

The Journal Register

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PALMER



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy

The Palmer Public Library starts off 2026 strong with a full parking lot.

Library sees strong growth

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – The Palmer Public Library experienced a year of renewed growth and momentum in 2025, with increased attendance, higher circulation, and expanded programming signaling what Library Director Stephanie Maher described as a long-awaited return to normal following the pandemic years.

“We definitely saw an increase overall in attendance

of programs, people coming into the building, books getting checked out... all of that increased in 2025,” Maher said. “I feel like we finally came back fully from the pandemic.”

According to Maher, the library welcomed approximately 60,000 visitors during fiscal year 2025, a figure that spans portions of 2024 and 2025. While not quite at pre-pandemic levels, the number represents the closest the library has come to full recovery since 2020.

“That’s been really wonderful,” Maher said. “We’re as close as we’ve been since the pandemic.”

The milestone year also coincided with the 20th anniversary of the library’s current building, which opened in 2004. While Palmer has had a public library for far longer, Maher said the anniversary marked an important moment for the modern facility, which celebrated the occasion with a community event last year.

GROWTH | page 6

MONSON

Monson Free Library looks to expand programs in 2026

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Free Library closed out 2025 on a high note, with increased visitation, a surge in new library card registrations, and an expanding slate of programs designed to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Library Director Hope Bodwell said that while the overall number of events remained similar to previous years, participation and engagement noticeably increased.

“We’ve seen a lot more people coming into the library,” Bodwell said. “We’ve had many more new library cards than usual, which we’re very happy about. More people are definitely using the library.”

According to Bodwell, monthly visit statistics show a clear increase in 2025 compared to 2024, reflecting a growing role for the library as both a community gathering space and a hub for lifelong learning.

The library continues to serve patrons of all ages, from its youngest visitors

to seniors, but Bodwell said staff place a strong emphasis on listening to what residents want.

“When people come in, we ask them: what works, what do you want to see?” she said. “Crafting was the answer we heard over and over again, so we really tried to up our game.”

Adult crafting programs have become especially popular, including last December’s holiday doormat painting workshop, which drew so much interest it had to be

PROGRAMS | page 6



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy

The Monson Free Library started off strong for the first week of 2026.

MONSON

School Committee prepares for difficult budget season

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson School Committee held its regular business meeting at Quarry Hill Communi-

ty School, covering a wide range of topics including fall athletic achievements, fiscal year 2026 budget variances, multiple policy revisions, and an in-depth discussion on revising the district’s kin-

dergarten early acceptance process.

Committee Chair Alison Morgan opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and the reading of the district’s mission and vision

statements before welcoming Kate Peterson back to the committee.

“We’re very excited to have you to complete our board,” Morgan said. “I’m sure you’ll jump right back

into the swing of things.”

Fall Sports successes recognized

Principal Chris Fontaine highlighted a highly successful fall athletic season, noting that more than 100 students

participated across multiple programs.

“We really had a successful fall season,” Fontaine said, detailing strong perfor-

BUDGET | page 7

MUSTANGS UNBRIDLED



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Jake Beaupre looks for an open lane to pass. See more photos on page 9.

PALMER

State of Old Mill Pond School presented

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – The Palmer School Committee convened its regular meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 17, addressing a wide range of topics including student activities, academic programming, student services, district finances, and several policy and action items. The meeting opened at 6 p.m. and reflected both celebrations of student success and ongoing discussions about district needs and future planning.

Early in the meeting, committee members acknowledged several communications from the public, including concerns about the absence of a girls’ junior varsity basketball team and questions regarding athletic admission pricing. Committee Chair Bonnie Rathbone also read aloud a letter written as part of a middle school civics assignment by eighth-grader Emma St. Tilma, who raised concerns about excessive Chromebook use, particularly

among younger students.

“I believe our school should go back to using paper books in place of Chromebooks or laptops, especially in kindergarten,” St. Tilma wrote, citing concerns about social development, attention span, and physical and mental health following the COVID-19 pandemic. Rathbone praised the letter as “very well written” and said the committee would likely receive additional student correspondence as the civics unit continues.

No members of the public addressed the committee during the public comment period.

Student Voices Take Center Stage

Student representatives from both Palmer High School and Old Mill Pond School provided detailed reports highlighting recent activities and accomplishments.

Palmer High School senior Scarlett LaRose, serving as the student representative, outlined a busy fall season

SCHOOL | page 6

MONSON

Planning Board reviews ANR plan

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Planning Board met Tuesday, Dec. 16, at Town Hall to address a wide-ranging agenda that included stalled subdivision infrastructure, land disposition decisions, site plan amendments, and extensive discussion on future zoning changes tied to the former Monson State Hospital property.

Quaboag Heights surety bond remains unchanged

The meeting opened with a discussion of the Quaboag Heights subdivision, where the board reviewed a letter from Capital Indemnity Corporation regarding a \$231,500 surety bond held for road construction by Bukowski Construction LLC. Planning Board Associate Member Bob Morgan emphasized that the inquiry did not originate from the developer and was part of the surety’s routine records review.

“To my knowledge, no additional work has been completed, inspected, or any request for release of bond has been made,” Morgan said, noting that the project remains unchanged from last year.

Consultant Ken Comia of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission explained that the town has not hired a third-party engineer to inspect the roadway, a step that would typically be undertaken only at the developer’s expense if bond release were requested.

“How do we provide details on a road that was built without any of our knowledge or involvement?” one member asked during the discussion.

The board voted unanimously to notify Capital Indemnity Corporation that

PLAN | page 6



WB&CA and Beyond celebrates 15th year

Staff Report

For the past 15 years, the Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond has been a catalyst for growth, creating a hub for businesses to visit and invest in the community of Ware.

The Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond began in 2011, with a gathering of local business and civic leaders at the Goodwill store, located at the corner of Main and North streets, currently the site of Hanna's on Main restaurant.

"Local businessman, Joel Harder, organized the meeting," said Chris Murphy, WB&CA&B Board of Director and IT officer. "Joel noted the pessimistic trend with business in Ware and thought there would be strength in numbers."

Meetings were held, more people and businesses joined the group and idea developed to support the town.

From that starting point, the WB&CA and Beyond took root in Ware. Over the next few years, community and business activities such as the Holiday Stroll, Shop Local weekends and the Fall Fair were held.

"The last year of the Fall Fair, over 80 businesses and organizations participated. The fair included a breakfast at the Millyard, art show in the town hall, chili contest and vendors at Veterans Park and other events at the library and Workshop13. We also hosted a decorating contest for area stores. It was a wonderful event that brought hundreds to town. One highlight was Cindi LaBombard had over 500 people sign in at the art show," said Carol Zins, member of the Fall Fair committee.

One WB&CA and Beyond program that has excelled since its inception in 2014, is the Ware in Bloom campaign.

"The Flowers in Bloom Committee began in the early years of the WBCA as a way to support the Main Street Improvement Project. Funded by local businesses and powered by hands-on volunteers who even helped water the flower baskets themselves, the initiative has always been rooted in community pride. It's inspiring to see it still flourishing today, with dozens of volunteers continuing to make downtown bloom, season after season," said Shelley Regin, Senior Vice President, Marketing, of Country Bank.

Regin served on the original Ware in Bloom committee. The Ware in Bloom continues to today, as Carol Zins handed off the program to current leaders, Carol Blackmer and Janice Ouimette.

WB&CA and Beyond officially became a not-for-profit status organization. Mission statements were created, organizational bylaws set and a formal slate of officers were elected.



Baystate Health President, Peter Banko, presented to attendees at the February Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond meeting.



Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond members dropped off collected school supplies to Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School administration.



Jason Turcotte, Co-owner, Tombstone Trading Company, is shown at a Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond monthly meeting.

In 2014, the mission statement bent towards Ware's revitalization and economic development.

The WB&CA and Beyond has been active over the years with regional and local initiatives.

Members of the WB&CA and Beyond also serve on the Town of Ware's Downtown Economic Development Committee, Community Development Authority, the Massachusetts Regional Railroad Transport Committee and the Hampshire County Transportation Committee.

The goals of the association remain rooted in membership support, networking and communication.

"Membership has grown every year, even during the COVID 19 pandemic," said WB&CA and Beyond President Dan Flynn. "We continue to evolve in some program areas, but we never lost sight of our core mission. Each month's meeting offers a quality program, each event is enjoyable, the membership fee is inexpensive, but the benefits far outweigh the cost."

For members who have joined the association, the membership benefits have been numerous.

"The networking aspect alone has been very rewarding for myself and my company," said Melissa Fales, president, QVCDC of Ware and WB&CA and Beyond Clerk/Treasurer. "Our Association growth has been making a bigger impact even outside of the Town of Ware."

In 2022, the WB&CA and Beyond altered the approach to its program.

Monthly program meetings were held every third Wednesday of the month at E2E on Main Street. However, due to membership increases and attendance had grown to the point where the meetings had to move the Cedarbrook Village on South Street.

