Association of Orthodontists Anthony Ginnelly Award in 2018.

Serrenho has been working in the dental field since she was 16 years old, receiving a lot of exposure to the positive impacts an orthodontist can have on the well-being of their patients.

"Our mission is to provide high-quality, convenient and comfortable orthodontic care. We have the latest in technology and use cloud software systems to streamline scheduling, billing and patient communication," Serrenho said.

Serrenho shared she always wanted orthodontics as she had spacing on her front teeth growing up and "was very self-conscious of it."

"(I) would not smile for photos," Serrenho said. "Psychosocial effects of a less-than-perfect smile can be long-lasting such as decreased self-esteem, social anxiety, feelings of embarrassment, etc. and I really enjoy making a difference in kids' lives."

When asked what she enjoys most about her work, Serrenho said the patients.

"I love that each patient is unique. There's no one-size-fits-all to orthodontics! I specialize in working with children," Serrenho said. "It's so rewarding to help kids overcome their concerns and help them achieve beautiful and functional smiles."

She stressed the importance of continuity.

"Continuity is not only important for the kids, but parents also want the same orthodontist overseeing the entire treatment for the whole family. That's something you are much more likely to get with a locally-owned ortho office versus a corporate ortho practice," Serrenho said. "I also like the community I practice in, which creates an added sense of responsibility."

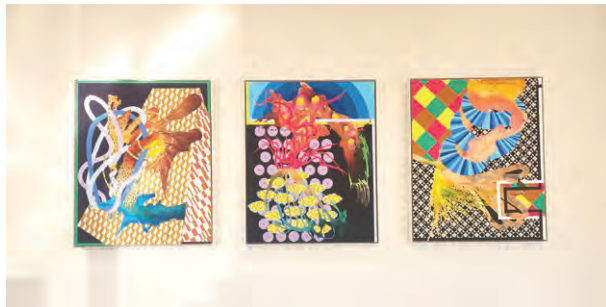
Michael Nordstrom, a practice administrator at Pediatric Services of Springfield that is also in Post Office Park,



A consultation space and private clinic space inside POP Orthodontics.



A wide shot of the clinic spaces to work on patients at POP Orthodontics in Wilbraham.



A shot of art painted by local artist Kim Carlino inside the waiting room space at POP Orthodontics in Wilbraham.

Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

expressed excitement at Serrenho's practice moving into the area.

"We are excited to welcome POP Orthodontics as our newest neighbor! Dr. Serrenho's practice is a wonderful addition to Post Office Park, perfectly complementing the other services we offer in our shared mission to meet the healthcare needs of the community," Nordstrom said.

Glen Garvey, the owner and developer of Post Office Park and who also owns 75 Post Office Park, was also thrilled to have another local business move in.

"The feedback, first and foremost from the patients, has been outstanding. She lives here in town," Garvey said. "She's very involved in the community and she's available for people when they want to get together, doesn't really matter what time the appointment is...so it makes it very, very convenient for her to have an office here and be a resident of the town to meet with her patients and the parents when it works for them."

Garvey said Serrenho has already left a positive impact on the community by meeting with and supporting the other businesses, along with her work with the patients.

"She's super high-energy, very social, very genuine," Garvey said. "Which I know resonates with her patients."

Garvey encouraged residents to reach



Photos courtesy of Ana Serrenho

A "POP Star," known as one of the young patients at POP Orthodontics, Bradley Ball, dropping off his letter to Santa during his visit to POP Orthodontics.

out to Serrenho for their orthodontic needs.

"With her work ethic and her drive and her skill as an orthodontist, going to be great. Going to be very successful in all of her endeavors," Garvey said.

Serrenho thanked the community for their support and looks forward to serving them.

"As someone who grew up in Ludlow and moved back to Wilbraham from Boston in 2017, I am thrilled to be able to provide services to the local community," Serrenho said.

To learn more, check out their Facebook and Instagram pages at [@mypoortho](https://www.facebook.com/mypoortho), visit mypoortho.com or call 413-675-7570.

Find Your Calm: Join our Gentle Yoga Retreat

WILBRAHAM - Join us for our Gentle Yoga Retreat on Friday, Dec. 13 at 10 a.m. to Noon at the Wilbraham Senior Center.

Reconnect with your inner peace at our Gentle Yoga Retreat. This retreat is designed for all abilities with a focus on mindfulness, relaxation, and healing.