"We wanted to have our members promoted within and outside the association," said Flynn. "We opened up our monthly programs to include meeting at our member's locations. Members could host and get to showcase the location, product and such."

Meetings have been held at American Athletic Shoe Company, Quabbin Wire, Tombstone Trading, Palmer Motorsports Park, 13th World and the newest WB&CA and Beyond member, Align Hypnosis.



Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond members thanked Parks Department staff with donuts on the town's Memorial Day weekend preparations. Pictured left to right, are Dustin Pennington, John Piechota, John Skutnik, Dennis Ouimette and Chris Murphy



Author Elena Palladino presented her book, "Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley", to the attendees of a Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond workshop held at Workshop13.

At a WBCA&B monthly program, each meeting would begin with a Town Manager/Administrator report from attending towns. Currently, the Towns of Ware, Warren, Hardwick and Palmer belong to the WB&CA and Beyond.

"I believe WB&CA and Beyond provides the town with a unique opportunity to share its latest projects, events, and future economic development opportunities within the town," said Jim Ferrara, Town Administrator, Town of Warren. "One of my roles as a Town Administrator is to market and promote the town for future economic growth and I believe WB&CA and Beyond creates a forum for this to happen."

"This report from each town improves communications about what projects and growth are moving forward, and what we should be planning together for future projects," said Stuart Beckley, Town Manager, Town of Ware. "In the Quaboag region, connection and cooperation are necessary. The meetings of the WB&CA and Beyond promote the sharing of regional knowledge and resources. This information is very beneficial for each of us."

In 2023, discussion was

held to open up the membership to include businesses and organizations from contiguous towns.

"The association was being approached by many non-Ware businesses," said Flynn.

In 2024, the association's bylaws were updated to include members from Palmer, Belchertown, Hardwick, Warren and West Brookfield.

A quarterly evening activity program was developed.

"We planned evening events such as bowling, pinball and pickleball. We had even rented a portable axe yard and held several axe throwing events," said Flynn. "A sponsor assists with defrayment of the cost of the facility or rental. Food is provided. It's a relaxed, fun networking outing but with a twist. A small business or sole proprietor may not be able to have an outing like this for themselves or employees, so this program is another member benefit"

In 2023, a special opportunity opened for the WB&CA and Beyond. The local state senate seat had been left open as the State Senator Anne E. Gobi took a position with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts administration and special election was then scheduled.

"We contacted both of the candidates on the ballot to offer a Candidates Forum, where both would be given time for an opening statement, each would answer questions, and then give a closing statement," said Flynn. "The forum was taped by local community access channel 15 and the tape was shared with the other town channels within the state senate district. It was a monumental event."

A second forum was held in 2024 for the candidates in the 2024 election.

One of the recent WB&CA and Beyond initiatives is new local business recognition. "The towns within the WB&CA and Beyond represents are fortunate to have state legislators who are active and truly present in their towns," said Flynn. "We have been setting up and having ceremonial ribbon cuttings for new businesses. If the legislators are available, they or a staffer will attend with a commendation from the Massachusetts Statehouse. The event is then reported in the local newspaper and promot-

Turley staff photos

ed on social media." The WB&CA and Beyond had partnered with the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce on several ribbon cuttings and support of each organization's past events.

"It's been wonderful to work with the WB&CA and Beyond," said TRCC President, Matt Lemieux. "We have even had a friendly wager, President to President, on the outcome of the annual Ware Palmer football game rivalry. Losing President had to scoop ice cream at Rondeau's Dairy Bar. This wager created a lot of interest in both of our towns."

This past summer, the WB&CA and Beyond and the TRCC collaborated on a town townwide school supply collection to support the schools in Ware, Palmer and Monson.

Members of the WB&CA and Beyond are very active with the community, supporting Main Street banners and the Ware Flair to name a few of the program. Flynn and Director Dustin Pennington serve on the Town of Ware Fireworks Committee.

"When we saw how much the cost of the fireworks went up from the 2024 show to the 2025 show, the committee was nervous about raising the money needed. We approached the WB&CA and Beyond. They volunteered to host and support two celebrity bartender/server nights. Hanna's on Main hosted and members of the WB&CA and Beyond acted as bartenders and servers," said Pennington. "All tips collected went to support the 2025 fireworks show. We had Neil Diamond aka Charlie Lask of Nat Falk, the first night, then karaoke the second night. We raised enough funds to cover the huge fee increase of the 2025 fireworks show. Both nights were a huge success."

To become a member of the Ware Business & Civic Association and Beyond, go online to <http://www.ware-bca.com/>, email warebca@gmail.com, on Facebook under Ware Business and Civic and Beyond, contact any board of director, or Flynn at 413-297-5886

Interested businesses and organizations are welcomed to attend the monthly meetings, held every third Wednesday, 8:30-9:30 a.m. at Cedarbrook Village, 73 South St., Ware, MA.

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PALMER - Almost one acre perked and ready for new owner. Affordable at **\$50,000**.

PALMER - 11 acres with mountain view potential and overlooking the Quaboag River. Handy to Pike. **\$79,900**

BRIMFIELD - Overlooking an open field, near the Quaboag River and handy to the Pike. This 1.63 acre lot would be the perfect spot to call home. **\$59,900**

BRIMFIELD - 25+ acres, home site would be privately set off the road. Perc. Info available. Near the Sturbridge line and close to lakes. Call for details. **\$299,900**

MONSON - 28+ acres near the Brimfield town line. Small brook on the property, town water available. **\$259,900**

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WARREN - Need your new home to have lots of space? Then check out this four-bedroom cape with cabinet packed kitchen that would handle a crowd easily, fireplaced family room. Extra dining room and living room. First floor bedroom/office. Walk out, mostly finished basement with potential for extra bath. Privately set on 3 plus acre lot. Town sewer. **\$525,000**



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Earth removal project approved with strict conditions

By Abigail McCoy
amccoy@turley.com

MONSON – The Monson Zoning Board of Appeals voted Thursday, December 18, night to grant a special permit allowing significant earth removal on a 12.7-acre parcel on Stafford Road, approving a long-debated proposal by Equestrian Hills Estates, LLC with a series of conditions aimed at mitigating environmental, traffic, and neighborhood impacts.

The December 18 meeting opened with the reorganization of the board following recent appointments. David Beaudoin was elected chair, Teresa Sobanska-Hrynkiw vice chair, and Sean Crookes clerk.

Following the reorganization, the board resumed a continued public hearing on Case No. ZBA2025-04, an application filed by Equestrian Hills Estates, LLC seeking a special permit under Section 6.6 of the Monson Zoning Bylaws to conduct an earth removal operation on property zoned Rural Residential.

Project Overview and Applicant Testimony

Attorney Josh Levine of Shatz, Schwartz & Fentin represented the applicant and outlined the intent and scope of the project, emphasizing that the earth removal is meant to

prepare the lot for residential use, not commercial gravel extraction.

“The applicant’s end goal is to have a single-family home parcel with room for a horse barn and a surrounding pasture on the lot well back from the street,” Levine told the board. “To put it very succinctly, the applicant is seeking to level out or change the grade in portions of the lot by removing earth material in order to build allowed structures.”

The proposal calls for the removal of approximately 94,000 cubic yards of material, with about 9,000 cubic yards reused on-site. The net removal from the property would total roughly 85,000 cubic yards. The work would create about one acre of level land for a barn and pasture and roughly half an acre for a future house site, with maximum cuts of up to 43 feet in one area and 10 feet in another.

Levine stressed that the work is intended to be completed within one calendar year, with the option of extending into a second year if economic conditions require it. Truck traffic would be limited to two applicant-owned trucks, averaging about 17 trips per day, roughly two trips per hour.

“The idea is not to level

out the whole parcel or even create a hole,” Levine said. “It’s to level off essentially the top of two portions of the hill.”

He also pointed to longstanding drainage issues as a major justification for the project.

“There’s a water runoff problem on this hill,” Levine said. “Water runs off onto neighboring properties and across the street. One of the goals of this project is to fix that.”

Levine noted that the property, purchased in 2005, is currently not marketable due to its steep terrain.

“The lot is essentially unsellable as is,” Levine said, adding that a local realtor estimated the land could be worth about \$150,000 after the work is completed. “This job can’t be halfway done. It has to be done in order to make this lot worth something.”

Engineering and Environmental Protections

Project engineer Keith Terry of Sherman & Frydryk Engineers presented detailed plans addressing stormwater management, erosion control, and site restoration.

Terry explained that the property’s natural watershed currently funnels runoff down a steep slope and across Stafford Road, sometimes affecting neighboring land. Under the proposed design, storm-

water would be captured in a large infiltration basin designed to meet Massachusetts stormwater management standards.

“This infiltration basin will actually capture and infiltrate a two-year storm, over three inches of rainfall, before there’s any discharge,” Terry said. “In a 100-year storm, we’re seeing more than a 50 percent reduction in overland flow compared to existing conditions.”

Excess water would discharge into the state drainage system on Stafford Road, reducing runoff across neighboring properties. Disturbed areas would be revegetated and allowed to reforest, with only the immediate house and barn areas maintained as lawn.

While the site will be clear-cut where earthwork occurs, Terry emphasized that the disturbance footprint has been significantly reduced from a similar proposal brought forward 15 to 20 years ago.

“This project now disturbs about six acres, not 10,” he said. “Setbacks have increased, and stormwater controls have been added that didn’t exist before.”

Board Concerns and Public Comment

Board members raised questions about erosion, enforcement, and the project’s

residential intent. Member Dominique Batiste voiced concerns about steep slopes and long-term environmental stability but ultimately expressed confidence in the mitigation plans.

“I had reservations for quite some time because of the steepness of the property,” Batiste said. “But it seems like they’ve done a lot of planning to take care of that.”

Public comment was limited. One resident raised concerns about truck traffic, noting cumulative impacts from other nearby gravel operations. Board members acknowledged those concerns but cited legal precedent limiting the town’s ability to restrict lawful truck use of public roads.

Approval and Conditions

Before voting, the board formally accepted all exhibits and documents from prior hearings into the record and closed the public hearing.

The ZBA then voted to grant the special permit with multiple conditions, including:

- Limiting earth removal operations to 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, with no operations on weekends or holidays
- Requiring a designated on-site parking area for employees
- Mandating dust control

measures and adherence to all submitted design plans

• Compliance with Conservation Commission requirements and submission of an EPA Notice of Intent for disturbance exceeding one acre

• Full site restoration, including replacement of at least four inches of topsoil and revegetation of all disturbed areas

• Compliance with all MassDOT requirements for highway access

• Limiting truck activity to approximately 17 trips per day

• Posting a \$100,000 performance bond to ensure completion and restoration of the site

Vice Chair Terry Hrynkiw emphasized the importance of enforcement.

“If we get too many complaints, we can pull this special permit,” Hrynkiw said. “We have that right.”

The board has 14 days to file a written decision with the Town Clerk. Once filed, the decision will be subject to a 20-day appeal period before it can be recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

Enforcement of the permit conditions will be overseen by the town’s Building Department, with residents encouraged to report any non-compliance.



Palmer Senior Center

Friday, Movie Matinee
at 12:30 p.m. with drinks and popcorn

Jan. 9: Ticket to Paradise - Academy Award® winners George Clooney and Julia Roberts team up as exes who find themselves on a shared mission: to stop their lovestruck daughter from making the same mistake they once made. Ticket to Paradise is a romantic comedy about the sweet surprise of second chances.

Jan. 23: Hope Floats - Sandra Bullock, Harry Connick, Jr. Life does not turn

out quite the way a former prom queen planned, so after her marriage falls apart, she returns to her hometown for another chance at life-and love.

Jan. 30: Lilly - About a courageous factory worker who fights for justice when cheated and mistreated by her company. Based on the life of Lilly Ledbetter.

Upcoming Events

Starting Thursdays in January at 1 p.m. the pool table and cornhole boards will be available for open play. Please grab a friend and come have fun.

Jan. 12: Dinner served

at 5 pm. Lasagna by Frigo’s.

Jan. 14: Lighted Snowman Jar - Kim Keeton will lead the class, see sample at the center. \$5 due to sign up.

Jan. 16: Memory Café - Ben & Ed Show - see this musical duo perform, songs and have some laughs.

Jan. 21: Lunch & Learn - 5 Wishes - The 5 Wishes is a legal advance directive document used to outline medical, personal, spiritual, and emotional preferences for end-of-life care. It helps people clearly communicate their wishes to family and doctors, so loved ones do not have to guess what you

would want if you became incapacitated.

Jan. 26: Quabbin Presentation - Eagles, Loons, and Bears - In the past 50 years our region has seen the return of many woodland animals in part because of the great habitat Quabbin Reservoir Forest creates. This presentation focuses on the history and habitats of some local wildlife. Join us for the first presentation on the Quabbin. This will be a monthly presentation about how the Quabbin was built.

Feb. 23: Introduction to Quabbin.

Wing Auxilliary Shop announces upcoming vendors

Located at 40 Wright St., Palmer

January Vendors

- Jan. 6 - Still River Homestead
- Jan. 7 - Generations of Cookies
- Jan. 8 - Weleful Weavers
- Jan. 12 - Kathy Picard, author
- Jan. 21 - How Charming
- Jan. 29 - Hollow Hobbit Herbs

February Vendors

- Feb. 4 - How Charming
- Feb. 5 - Jewelry For Diane
- Feb. 9 - Generations of Cookies
- Feb. 10 - Hollow Hobbit Herbs
- Feb. 11 - Wicked Good Treats
- Feb. 12 - Weleful Weavers
- Feb. 13 - Cork Elegance
- Feb. 26 - Weleful Weavers

March Vendors

- March 4 - Generations of Cookies
- March 10 - Hobbit Hollow Herbs
- March 11 - Weleful Weavers
- March 12 - Jewelry for Diane
- March 18 - How Charming
- March 26 - Weleful Weavers
- March 30 - Wicked Good Treats
- March 31 - Geriations & Sew On

Lotto calendars now available at Wing

PALMER – Baystate Wing Gift Shop Annual January Lotto Calendars are now available through Jan. 30, 2026.

The drawing will be held Feb. 3, 2026.

The price is \$5 for one calendar with 31 chances to win and \$10 for three calendars with 93 chance to win.

The winner need not be present.

Funds are used for scholarship awards for seven local high school graduates and towards the gift shop’s pledge of \$200,000 (in installments) to Baystate Wing to a specific department.

These make great stocking stuffers/gifts or recognition of someone in your daily life.

Free yoga program offered on Jan. 8

WARREN – Enjoy a slower-paced yoga practice with simple poses that are easy and work like magic with Yoga & Meditation for the Vibrant Health and Peace of Mind on Thursday, Jan. 8 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Join Phil Milgrom at The Centered Place for this free event that is appropriate for ages 14+. This program will be held in person at The Centered Place, 286 Bridge St., or

online via Zoom. To register, contact the Warren Public Library at 413-436-7690 or warrenpubliclibrary@hotmail.com. The Zoom link will be provided after registration.

This program is sponsored by the Warren Public Library with a grant from the Warren Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the MA Cultural Council, a state agency.

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Viewpoints

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

My wife believes she can get a spouse benefit while I'm still alive; can she?

Dear Rusty:

A friend of my wife told her and she believes, she could receive a Social Security benefit based on my SS benefit that I'm currently receiving while I'm still alive. I told her she could only receive spouse survivor benefits. Is there any truth to what she now believes? Would you settle this issue for us please? Thank you.

Signed:

Uncertain Husband

Dear

Uncertain Husband:

Well, surely I don't want to get in the middle of your marital discussion, but I'll be happy to explain Social Security's rules about your wife's eligibility for spousal benefits while you are both still living. And just for awareness for both of you, the rules about spousal benefits are one of the most confusing areas of Social Security.

Per Social Security's rules, a spouse (e.g., your wife) can receive a "spousal boost" from you — while you are still living — if the SS retirement benefit she is personally entitled to at her Full Retirement Age is less than 50% of the SS retirement benefit you are (were) entitled to at your FRA; full retirement age amounts are used to calculate living spouse benefits, regardless of when each of you actually claimed your Social Security.

So, if your FRA entitlement benefit amount is more than twice your wife's FRA entitlement benefit amount, she can, indeed, get a "spousal boost" from your record while you are both still living. The spousal boost is added to her own SS retirement amount and will be based on the difference between her FRA entitlement and half of your FRA entitlement. Thus, in this discussion, your wife may be correct — she may be able to get a spousal boost from you while both of you are living, depending on how your personal FRA retire-

ment amounts compare. The best way for your wife to find out is to contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to inquire and if she's eligible, also make an appointment to apply for her spousal benefit.

And to clarify your wife's options as your possible widow, a surviving spouse can also get a survivor benefit if their marital partner passes away, but only if the deceased spouse's current benefit at death was more than the surviving spouse is already receiving. The surviving spouse receives the higher amount, instead of their own smaller Social Security retirement benefit.

But here is an important thing to know: Whenever any Social Security benefit (including a spousal or surviving spouse benefit) is claimed before the recipient's Full Retirement Age, the payment amount is permanently reduced, both spousal and survivor benefits do not reach maximum until the recipient's Full Retirement Age. And just to complete the picture for survivor benefits, a surviving spouse is also entitled to a one-time, lump-sum death benefit of \$255 if their marital partner dies, in addition to any other benefit they are entitled to.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



TLC for overwintering plants

Have you taken a good look at your tender plants lately? Maybe you have a Gerber daisy, coleus, fuchsia or geranium that you are attempting to overwinter because you loved it so much this past summer.

Perhaps the flower color or leaf shade was perfect in a patio planter and you thought if you could get through the winter you wouldn't have to buy it new this spring. Or maybe you intend to use your overwintered plants as stock plants.

Soon you'll be taking cuttings and making your own new plants. Likewise, maybe you brought in some tender herbs in hopes of growing your own seasoning year round.