You will be guided through a restorative yoga session consisting of gentle movement and balance followed by a guided meditation practice and extended savasana.

This event is FREE thanks to the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors.

Non-Senior Center members are welcome!

Please call the Senior Center to register. 413-596-8379

Hanukkah - It's NOT Jewish Christmas

WILBRAHAM - Norah and Craig Kazan will be hosting a free educational presentation at the Wilbraham Senior Center

Hanukkah is the Jewish Festival of Lights and occurs in proximity to Christmas each year. Come learn a little bit about the Jewish religion, the significance of Hanukkah in the Jewish calendar, and sample some of the culture surrounding this holiday.

- We will be discussing:
- 1) Very brief overview of Judaism
 - 2) The Jewish Calendar and Holidays
 - 3) The story of Hanukkah and its significance
 - 4) Observance and meaning in Israel vs. the United States
 - 5) Lighting the Menorah
 - 6) Games
 - 7) Foods
 - 8) Open Forum

Dec. 20 at 1 p.m. at the Wilbraham Senior Center. This is a free presentation that all are welcome to join.

Please call the sign up at 596-8379

Heritage "Pops" Orchestra Christmas Party Dinner & Dance

LUDLOW - Celebrate the Christmas Season with The Big Band Sounds of the 19-piece Heritage "Pops" Orchestra with vocals by Ann Maggs on Friday, Dec. 13, 2024. Includes Hors d'oeuvres, Dinner & Dessert.

There will be dancing, 50/50 Raffle and Cash Bar.

The event will take place at the

Polish American Citizens Club on 355 East Street in Ludlow.

Hors d'oeuvres 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Grand Buffet Dinner by John Diotalevi at 6:30 p.m. Music and Dancing from 7 to 10 p.m.

Advance tickets available for \$25 at the PACC bar or call Bob at 413-636-7588 or call Paul at 413-800-4164.

Storytime at the Wilb. Public Library

WILBRAHAM - Registration is now open for the winter session of Storytime at the Wilbraham Public Library. Join Mrs. B for a fun collection of stories, songs, and fingerplays geared for children ages three to six.

Kids must come in independently and parents/ caretaker must wait

in the library. Sessions run for six weeks.

Winter session dates: Thursday January 9, 2025 to February 13, 2025 at 10 a.m.

Call the library at (413) 596-6141 or visit www.wilbrahamlibrary.org to register.

SPORTS

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

SEND US YOUR SPORTS SUBMISSIONS

www.sports.turley.com

Alumni game brings big crowd



The Annual Minnechaug Regional Alumni Boys Soccer game was held on Friday, Nov. 29, with a great turnout and a fun time the day after Thanksgiving.



The game has historically featured players from recent graduates to longtime alumni.



Nick Guidi makes a play.

Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande



WILBRAHAM – After the pouring rains of Thanksgiving Day, the day after was bright and sunny and featured the Annual Minnechaug Regional High School Boys Soccer Alumni Game at the Wilbraham Club fields. This year's event marked the 25th year of the game with players in attendance from California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and all across Massachusetts. Close to 60 players participated in the game, including many players from the current year's varsity team, with two fields being utilized at once.

While it rained on Thanksgiving, the skies were bright for this year's alumni game.



Matthew O'Keefe makes his way up the field.



The former Falcons are up for some stiff competition on the holiday morning.



The alumni game is led by former coach John Ingalls.

Pastreck commits to Southern Connecticut

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—Many of the girls' soccer players at Minnechaug Regional High School have continued playing the sport at the collegiate level since Nundi Goncalves took over as the varsity coach in 1995.

Senior goalkeeper Makenzi Pastreck is the newest member of the college club.

Surrounded by her parents, teammates, coaches, and friends, Pastreck signed her National Letter of Intent to play soccer at Southern Connecticut State University during a signing ceremony held at the school on November 20.

"Having my parents, teammates, coaches, and friends watching me sign my letter made it a very special day for me," Pastreck said. "Nundi is a great coach and he's the biggest reason why our soccer program has been so successful over the years. He always pushes us to become better players."

Goncalves, who has compiled a 370-126-87 overall record during the past 30 years, will be receiving the Larry E. Briggs Award at the Pioneer Valley Soccer Official Awards Banquet on December 6. The Briggs Award is annually given to a person who exemplifies the high standards and contributions to soccer over a long period of time.

During the four years that Pastreck was a member of the varsity soccer team, the Lady Falcons posted a 46-19-10 overall record.

"Makenzi has become one of the best goalies that I've ever coached here. She has improved a lot since she was in the ninth grade," Goncalves said. "Having good soccer players like Makenzie is one of the reasons why we've been so successful over the years. Players win games."

One of the reasons why Pastreck decided to attend Southern Connecticut, which is a Division 2 school in New Haven, was its location.

"I always wanted to play college soccer close to home," she said. "During my recruiting process, Southern Connecticut became my top choice. I'm very excited about playing soccer there next year."

The head coach of Southern Connecticut University women's soccer team is Adam Cohen, who's been coaching at the school for the past 20 years.

Pastreck isn't the first Minnechaug girls' soccer player to play at Southern Connecticut

Sarah Brochu, who was a member of the Lady Falcons 2008 state championship team, was a starting defender at SCSU. Tamara Zippin, who's a goalie, also began her collegiate soccer career at Southern Conn before finishing her soccer career at A.I.C.

Two of Makenzi's biggest supporters are her parents, Robin and Bob.

"My parents are very happy for me," she said. "They've always been my biggest supporters."

Pastreck and Kylie Ray, who recently wrapped up her freshman season as a member of the women's soccer team at Seton Hall University, were teammates on the Minnechaug soccer team for three years.

"Kylie was one of my role models when she was in high school," Pastreck said. "She's an outstanding soccer player and she taught me a lot."

One of the Lady Falcons current players who looks up to Pastreck as a role model is junior Ava Kearney,



File photos

Makenzi Pastreck departs Minnechaug next year and has committed to play college soccer at Southern Connecticut State University.

who didn't play this season because of an ACL injury.

"Makenzi is a role model to me," Kearney said. "It's going to be very special seeing her play college soccer. It's something that I would like to do in a couple of years."

Goncalves didn't realize that Pastreck was a goalie on the first day of practice when she was a freshman.

"My mom didn't sign me up as a goalie, so Nundi thought I was only a field player," said Pastreck, who became a goalie in the fifth grade. "I had my gloves on at the first day of practice, and he asked me if I was a goalie. I told him yes. I really enjoy being a goalie."

Pastreck wound up seeing a lot of playing time for the varsity team that season.

Alyssa Russell, who entered the 2021 campaign as the Lady Falcons returning starting goalie, suffered an injury.

Pastreck wound up starting eleven games and split playing time with Russell in four other matches. Pastreck finished her freshman season with five shutouts and a total of 66 saves.

"Alyssa got injured when I was a freshman and there was a lot of pressure on me," Pastreck said. "Being a goalie is a very difficult position to play. When I was younger, I always felt like I needed to work harder because I didn't want to disappoint the upper classmen. I've improved my skills a lot during the past four years."

The Lady Falcons, who finished the 2021 season with a 9-7-2 record, advanced to the semifinals of the Western Mass. Class A tournament and the round of 16 in the inaugural Division 2 state tournament.

The only two teams to beat Minnechaug during the regular season the following season were Westborough and Coombs Division rival East Longmeadow.

Minnechaug faced East Long-

meadow for the third time in the Western Mass. Finals and they celebrated a 2-1 victory in a penalty shootout. Pastreck made a couple of saves during the shootout which helped her soccer team capture the Western Mass. title for the first time in seven years.

The Lady Falcons also advanced to the state semifinals where their magical season came to an end with a 1-0 loss to Silver Lake. They finished the memorable 2022 season with a 19-3-2 overall record.

"We did qualify for the postseason tournament all four years that I played for the varsity soccer team," Pastreck said. "We were able to win the Western Mass. title, and we made it to the semifinals of the state tournament when I was a sophomore. We were a very close team, and it was probably our best season. I'll never forget it."

Pastreck, who made a total of 122 saves, posted a shutout in 15 games as a sophomore.

The Lady Falcons didn't make it back to Western Mass. finals during the past two seasons.

In this year's Western Mass. semifinals, they lost to top-seeded Pope Francis in a penalty shootout.

Pastreck's outstanding varsity soccer career came to an end following a 1-0 setback at Westborough in the round of 16 in the Division 2 state tournament.

Pastreck, who only allowed 13 goals this fall, posted a total of 43 shutouts and made 481 saves in 75 career varsity games.