Whatever the case may be, closer examination of each plant at this point in the winter might be a smart idea.

What I have noticed almost across the board, especially with my Gerber daisy, fuchsia and geraniums is that there are a lot of older leaves turning yellow or showing discoloration. To me, that indicates that fertilizer is needed.

The fact that this coincides with the lengthening of the daylight hours is no accident. And all three plants have continued to bloom inside, which certainly has taxed their nutrient reserves.

I will start watering with half strength fertilizer twice a month now through mid March. I sure bet that old foliage will start to perk up and new growth won't be too far behind.

One pest in particular attacks the herb rosemary and is especially troublesome. I noticed stippling on the leaf tips and clear winged insects flying away when I brushed by the plants. After placing sticky yellow monitoring cards nearby I learned it was leaf hoppers!

As carefully as I could I carried the lighter plants outside and gave them a good shake to dislodge any eggs or nymphs (and to make me feel better) then I doused them to the point of run-off with insecticidal soap. I will have to be careful here, because tiny 3 mm size, wedge-shaped (adult) insects can transmit viruses from plant to plant.

I'll put out new monitoring cards near the rosemary plants to check if the population is decreasing. Regardless, I am glad I caught this situation early.

With the pests under control and a proper fertilization regiment, these plants will be in great shape come springtime, and ready for new adventures in the landscape.

Spider mite cause webbing, and are usually indicative of hot, dry conditions. Dousing with cold water will really set them back.

Mealy bug show up as a cottony blob usually on growth tips or at the junction of leaves and stems. Rubbing alcohol on a swab applied directly to the blob will dissolve that protective layer and the insect underneath.

Aphids are usually green and congregate in clusters on stems or leaf ribs. White fly usually hang out on the underside of leaves. They fly around if disturbed.

Both insects are best stopped in their tracks by use of an insecticidal soap. Safer's Soap or M Pede as it's known commercially work well. I've even soaped up my plants using a mild dish detergent and hosed

In the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid



The Journal Register

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Letter to the Editor

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The submission deadline for consideration is Monday at noon.

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Journal Register 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 The Journal Register, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to journalregister@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 The Journal Register.

The flu is lurking – can you avoid it?

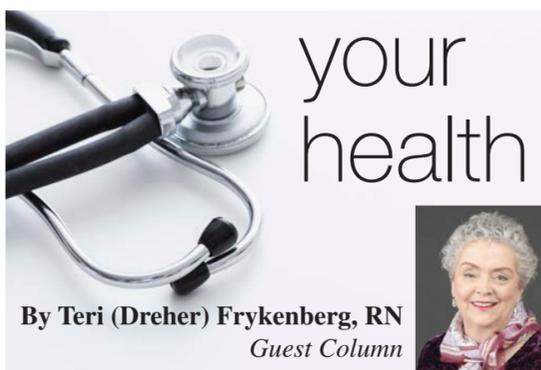
I wouldn't go so far as to categorize the pandemic as the "good old days," but during the 2020-2021 flu season, only 1,316 positive flu cases were reported in the U.S. Why? Because most of us were wearing masks and staying away from one another.

Now, there are far more cases of flu than COVID-19. Just from October to December 2025, there were nearly 5 million diagnosed cases of the flu and 1,900 flu-related deaths, and that's just in the U.S.

You may have heard that the 2025-2026 strain of flu doesn't really care whether or not you had a flu shot. That's not quite true, but it does seem that the so-called "subclade K" variant is pretty good at evading whatever immunity you have, whether from a vaccine or from previous infections.

"This flu is just different than the strain that we saw last year," Dr. Santana Wheat of Northwestern Medicine told CBS News. "It's similar, but we are seeing that it is moving faster."

Recent holiday gath-



By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN

Guest Column

erings probably made it spread even faster. Illinois hasn't had the spikes that have been seen in New York, but doctors think the worst is yet to come.

Can you totally protect yourself and your family? Probably not. Can you reduce the risk of severe illness and hospitalization? Definitely.

These tips shouldn't come as a surprise — most of them are just common sense.

Get vaccinated

Yes, it's already January. No, it's not too late to get a flu shot. While the op-

timum time to get a flu shot is October, the flu doesn't usually peak here until February. It takes a bit of time for the vaccine to reach its highest effectiveness, so getting a shot now will still provide protection.

Doctors emphasize that vaccination is not a surefire preventative. You may still get the flu, but you are more likely to avoid severe consequences if you have the vaccine on board.

Stay away

What do I mean by that? If you're sick, stay away

HEALTH | page 5

POETRY CORNER

New Year's in the Country

I don't care where yer from,
Now yer here - just be a man
Or a woman, whether good or ill-begotten;
So, let us ring the bell
Or we'll all go down to hell,
If the past, aye the past, were forgotten.

The wise we have around us,
Cause, universalling fuss,
With their rockets and their robots
much and then —
O' we need something new
Or we wouldn't know what to do,
But wouldn't know a thing,
were the past forgotten.

After sorrows, after strife,
After things would dim yer life,
O' sing out, O' say out, here and then —
O' the times they go too fast,
But the past we will hold not forgotten.

Let the lambs grow their fleece,
Let us have a moments peace,
Here on earth or wherever
That you can;
O' the present — sing its praise,
Down the pastures
Of yer days —
But the past let it stand
Unforgotten.

— Charles Barnes

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

E-mail items to journalregister@turley.com or mail to Calendar Editor, Journal Register, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, for receipt by Monday of week for publication.

The Journal Register encourages readers to contact event coordinators and organizers for updated event times. Have an event to promote? Email the information (in sentence form and as a Word doc or plain email text – no PDFs or flyers, please – to journalregister@turley.com.

UPCOMING

WING MEMORIAL HOSPITAL AUXILLIARY SHOP 40 Wright St., Palmer

January Vendors

- Jan. 6 - Still River Homestead
- Jan. 7 - Generations of Cookies
- Jan. 8 - Weleful Weavers
- Jan. 12 - Kathy Picard, author
- Jan. 21 - How Charming
- Jan. 29 - Hollow Hobbit Herbs

ONGOING

2025-2026 Drama & Dance Program beginning Sept. 11 and running through May on Thursdays at PHCC. Does your child love dancing and acting? Have they always been interested but never tried? All levels and ages 5 plus welcome! (Drama students must be able to read.) Also offering Adult Hip Hop

& Lyrical Dance Classes. Students must be available for show date in May. Date TBD. Adult class students can dance in show or choose not to as long as requested ahead of time. Contact: trulytorie2000@gmail.com for more info and to register.

THURSDAYS - WESTERN LINE DANCE CLASSES 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. \$10 for one lesson or both. Brimfield Winery at 35 Main Street in Brimfield. Check brimfieldwinery.com for any variations.

CRAFTERNOONS: Drop in 2 to 4 p.m. daily at the Holland Public Library, 23 Sturbridge Road to learn or practice different crafts. There are new crafts every Wednesday. For more information, call 413-245-3607.

KEEP HOMESTEAD MUSEUM: Located at 35 Ely Rd., Monson, nature trails are open daily until dusk for hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Trail maps can be found in the parking lot. For more information call 413-267-4137, email khm@keephomesteadmuseum.org or visit keephomesteadmuseum.org.

QUABOAG VALLEY QUILTERS GUILD: Members meet at 1 p.m. on the first and third Thursdays of the month in the Amvets post at 2150 Main St., Three Rivers. The Guild is a no-pressure group with varying degrees of accomplishments, from novice to Big E "Best In Show" winners. Dues are \$55 a

year. For more information, contact Barbara Beaulieu at 267-4044 or Merry Mombourquette at 283-7577. Follow them on Facebook for more.

LINE DANCING CLASS: 3-5 p.m. and/or 6:30-8:30 p.m., every Thursday at the Monson Polish Club, 7 Bliss St, Monson. Rose's line dancing classes include absolute beginners and beginners, and participants get to dance to all types of music. \$10 per class. Please wear comfortable footwear, no sandals.

GAME NIGHT: 6-7:45 p.m. the second Tuesday at the Palmer Library at 1455 N. Main St. Free and open to the public. Play available board and card games or bring your own. Must be 16 or older unless accompanied by an adult. No Registration Required – just show up! Questions? Call 283-3691, or email palewis19@yahoo.com.

NOTCH VISITOR CENTER OPEN FOR WINTER SEASON: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday-Monday. The center is located on Rt 116, at the center of the Holyoke Range State Park. DCR Interpretive staff will be available for visitors. Coming in January, programs will also be offered to highlight the Range's special nature in winter, see the park web site for details.

QI GONG: Qi Gong at Monson Free Library with Randy Emerson. Every Tuesday from 5:45 to 6:45 p.m.

HEALTH | from page 4

from other people. Don't go to work, don't go to school, and get your groceries delivered. If people around you are coughing and feverish, avoid them like, well, the plague. If you know you've been exposed to the flu, get a flu test from your doctor so you can get started on an antiviral medication.

Masks fell into political disrepute during the pandemic, but there's a reason medical professionals wear them. They are a kind of physical barrier that prevents both droplets being spread to others and droplets being breathed in. They're more effective when it's the infected person wearing them.