The other seniors listed on the Lady Falcons 2024 roster are Mackenzie DaFonseca, Nora Kennedy, and Taylor Labadorf. The four seniors were also the team captains this year.

"Makenzi has always worked very hard, so this is a special day for her," Labadorf said. "She's a very good goalie."

Minnechaug winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Friday, Dec. 13	Away	Wahconah	7 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 16	Away	Agawam	7 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 19	Home	Taconic	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 23	Home	Pittsfield	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 27	Away	West Springfield	1 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 30	Home	Tantasqua	12:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 3	Home	Westfield	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 7	Away	Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 10	Away	Commerce	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 14	Home	Chicopee Comp.	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 16	Away	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 21	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 23	Home	Pope Francis	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 28	Home	Commerce	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 31	Away	Chicopee Comp.	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 4	Home	East Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 6	Away	Northampton	7:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 10	Home	Amherst	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Wednesday, Dec. 18	Home	Holyoke	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 20	Home	Central	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 27	Away	Wachusett	1:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 30	Away	Tantasqua	12:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 3	Home	Northampton	7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 7	Away	Westfield	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 9	Home	Chicopee Comp.	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 13	Away	Chicopee	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 16	Home	East Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 20	Home	Pittsfield	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 23	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 27	Home	Chicopee Comp.	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 30	Away	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 31	Away	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 3	Away	Pittsfield	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 5	Home	SICS	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 11	Away	East Longmeadow	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 12	Home	Granby, Conn.	6:30 p.m.

Ice Hockey

Saturday, Dec. 14	Home	Ludlow	12:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 21	Away	Ludlow	2:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 23	Home	East Longmeadow	3 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 26	Away	Longmeadow	8:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 27	Home	Amherst	2 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 2	Away	Westfield	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 9	Away	East Longmeadow	8:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 11	Home	Auburn	4:10 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 16	Away	West Springfield	8:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 18	Away	Marlborough	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 23	Home	Greenfield	8:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 25	Away	Greenfield	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 30	Home	Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 6	Home	West Springfield	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 8	Away	Grafton	12 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 13	Home	Westfield	8:30 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 15	Home	Northbridge	4:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 17	Home	Westborough	10 a.m.

Boys and Girls Swimming

Friday, Dec. 13	Home	Northampton	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 14	Away	Deerfield Academy	2 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 16	Away	West Springfield	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 18	Home	Amherst	5:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 3	Away	Holyoke	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 7	Away	Central	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 14	Away	Chicopee Comp.	5:15 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 17	Home	Agawam	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 21	Away	East Longmeadow	5 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 24	Home	Belchertown	6 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 25	Away	TBD	TBD
Monday, Jan. 27	Home	Westfield	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 29	Away	Longmeadow	5 p.m.

Wrestling

Wednesday, Dec. 18	Away	West Springfield	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 8	Away	Central	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 11	Away	Catholic Memorial	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 15	Away	Agawam	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 22	Home	Chicopee	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 25	Away	Methuen Duals	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 29	Home	Putnam	7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 1	Away	East Longmeadow	11 a.m.



Submitted photo

Callan Weber, 7, received another All-American award during a recent national meet.

Young harrier runs into honor

LEXINGTON, KY – Seven-year-old Callan Weber, of Wilbraham, takes home third Cross Country All-American Honor. Callan competed at the Cross Country Coaches Youth National Championships in Masterson Station Park in Lexington, Kentucky this past weekend. Weber raced the 2K where he placed 5th with a time of 8:39.08 over a very hilly course earning his first All American Honor of the season. With this honor Weber is now a nine-time All American in Track and Field/Cross Country including a sixth-place finish in this meet a year ago. Weber is trained by his parents Jason and Kelsey Weber. Both are track and field coaches at WNEU and Minnechaug. Callan looks to place again at the AAU National Championships in McAlpine Creek Park, North Carolina in two weeks.

T-Birds stay on track with big OT win

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (12-9-1-0) clawed back from 1-0 down after 40 minutes and emerged with a 2-1 overtime victory over the Rockford IceHogs (8-10-3-0) before a sold-out crowd of 6,793 on Saturday night at the MassMutual Center.

After the two clubs exchanged chances in the opening five minutes, the opening period brought very little in the way of offense against Springfield netminder Vadim Zherenko or Rockford goalie Mitchell Weeks.

The T-Birds were uncharacteristically sloppy in the defensive zone, and a pivotal turnover at 2:59 of the second period resulted in Rockford's opening goal as Cole Guttman picked off a loose puck in the middle of the zone and slipped a five-hole shot through Zherenko to make it 1-0 IceHogs. It marked the first time in eight games that the T-Birds allowed the first goal of a game.

Offense did not come easily for Springfield, as the home team was outshot

16-6 in the middle period. Zherenko was at his best, making a pair of other break-away saves on Guttman among his 24 denials through 40 minutes of play.

Zherenko rose up to make a game-changing stop in the opening seconds of the third, as he stretched out with the left leg to stonewall Samuel Savoie on a breakaway bid to keep the score at 1-0.

Less than three minutes later, Tyler Tucker continued his torrid goal-scoring weekend, flipping a point shot over Weeks on the glove side, bringing about a Teddy Bear storm and equalizing the game, 1-1.

It appeared as if the Thunderbirds had taken the lead just a few moments later when a Michael Buchinger shot bounded high in the air and into the blue paint. Matthew Peca jabbed the loose puck across the goal line, seemingly making it a 2-1 Springfield lead. Despite being called a goal on the ice, the officials gathered and ultimately waved off the tally, and the 1-1 tie carried to the end of regulation.

The T-Birds rewarded their netmind-

er in the extra session at 3:42 with their 19-year-old phenom stepping into the spotlight. After Aleksanteri Kaskimaki fed the puck through neutral ice to Dalibor Dvorsky, a 2-on-1 developed with Tucker joining the rush. Dvorsky patiently curled the puck to the middle of the ice around a sprawled defender before launching a perfect shot glove-side on Weeks to give Springfield its second overtime win in as many nights.

The rookie's team-leading 10th goal of the season also went down as his first overtime game-winner as a pro. Springfield has now won four straight games and is 8-1-1 in its last ten games, springboarding the team into third place in the Atlantic Division standings.

The T-Birds next embark on one of their longest road trips of the season, beginning with a Saturday contest in Wilkes-Barre against the Penguins on Dec. 14 at 6:05 p.m. at Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza.

Railers fall to Maine Mariners

WORCESTER – The Railers 4-3 loss to Maine Saturday night dropped their record at the DCU Center to 3-6-1 in 2024-25. That compares with a .500 mark on the road at 6-6-0.

There is no logic to it, nor is there any specific area or areas that Worcester needs to be better at.

"I don't think there is any one thing you can put on that," coach Bob Deraney said. "There is nothing that significant that says why we've been better on the road than at home."

Some of the Railers' home losses have been lopsided and interesting. This one was headed that way but turned out to have a thrilling, if disappointing, finish.

Worcester fell behind early, 2-0 and the Mariners eventually stretched that lead to 4-1. Then the Railers came alive late in the third period, scoring goals at 11:07 and 18:29, but could overcome the early deficit.

Griffin Loughran, Anthony Repaci and Anthony Callin had the Worcester goals. Owen Pederson, Justin Bean, Jim-

my Lambert and Matthew Philip scored for the Mariners, who snapped a four-game losing streak.

Callin was one of the Railers best players last season. His goal late in the third period was a beauty, a high hard snap shot from the right circle with Worcester having an extra skater, and his first of the year.

"I think it's huge," Deraney said of that goal. "I know it's been weighing on him. He's been second-guessing himself, gripping the stick too tight, all those things that happen to a guy who cares so much and wants to contribute to the team."

Repaci scored shorthanded at 11:07 to make it 4-2. He converted a pass from Matt DeMelis. Repaci continues to have a memorable, and perhaps in the long run, unprecedented season. He was 1-1-2 Saturday night and is 16-8-24 in 22 games.

Repaci is up to 160 points in a Worcester uniform. He is tied with Ice-Cats forward Marc Brown for third most in city history.

The Railers could not find any offensive traction until the game was almost over. Maine had the best of things by far, both in terms of time of possession and quality of scoring chances.

The first period was an omen of things to come. About three minutes after the puck drop the Railers incurred three consecutive icing calls in a span of 30 seconds. Then Pederson scored from 15 feet out at 7:37 into the period and Bean put one over Michael Bullion's glove at 9:23 to make it 2-0.

Loughran's goal was a thrilling one. Early in the first period he caused a turnover that turned into a breakaway, but he got in too deep and Maine goalie Ryan Bischel stopped him. This time he was set up by a great pass from Connor Welch and zoomed in at top speed. His wrist shot from between the circles was essentially unstoppable.