Become a champion hand-washer

The best hand-washing practices include wetting your hands with clean, running water, applying soap, and scrubbing all surfaces of your hands and fingers for at least 20 seconds. Make sure to rinse well and dry your hands with a clean towel or air dryer to effectively remove germs.

Paper towel and dispos-

able hand towels are a good idea this time of year.

Pay attention to touch surfaces

When the flu is in your house, take special care to disinfect common touch surfaces, such as doorknobs and light switches, so it won't spread. Disinfectant sprays and wipes can be used, and if you want to avoid chemicals, warm soapy water is all it takes.

Remind everyone not to touch their faces

Observational studies have revealed that we touch our faces 15 to 23 times every hour while we're awake. The problem is that most of those touches are in the "T-zone," encompassing our eyes, nose and mouth, where mucous membranes can let in viruses and germs.

It's a hard habit to break, so it's another reason to keep your hands as clean as possible.

Keep up good health habits

Hydrate like crazy. Winter dries out those mucous membranes, which makes them less effective at filtering out allergens, irritants – and viruses. Staying physically active boosts

the immune system, as does good nutrition.

Most of us will get through the flu with some aches and pains, maybe a little nausea or diarrhea, and generally feeling like we've been hit by a bus, but serious complications can include pneumonia, heart attack and stroke – particularly for people over 65 and those whose immune systems are compromised.

No one wants to get the flu. It's good to know we can take steps to avoid the worst of it.

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, R.N., a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of www.NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. A Monson, MA resident, she is the author of "How to Be a Healthcare Advocate for Yourself & Your Loved Ones" and her new book, "Advocating Well: Strategies for Finding Strength and Understanding in Health Care," available at Amazon.com. Contact her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com to set up a free phone consultation.

Central Park comes to Brimfield

BRIMFIELD – Hitchcock will proudly host its first Brown Bag Speaker Series installation of the new year on January 21 - Gail Ward Olmsted will present "Designing America: The Olmsted Effect". The talk will begin at 12:30 p.m. with an optional lunch at noon. Attendees may reserve a lunch ahead of time or bring one in. Reservations are required for both (\$10 for the talk with an additional \$10 due for the lunch at the event). The talk will likely run approximately one hour, and additional time is reserved for questions and discussion.

Frederick Law Olmsted is considered the father of American landscape architecture. He was born in Hartford, CT April 26, 1822. His most famous work is Central Park in New York City designed in 1857. Other works include the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, the grounds of the United States Capitol, the grounds of the White House, the 1893 Columbia Exposition (The White City) in Chicago, Illinois, and the Main Quad at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Mr. Olmsted also was informally involved in the design

of Forest Park in Springfield. He retired in 1895 and his sons John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. continued their father's firm doing business as the Olmsted Brothers which lasted until 1980. Frederick Law Olmsted Sr died in 1903.

Married to a descendant of Olmsted, MA author Gail Ward Olmsted will discuss Olmsted's body of work, share some little-known facts about him and read an excerpt from her critically acclaimed historical novel: Landscape of a Marriage. Signed copies of all her books will be available for sale.

Gail Ward Olmsted was a marketing executive and a college professor before she began writing fiction on a full-time basis. A trip to Sedona, AZ inspired her first novel Jeep Tour. Three more novels followed before Landscape of a Marriage, a biographical fiction featuring landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, a distant cousin of her husband's, and his wife Mary. Olmsted enjoys writing about quirky, wonderful women in search of a second chance at

a happy ever after. When not writing, she loves being on the water, especially in a kayak.

The Brown Bag Speaker Series is presented with support from The Shirley Frye Memorial Fund.

Also offered in January is a "Baking Bread Made Easy" workshop on the 31st. Local baker Lee Fernandez of Turnabout Farm Bakery and Brimfield Farmers' Market will share her baking secrets while guiding attendees in the preparation of their choice of Honey Wheat Oatmeal or an Italian loaf with roasted garlic and Italian herbs to bake and take home. The workshop will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and costs \$65. Regular fitness offerings such as Yoga, UpBeat Barre, Pilates, Fencing, High Fitness, Judo/Ju-Jitsu continue, along with Music Lessons, K-9 Nosework and additional workshops routinely added.

For more information, visit www.hitchcockacademy.org. Hitchcock Academy is a community center located at 2 Brookfield Road in Brimfield serving the community with educational, recreational, and cultural programming.



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Proceeds To Benefit the Palmer Public Library

PLAN | from page 1

the project's status remains unchanged, without offering additional details.

Lower Hampden Road parcels: Right of first refusal waived

The board next addressed two parcels on Lower Hampden Road, both subject to the town's right of first refusal: Parcel 077-003A (Lot 4) and Parcel 077-001 (Lot 3).

Members reviewed site plans and confirmed that neither parcel abuts town-owned land nor appears in any municipal open space or land acquisition plans.

"I don't recollect acquiring this property coming up in any open space plan or other Town of Monson real estate acquisition plan," Morgan said.

With no identified municipal interest, the board voted to waive its right of first refusal for both parcels.

ANR Plan approved for lower Hampden Road Lot 3B

An Approval Not Required (ANR) plan for Lot 3B on Lower Hampden Road, prepared for Anthony Catalano, was then reviewed.

The board focused on dimensional compliance, frontage, remaining land, and buildable area, which totaled just over 60,000 square feet of upland area, meeting town bylaw requirements.

"This buildable area is beyond the 100-foot riparian area, so we can assume that meets our definition," Comia said.

Finding the lot in full compliance, the board approved the plan for signature.

Bliss Street hours extended through administrative review

The board considered a

request from Bradford Medeiros, owner of a commercial property on Bliss Street, to amend hours of operation previously approved under a special permit in April 2024.

Medeiros explained that the existing 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. hours had made it difficult for tenants working early or late shifts.

"Even my guys...we're on the road for five, so we can't even get in there to get material," Medeiros said, adding that one prospective tenant had withdrawn due to the limited access.

While Medeiros expressed interest in 24-hour access, the board determined that such a change would require reopening a public hearing and police department review. Instead, members agreed that a modest extension could be handled administratively.

"Historically, other communities have tackled minor changes to hours of operation through administrative review," Comia said.

The board unanimously approved revised hours of 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., characterizing the change as minor.

Hospital redevelopment draws public interest

Later in the meeting, resident Ted Kozak, a former Monson Town Administrator, addressed the board regarding the proposed redevelopment of the former Monson State Hospital property by West Mass Development.

"This is a big change from what the town's seen in a long time," Kozak said. "It could be a very big benefit. It could also have headaches for the community."

Discussion touched on the potential scale of development, whether limits on residential or commercial

buildout should be considered, and the developer's statement that the property could revert to the state if a zoning change is not approved.

"It's more of a statement of fact than a threat," Planning Board member Bob Morgan said, acknowledging how the message might be perceived.

Kozak also urged the board to explore Smart Growth zoning options under Chapters 40R, 40S, and 40Y, which can provide state incentive payments and school cost reimbursements. Consultant Ken Comia confirmed the developer has experience with 40R projects and said the option could align with the town's housing goals.

A zoning submission is expected before the end of December, with a public hearing likely in January. Due to anticipated attendance, the board noted the hearing would likely be held at a larger venue such as Granite Valley.

Zoning Map Update and Commercial Recreation Bylaw Revisions

The board turned to longer-term planning initiatives, beginning with an updated Zoning District Map that reflects recent amendments and replaces the town's outdated 1990 map. Adoption will require a public hearing and a town meeting vote.

Members also continued work on revisions to the Commercial Recreation Development Bylaw, focusing on conflicting language regarding buffer strips and whether utilities are permitted within them.

"I don't think that was the intention...that utilities couldn't be located in the

buffer strip," Morgan said.

The board agreed to amend Section 5.1.10 to explicitly allow utilities within buffer strips, define "utilities" in the bylaw's definitions section, and strike conflicting language in Section 6.11.4.2. Revised language will be presented in January, with a public hearing tentatively planned for February.

ADU Bylaw, Subdivision Regulations, and Master Plan Updates

Regarding the town's Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw, Comia explained that while the bylaw is currently approved, minor language changes recommended by town counsel will be submitted to the Attorney General's office for pre-review before any town meeting action.

The board also revisited Monson's Subdivision Rules and Regulations, which date back to 1988. Comia said he would search for a draft update prepared prior to COVID-19 and explore grant opportunities to support a formal revision.

Members agreed the town's Master Plan, last substantially revised in 2012, no longer reflects current development pressures, including solar facilities, cannabis businesses, and the potential Monson State redevelopment.

"I don't think the master plan currently is of any value," one board member said. "It's time."

Comia said grant funding may be available for a comprehensive update overseen by a steering committee representing multiple boards and residents. A memo outlining next steps will be prepared for the Select Board.

GROWTH | from page 1

Looking ahead to 2026, Mayer outlined several major goals, including a long-anticipated new roof for the building. "Getting a new roof is very exciting," Maher joked.