Lambert made it a 3-1 game at 6:39 of the third period, beating Bullion from the side of the net. Philip scored on a break-away at 17:54.

This Week in Rec

Bryan Litz,
Parks & Recreation Director

WILBRAHAM - We have now had our first snowfall of the year, Thanksgiving has come and gone and we are one step closer to Christmas!

Thanksgiving week, when most are preparing for family and lots of good food, WPRD was busy preparing for two big events, the Friends of Recreation

(F.O.R.) celebrity bartender event held at Pafumi's and the Play for MKJ Turkey Day Jamboree.

The celebrity bartender event was the first of its kind held by F.O.R., and it was a full house from start to finish with what seemed like all having a good time. Big thank you to Pafumi's for allowing us to take over their space on Thanksgiving Eve, the event raised a lot of money towards the various causes that F.O.R. sup-

ports. Once we wrapped up the Wednesday night event, then took a day off to enjoy Thanksgiving, we hit the ground running Friday, Saturday and Sunday with our big basketball jamboree. The Turkey Day Jamboree has been renamed in memory of Melissa Kowalski James, and this year's event added lots of stuff centered around Melissa. We set yet another record in regards to enrollment, with 104 teams, and

utilized five courts and four different venues. Couple minor hiccups and behavioral issues, but overall another great jamboree and thanks to all for making it such a success!

NOTE: To register for all of our programs and for more information, please visit WilbrahamRec.com.

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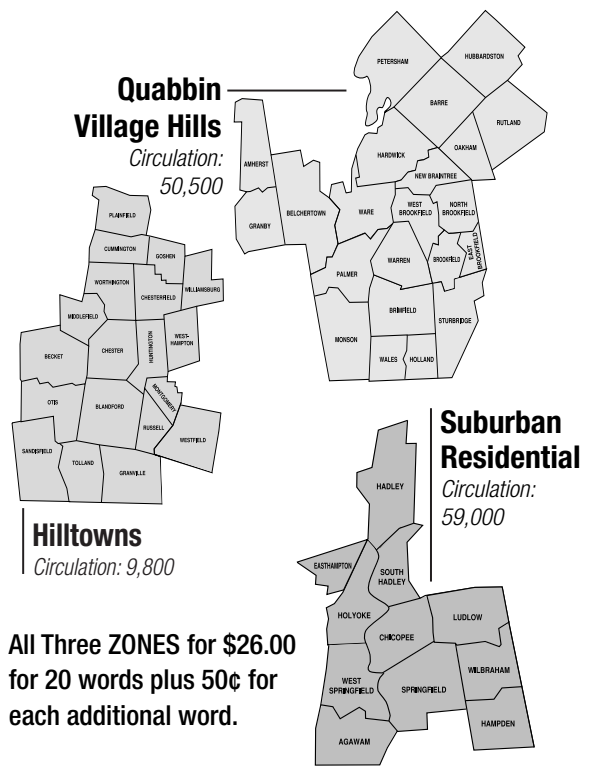
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Photos courtesy of the Felt Family
Macy Felt stands with various book donations to support underprivileged children.

MACY from page 1

countries such as Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand with three carry-on suitcases worth of books.

"I really like reading, it's my favorite thing to do," Felt said. "And then I noticed that not all kids have that same opportunity as me and having access to books. So, I decided I wanted to donate books to kids for my birthday... My goal was like a hundred dollars, maybe ten books donated. But when I found out that I raised over 2,000, I

was so happy and we were able to donate so many books to kids who needed them. I feel so accomplished that I could do this and I feel very thankful that my parents and my brother and all these other people I didn't know, they helped support me in this journey."

Macy's mother, Mary Kate Feit, also spoke about her daughter and the journey to help people be able to read, sharing this about the donations.

"We had people we knew; we had people we knew share it and then people they knew when went and donated. So, you

know there was an example as my sister's friend donated, who we kind of knew from my sister's wedding, but not a lot. So, a lot of people, we even barely knew, heard about Macy's Mission and got really interested and decided to be a part of it," she said.

Surrounding her daughter, she said this.

"It's been really cool how a ten-year-old can have a goal and through the support of her community she's able to make such a big impact. Seeing the photos, and my mom telling us about giving the books to these children, and these were children that don't have books at home and how excited they

were to just walk around carry the book with them. It was pretty cool," she said.