Another major initiative in development is the acquisition of a new bookmobile-style vehicle designed to bring library services directly into Palmer's neighborhoods. Maher recently spoke with a Worcester-based company that builds bookmobiles for libraries across the country.

"This won't be as big as the old bookmobiles people might remember...those were like buses," Maher explained. "But it will be a wheelchair-accessible truck with built-in shelving."

The mobile library will allow staff to set up pop-up library services in areas such as Bondsville, Three Rivers, and Thorndike, particularly during the summer months, expanding access beyond the library's walls.

"I'm really excited about that," Maher said.

Community wellness programming also continues to be a cornerstone of the library's mission. The library's Community Wellness initiative is approaching its second anniversary on January 17, marking two years of programming focused on health, connection, and support.

"We're going to continue community wellness," Maher said. "We've applied for some grants and have some things in the works."

The program has gained broader recognition as well. Members of the Community Wellness group will be traveling to Nashville to present at a national conference, where they will share a poster presentation highlighting the

library's programming, including its partnerships and outcomes.

"Hopefully it will inspire other libraries around the country to get involved in things like this," Maher said.

As the library builds on its successes, Maher emphasized that the core goal remains unchanged.

"We just want to be here for the community and help out in any way that we can," she said. "Bigger and better every year."

In addition to its long-term initiatives, the Palmer Public Library has a full slate of January programming for all ages.

Upcoming children's programs include:

- Take & Bake Gingerbread Mug Cake, with pickup beginning Thursday, Jan. 8 (registration required, all ages)

- Snowball Painting Night, Thursday, Jan. 15 at 4 p.m.

- Beaded Sparkle Snowflakes, Thursday, Jan. 22 at 4:30 p.m.

- Cloud Dough, Thursday, Jan. 29 at 4 p.m.

Other January offerings include:

- Take & Make Creativity Kits, pickup starting Wednesday, Jan. 7

- Stranger Things Finale Watch Party, Wednesday, Jan. 14 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

- Boba & Bullet Journals Craft Night, Wednesday, Jan. 21 from 4:30 to 6 p.m.

- Nintendo Games & Co-coa, Wednesday, Jan. 28 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

With strong attendance, expanding outreach, and new projects on the horizon, the Palmer Public Library enters 2026 with renewed energy and a clear focus on serving the community in meaningful and innovative ways.

SCHOOL | from page 1

that included a thankful notes project, National Honor Society induction of more than ten students, a student council food drive, and the annual craft fair and Santa breakfast, which drew approximately 1,000 attendees from Palmer and surrounding communities.

LaRose also provided a winter sports update, noting that boys basketball had opened the season with a two-game winning streak, girls basketball held a 1-1 record, and the swim team had already seen multiple athletes qualify for postseason competition.

"We wish everyone a safe and happy holidays," LaRose said as she concluded her report.

Two Old Mill Pond sixth-grade Student Council members followed with an extensive overview of school events, fundraising efforts, and student engagement initiatives. Highlights included candy gram sales raising \$240, Spirit Week activities, a school-wide snow cone challenge involving more than 430 students, and upcoming holiday programming such as Grinch and Santa readings and classroom craft days.

Student Services Presentation Emphasizes Inclusion and Compliance

Director of Student Services Monique Dubuc delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining the scope, mission, and impact of the department's work across the district.

"Our mission is to educate, inspire, and empower, creating a supportive environment where students learn, grow, and thrive," Dubuc said, emphasizing a "whole child" approach that connects academic success with social and emotional well-being.

Dubuc reported that Palmer Public Schools achieved 100 percent compliance in two recent DESE monitoring reviews, covering a combined 43 indicators. She noted that the district currently serves approximately 1,086 students, including 243 receiving special education services, 46 English language learners, and 82 students with 504 plans.

Among the initiatives highlighted were expanded Response to Intervention services in early grades, clinical supervision for special education teams, alternatives to suspension through the state's Rethinking Discipline initiative, and increased access to inclusive resources such as sensory rooms, adaptive equipment, and augmentative communication devices.

A particularly memorable moment came when third-grader Felicity Pelletier, who is visually impaired, sent in a letter she wrote in braille to the committee as well as a video of her reading it. Pelletier explained how she learned braille starting in kindergarten and demonstrated her brailler.

"I like my brailler because it has a handle," she said, drawing smiles and applause from committee members. Dubuc described the moment as a powerful example of what student services can make possible when supports are in place.

Old Mill Pond State of the School Report

Old Mill Pond Principal Holly Riopel presented the school's annual State of the School report, offering an in-depth look at demographics, academic performance, and ongoing initiatives.

Riopel reported that the school serves 676 students, with nearly 57 percent classified as low income. While she celebrated progress in reducing chronic absenteeism

to 11.9 percent, she acknowledged a slight decrease in overall accountability metrics.

"We trust the process," Riopel said. "While we don't like to see any decrease, we believe in the initiatives we've put in place and know they take time."

Riopel highlighted academic gains in math, where students have shown strong growth on MCAS assessments, and detailed ongoing work in English Language Arts, including reading intervention, phonics instruction, and plans to adopt a more robust writing curriculum. She also outlined curriculum updates across science, social studies, and unified arts, along with expanded co-teaching models and social-emotional supports.

Financial Overview and Action Items

Director of Finance and Operations Sarah Menard presented a financial update showing that 71.4 percent of the district's \$6.6 million budget had been spent or encumbered as of Nov. 30, largely due to full-year encumbrances for tuition, utilities, and transportation. Committee members discussed substitute staffing costs, utilities, and special education expenditures, with assurances that the town's electric rate had been locked in as of November.

The committee approved several action items, including a first reading of the district's wellness policy, acceptance of a \$26,000 Fair Share earmark to upgrade the Palmer High School gymnasium audio system, revisions to the Palmer High School Program of Studies to align with DESE feedback, approval of a 2027 international student trip to Europe, and ratification of a new three-year contract with the Palmer Cafeteria Association.

PROGRAMS | from page 1

offered twice.

"People want the socialization just as much as they want to make something," Bodwell said.

In a rural town like Monson, where residents are spread across back roads and large parcels of land, the library plays a key role in bringing people together; particularly during colder months, when getting out in the evening can be challenging. The library has experimented with different days and times to better accommodate work schedules, school activities, and family commitments.

Looking ahead to 2026, the library is introducing new reading groups in response to long-standing community interest.

Beginning in January, the library will launch a Silent Book Group, a low-pressure alternative to traditional book clubs. Participants bring whatever they are currently reading, spend an hour reading quietly together, and then have the option to socialize and share book recommendations afterward.

"There's no assigned book and no pressure," Bodwell explained. "Some people call it an introvert book group, but we still want people to connect. You can participate as much or as little as you want."

At the same time, staff are laying the groundwork for a more traditional book group. A community survey is currently gathering feedback on preferred genres, meeting times, and formats, and volunteers have already expressed interest in facilitating discussions.

One of the library's newest initiatives, launched in

December, is the "How Can We Help You?" program series, which focuses on practical topics residents have identified as important.

The series began with a workshop on scams presented by the Monson Police Department and will continue in January with two Zoom-based sessions led by recruiter Gary Gekow, who has more than 30 years of experience.

The first session will focus on modern resume writing and navigating online job searches, including how resumes are screened by artificial intelligence. The second session will address career changes and strategies for avoiding age discrimination.

"We were hearing from recent college graduates who don't know where to start, and from people in their 40s who haven't written a resume in 20 years," Bodwell said. "It's a whole new world, and people really need help with this."

Additional workshops are planned on financial and health-related topics as the series continues.

The library is also revamping its Memory Cafe, offered monthly in partnership with the town's Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly Working Group, which includes representatives from police, fire, volunteers, and the library.

The program provides a safe, welcoming environment for individuals affected by Alzheimer's or dementia and their caregivers.

"It's social, it's fun, and it gives caregivers a break," Bodwell said. "Support is there if you need it, but mostly it's about getting out of the house and enjoying time together."

Children's programming remains a cornerstone of the library's offerings, including

weekly baby and toddler story times and a newer Stories and Crafts program held Saturday mornings to better accommodate families' schedules.

Special programming is also planned for school vacations, including a February program by Playful Engineers, presented with support from the local cultural council.

Teen programming continues to be a challenge nationwide, Bodwell noted, but the library persists. A teen Dungeons & Dragons group has been particularly successful, and staff remain open to expanding similar opportunities for young adults.

A newer pop-up program called "I Love Food" debuted in November, inviting community members to demonstrate and share their favorite dishes. Participants help prepare the food and sample it together, creating another avenue for social connection.

The library is also planning programs related to the 250th anniversary of the United States, which will be marked throughout 2026.

Bodwell emphasized that the library's success is rooted in strong community backing, particularly from the Friends of the Monson Library.

"The Friends fund about 90 percent of our programs," she said. "Every bake sale, raffle, and book sale helps make these programs possible. If you support the Friends, you support the library."

As the calendar continues to fill with new ideas and initiatives, Bodwell said the library remains focused on adapting, evolving, and responding to the needs of Monson residents.