Out of the \$2,300 raised, \$1,500 went to Big Brother Mouse in Laos, and the rest of the money was split between the Gray House and the Springfield Boys and Girls Club.

It is so amazing how one girl can have an idea to make such a large impact on others, and then take that action and give back to others. It was able to help many people across the world achieve something so wonderful that we can easily often take for granted: The ability to read.



Beth Jones and Jeanie Marsh are with various elementary students who have benefitted from Macy's Mission.



Many elementary students benefitted from the books that were donated from Macy's Mission.

HPL from page 1

Youth Services Librarian Kate Rumpalik was ecstatic with the turnout, calling it "an exciting day" and thanking the Key Club members, Friends and Santa and Mrs. Claus for their support.

"I try and find a bunch of different things for all the different kids. They can write letters to Santa, they can make some reindeer food, some ornaments for the tree. I have some winter things like winter puzzles and some little tattoos they can put on, things like that," Rumpalik said. "So, a little something for everybody."

Rumpalik loves how the event brings families together. "It's just a nice way for people to come together. I really like in the library that everything is free. So, it doesn't matter what you need. You can come and just do crafts and visit Santa and do whatever you want and everybody's welcome," Rumpalik said. "And it's a good time for the kids."

She added events like this are also bonding experiences for the parents.

"They come in and spend time with their kids. Honestly, the only time I've seen phones out is when they're taking pictures over there at the photo booth. People are doing crafts with their kids," Rumpalik said. "It's a really quality experience I feel like."

For Santa and Mrs. Claus, seeing the joy on the children's faces was everything, especially after they made their special arrival in Hampden last Sunday for the town's tree lighting.

"Now that we're inside, they can come and really talk to us and see us again," Mrs. Claus said. "It's a very joyful, happy occasion."

"What we enjoy most is the children. Christmas is about the children, so to see the smiles on the kids' faces and to see that they're enjoying themselves and looking forward to Christmas, that's what it's all about," Santa said.

Mrs. Claus emphasized the importance of bringing peace and joy to others.

"We need more peace and joyful happiness in this world. There's not enough right now, so we need more. So, if we could do our part and make everyone happy, especially the children, and the mommies and daddies, I think, are very happy too when they see us," Mrs. Claus said. "So, we feel glad that we can do that."

The Big Man himself was thrilled many families stopped by to visit.

"That just adds to it. I guess you could say the more the merrier!" Santa said.

Mrs. Claus also enjoys the surprise gifts the children bring.

"Sometimes, the children go down to the crafts room and they bring stuff up and they give them to us that they made with the colored paper," Mrs. Claus said. "So, we take them back to the North Pole with us. We're so happy that they do that."

Rumpalik hopes the community has "a fabulous holiday season."

"I'm so glad everybody came out to visit with us today and had a great time!" Rumpalik said. "I've had a couple of kids that have been coming for a long time. I've had a couple--I think they're in sixth or seventh grade now--that come out and get their picture taken with Santa. So, I feel like it's one of those events that people know is coming every year and they come to spend time with the families. So, I hope everybody enjoyed it and we'll be back at it again next year!"

Santa and Mrs. Claus wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

"We really enjoy being part of this library's Christ-



Alena and her mom, Debra Brown from Spudley's Sweets, take a "sweet" family photo as gingerbread men during the Children's Holiday Party.



Ruthie tosses a ring during the Grinch ring toss game.



Members of the Friends of the Hampden Free Public Library take a break from serving refreshments to pose for this festive group photo, festive Christmas sweaters included.



The legacy of the Rochfords comes full circle as Beau Francis Reed, the great-great grandson of Margaret Rochford, and his parents, pose for a photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus in the Rochford Reading Room. Margaret Rochford was the children's librarian for 25 years in Hampden, with the Rochford Reading Room having been named in her honor.



Morgan looks in awe at Santa as she and her mom, Melissa Martucci, meet Santa and Mrs. Claus in the Rochford Reading Room.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
Attendees had the opportunity to make their own reindeer food during the Children's Holiday Party in Hampden.



Children enjoy making their own festive ornaments with volunteers from Minnechaug Regional High School's Key Club.

"We like to make the whole town of Hampden a very peaceful, joyful Christmas because we all need that," Mrs. Claus said.

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