"We're doing great," she said. "And we're doing great because of our community."



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CAMPUS NOTES

HCC announces Fall 2025 Dean's List

HOLYOKE – Each semester Holyoke Community College recognizes superior scholarship through the Dean's List. A student is placed on the Dean's List if their G.P.A. is 3.2 or higher. The students listed below have earned Dean's List honors for the Fall 2025 term:

Brimfield: Macy Beth Jensen.

Monson: Nicholas James Aliengena, Nicole Chambers, Joshua Alan Gorham, Catherin Grant, Paige Herbert, Dasia Renee Jones, Logan James Mitchell, Kazelis Rosario, Nicholas Aiden Tiraboschi.

Palmer: Martha Elizabeth Cobb, Elizabeth Rose Craig, Adam James Curtis, James M. Delaney, Vianela Teresa Encarnacion, Joseph Thomas Griswold, Andrew K. Haley, Kannon Francis Jacques, Keaghan Daniel Jez, Sarah E. Lee, Heather Lynch, Vanessa Marie Marrero, Kevin Thomas Moriarty, Brandon Lee Phommasith, Justin David Sikes, Violet K. Snook, Morgan Marie Thiphavong.

Sturbridge: Isabella Dawn Fitzgerald.

Three Rivers: Tiffany Theresa Ganieany, Michael Jay Mancini, Ashley Marie Saez.

Wales: Samuel John Champigny, Rowan Liam Downey.

SNHU announces Fall 2025 Dean's List

MANCHESTER, NH – It is with great pleasure that Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) congratulates the following students on being named to the Fall 2025 Dean's List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Local students Grace Morin of Wales; Daniel Courtney of Monson; Emma Keith of Brimfield were named to the Dean's list.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 for the reporting term are named to the Dean's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

SNHU announces Fall 2025 President's List

MANCHESTER, NH – It is with great pleasure that Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) congratulates the following students on being named to the Fall 2025 President's List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Local students are Matthew Brotherton of Three Rivers; Jordan Brassard of Palmer; Joice Ortiz of Monson; Tyler Cuzzone of Monson; Sophia Villamaino of Monson; Josslyn Seals of Bondsville were named to the President's list.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

PEOPLE/MILESTONE NEWS

As a free service for our readers, we will print all births, weddings, engagements, milestone anniversaries, major birthdays, military achievements, honors and awards. We have a "people news" form available for you to submit these listings. This material is provided to us by our readers and local institutions and we do not charge to print this content.

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Business

Monson Savings Bank pledges \$50,000 to Baystate to benefit Wing Hospital

MONSON – Earlier in 2025, Monson Savings Bank proudly pledged \$50,000 to the Baystate Health Foundation in support of Palmer's Baystate Wing Hospital. This significant contribution underscores the Bank's commitment to enhancing healthcare access and quality for the local community.

Monson Savings Bank's Dan Moriarty, President & Chief Executive Officer, and Michael Rouette, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, presented the pledge to Teresa Grove, Philanthropy Officer at Baystate Health Foundation.

"We are honored to support Baystate Wing Hospital, a vital resource for our region," said Dan Moriarty. "This pledge reflects our dedication to ensuring that families and individuals in our community have access to exceptional healthcare close to home."

Michael Rouette added, "At Monson Savings Bank, we believe that strong communities start with strong healthcare. We are proud to contribute to Baystate Wing Hospital's mission and help



Submitted photo

Monson Savings Bank's Dan Moriarty, President & Chief Executive Officer (left), and Michael Rouette, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer (right), presented the pledge to Teresa Grove, Philanthropy Officer at Baystate Health Foundation.

ensure that critical services remain available to those who need them most."

Teresa Grove expressed appreciation for the pledge, stating, "Monson Savings Bank's generosity helps us continue to provide advanced care and essential services to the residents of Palmer and surrounding communities. We are deeply grateful for their partnership."

Baystate Wing Hospital serves as a cornerstone of healthcare in the region, of-

fering comprehensive medical services and compassionate care to thousands of patients each year. To learn more about Baystate Wing Hospital, please visit: <https://www.baystatehealth.org/locations/wing-hospital>

For more information about Monson Savings Bank's community commitment, please visit: <https://www.monsonsavings.bank/connect/our-community/our-community-commitment.html>.

Country Bank welcomes Victoria Scott and Tony Marini as Retail Banking Officer

WARE – Country Bank, a leading full-service financial institution serving Central and Western Massachusetts, is pleased to announce the addition of Victoria Scott and Tony Marini as Retail Banking Officers. Each brings extensive industry experience, strong leadership qualities, and a deep commitment to customer service and community involvement. These qualities align closely with Country Bank's mission to make a meaningful difference in the lives of its customers and communities.

"We are excited to welcome Victoria and Tony to our retail banking team," said Miriam Siegel, Chief Culture and Development Officer. "They both bring strong banking backgrounds, a genuine dedication to our customers, and a shared passion for supporting the communities we serve."

Victoria Scott
Retail Banking Officer
Victoria brings 12 years of financial industry experience, including roles in customer service, private client

banking, and wealth management. She holds advanced degrees in organizational leadership and business management as well as FINRA and insurance licensing. Victoria is passionate about building relationships and helping customers achieve their financial goals.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in people's lives. Helping customers identify their needs and goals and providing guidance to help them succeed is truly rewarding," Scott shared. Victoria has been involved with organizations including Make A Wish Foundation, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, United Way, and the American Heart Association. She looks forward to engaging with the Belchertown community.

Tony Marini
Retail Banking Officer
Tony Marini joins Country Bank with 20 years of banking experience, progress-



Victoria Scott



Tony Marini

while working closely with my team to support our customers every day," Marini said.

About Country Bank: Established in 1850, Country Bank has a rich history of supporting personal and business banking customers through financial solutions with FDIC and DIF insurance for added security. Country Bank is a full-service \$2B mutual community bank serving Central and Western Massachusetts with 15 banking centers and 2 business offices in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Brimfield, Belchertown, Wilbraham, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Leicester, Paxton, Charlton, Springfield, Uxbridge, and Worcester. With a commitment to personalized service and community involvement, Country Bank offers individuals, businesses, and municipalities a comprehensive range of banking products and services. Country Bank is a member of FDIC, DIF, and the SUM network. Country Bank can be reached at 800-322-8233 or online at countrybank.com.

ing from customer service to branch leadership roles at regional institutions. He is known for his team-oriented leadership style and commitment to delivering exceptional customer experience. Tony is a board member of the South-Central Chamber of Commerce and was recognized with a 2020 CORE Award for Exceeding Customer Expectations. He also contributed to community recovery efforts following the 2011 tornado, reflecting his long-standing dedication to service.

"I enjoy helping people and giving back to the community, and I'm proud to serve the Palmer community

BUDGET | from page 1

mances in soccer, golf, cross country, unified basketball, and cheerleading.

The boys soccer team finished the season with a 14-1-4 record, captured the league championship, and advanced to the Round of 16 in the state playoffs. Multiple players received postseason honors, including All-League, All-Western Massachusetts First and Second Team, and All-State recognition.

The girls soccer team advanced to the Division 5 MIAA State Championship game and finished with a 9-10-1 record. Hannah Murphy earned All-League, All-Western Massachusetts First Team, All-State, and All-New England honors, along with the Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association Girls MVP award.

The golf team captured a league championship with a 13-5 record, while the Unified Basketball program doubled its roster size from the previous year. Fontaine also noted that many cross country athletes achieved personal best times.

Superintendent Paul Foster praised the achieve-

ments, calling it "amazing" and congratulating both students and families.

Superintendent's updates: Professional development and program reviews

Superintendent Paul Foster shared several district-wide updates, including changes to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) online policy manual platform.

"If you go and look at our online policy manual, it looks mostly the same," Foster said. "It's slightly different in how you navigate, so I don't want anybody to be shocked."

He also outlined plans for the March 20 professional learning day, which will emphasize practical classroom strategies. Teachers have been invited to lead sessions.

"Staff are looking for specific skills and strategies they can apply in their classrooms right the day after PD," Foster said.

Two program reviews were announced, including an evaluation of the district's Tiered Systems of Support (TSS) for students needing academic or behavioral assistance.

"The idea there is just

to give us some honest feedback about are there things we can do to improve those systems," Foster explained.

Additionally, the district will partner with Carnegie Learning to review math instruction and the use of multiple curriculum tools.

"I want to make sure with all those resources, we're maximizing the ways in which we're using them," he said.

Foster concluded by acknowledging the many holiday activities taking place across the district and extending well wishes to students, staff, and families.

Public Comment highlights athletic funding concerns

During public comment, Monson High School student Raymond Sheffer addressed athletic program funding and participation costs.

"We pay a good amount of money for sports no matter which one it is," Sheffer said, noting fees ranging from \$100 to \$275 per sport.

Sheffer proposed lowering participation fees while increasing fundraising opportunities, citing surrounding communities as examples. He also suggested increasing the athletics budget by

approximately \$50,000 annually to support equipment replacement, transportation, and potentially a part-time athletic trainer.

"We want athletics to be properly funded every year and not treated like an emergency fundraiser," he said.

Sheffer also raised concerns about shared bus transportation and outdated uniforms, emphasizing the role booster clubs currently play.

"They put so much effort into improving our sports," he said. "A budget increase would take pressure off the coaches, the boosters, and even the players."

FY26 Budget update shows mixed outlook

Business Manager Leah Zippin presented the FY26 budget variance report, indicating that the operating budget remains on target despite minor fluctuations in grant funding.

"For right now, we're right on target," Zippin said. "We feel really good about it and don't have any concerns to report."

However, the transportation budget projects a shortfall of nearly \$35,000 by June 30, largely due to specialized transportation needs.

"If we stay exactly where we are, we are looking at a shortfall," Zippin explained.

Zippin noted that rural aid funding came in significantly lower than expected, limiting flexibility, though school choice funds may provide some relief.

Policy revisions advance

The committee advanced several policy updates to second readings, including revisions to the Smoking on School Premises policy to explicitly include e-cigarettes and vaping devices.

"I do appreciate that they added e-cigarettes and vapes in there because I think those are so common at this point," one member said.

The committee also moved forward with updated policies on drug and alcohol use by students and harassment of students, aligning district language with current MASC models. The Drug and Alcohol policy includes SBIRT screening for substance abuse concerns in grades 7 and 9.

Kindergarten early entry process under review

A lengthy discussion focused on revising the district's kindergarten early acceptance process. Currently,

families whose children miss the Sept. 1 age cutoff may petition the committee after academic readiness screening.

"It's a little intimidating to a parent to come stand here and explain why you want your kid to enter early," Foster said.

Proposed changes include moving the petition process online, establishing a firm cutoff date beyond Sept. 1, and relying more heavily on educator input rather than in-person appeals.

"It puts everyone in an awkward situation," one committee member said. "Giving a 'yes' to some families and a 'no' to others."

Committee members expressed concerns about social-emotional readiness and long-term impacts on students who start school significantly younger than peers.

"Kindergarten today is what preschool used to be," Foster said. "We're expecting much academically from these children."

Foster will return in January with historical data on early-entry students, feedback from kindergarten teachers, and legal guidance regarding transfer scenarios.

Business

527 Candle Co.: The scent of something new

By Abigail McCoy
amccoy@turley.com

PALMER – A new small business has added warmth, fragrance, and a personal story to Palmer’s downtown with the opening of 527 Candle Co., a clean-candle shop founded by longtime area resident Shauna Ziemba.

Ziemba hosted the official opening on Saturday, Jan. 3, at 1018 Central Street, marking the launch of what began less than a year ago as a hobby and quickly grew into a full-fledged storefront. The name 527 Candle Co. carries special meaning, drawn from her son’s birthday (May 27) making the business both a creative venture and a deeply personal one.

“I had the idea less than a year ago,” Ziemba said. “It was a hobby that turned into more than a hobby.”

The shop specializes in clean-burning soy candles, a key point Ziemba emphasized throughout the opening. All candles are soy-based and free from paraffin, dyes, and other additives, designed to be safe for use in any room of the home.

“Our goal is to create a candle that can be put into any room,” she explained. “We keep the look simple, no loud colors or flashy packaging, just something that blends into the space and gives the room a beautiful scent without demanding attention.”

The minimalist design carries through the shop, where neutral tones and clean lines allow the focus to remain on the fragrances themselves. Customers can choose from more than 30 different scents, ranging from seasonal favorites to rustic and home-inspired blends.

Among the offerings are scents such as Mulled Cider, Fall Harvest, Rustic Pear, Wild Mulberry, Cedar and Smoke, Weathered Barnwood, Coffee House, Country Herbs, Clothesline, Spiced Pumpkin, and Vintage Christmas, along with bakery-style aromas like Vanilla Cider Donut, Lemon Blueberry Crumble, and The Cookie Jar. Seasonal and holiday scents, including Holiday Cranberry and Farmhouse Christmas, are also available.

Ziemba’s personal favorite, and the shop’s signature scent, is appropriately named “527.” The candle blends cinnamon, apples, brown sugar, vanilla, and pastry notes, creating a warm, bakery-inspired fragrance.



A mini chalkboard with the 527 Candle Co. slogan and a photo of Ziemba’s son whom the name was based off.



Shauna Ziemba, owner of 527 Candle Co., ran the counter for her shop’s inaugural storefront opening.



Shelves full of over 30 unique scents patrons can choose from.

“That’s my signature,” she said. “It’s cinnamon, apples, and streusel...like a pastry.”

In addition to traditional candles, 527 Candle Co. offers a distinctive service that allows customers to bring in found or sentimental vessels to be refilled with a candle scent of their choice, pending approval for safety and suitability. The shop also features a display of found vessels available for customers who want something unique and repurposed.

Candle sizes include 8-ounce candles priced at \$14 and 16-ounce candles priced at \$22. Complementing the candles are a variety of candle accessories, including wick cutters, matches, lighters, and snuffers, as well as decorative candle plates.

The store also carries additional home goods, including throw blankets, pillow inserts and covers, and giftable items that align with the cozy, rustic aesthetic of the brand.

Wax melts and additional candle varieties are expected to be added soon.

Ziemba, who grew up in Palmer before moving away and later returning to raise her son, said opening the shop feels like a homecoming.

“We’re super excited to be part of the Palmer business community,” she said. “It’s really nice to see the town starting to grow again and to see more small businesses opening on Central Main Street. I’ve lived here most of my life, so this is very special.”

527 Candle Co. is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with extended evening hours on Wednesdays until 7 p.m. Hours and updates are posted on the business’s Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok pages.

As Palmer continues to welcome new small businesses downtown, Ziemba hopes her candles: clean, simple, and thoughtfully made, will help customers feel at home.

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy



The found vessels were available to be filled with Ziemba’s special soy candle wax.



Merchandise is artfully displayed throughout the store, creating a very homey feel.

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Cassian Kowalik tries to lift a shot over a Monson guard.

Mustangs win over host Pioneers



Treynce Senquiz tries to get a shot over a Monson blocker.

PALMER – Last Friday night, Pathfinder opened up the 2026 portion of its schedule with a 56-40 loss against Monson. Pathfinder managed just three points in the opening frame and trailed 30-11 at halftime. Monson, which improved to 2-3 on the season,

had a strong second half as well. Pathfinder fell to 1-4 on the season. Cayden Bousquet was a bright spot with 19 points to lead all scorers with the Pioneers. Monson was led by Niko Mathieu with 14 points. Austin Meacham had 12 points.



Austin Meacham dribbles into the paint.



Cayden Bousquet eyes a teammate closer to the hoop.



Niko Mathieu attempts a free throw.

Turley photos by David Henry



Brady Ronaldson tries to shoot with pressure on top of him.



Kyle Beaudry goes for the three-pointer.



Grayson Griswold launches a pass over his opponent's outstretched arms.



Maddox Baer holds the ball away from his opponent.



Aiden Girard tries to pass out of the corner.

Palmer falls to Ware

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER – The Ware Lady Indians completed the 2025 portion of their regular season schedule as one of the seven remaining undefeated girls' varsity basketball teams in Western Massachusetts.

The Lady Indians kicked off 2026 with a 53-40 road victory over archrival Palmer, last Friday night.

"We've been playing very well early in the season, especially defensively," said Ware head coach Dan Orszulak. "I thought we played very well offensively in tonight's game. The sign of a good team is when someone different plays well in each game."

Ware, who scored more than 50 points in a game for the second time this winter, made the short bus ride home from Palmer High School with a perfect 7-0 overall record and a 5-0 mark against Franklin West foes.

The other undefeated Western Mass. girls' basketball teams on New Year's Day were Southwick, Mahar, Smith Vocational, McCann

PALMER | page 12



Cali Zielinski heads down the court to start a new offensive play. Gregory A. Scibelli



Sophia Leonard sends a pass toward the arc.



Grace Berry fakes before making a pass.



Mia Hudak passes inside the paint.



Cali Zielinski gets the open layup.

Mustangs take loss to Lions

MONSON – Last Tuesday evening, Ludlow High School girls basketball finished off the 2025 portion of its schedule with a 43-18 win over host Monson. Monson, which is struggling on offense, fell to just 0-6 on the season. Monson was led by Cali Zielinski with eight points. Ludlow got 12 points from Aneysha Donais and eight points from Nora Adams in the win. Ludlow improved to 2-3 on the season.



Vivienne Kowalik goes for the tip.

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Athlete of the Week

Cayden Bousquet

Pathfinder

Despite a loss against Monson, Bousquet led all scorers with 19 for Pathfinder Tech in a Jan. 2 matchup.

To nominate someone for Athlete of the Week, contact Managing Sports Editor Gregory A. Scibelli at 413-283-8393 or send an e-mail to gscibelli@turley.com.



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Candlepin League News

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

Bogey Doubles

EAST BROOKFIELD – The Bogey Doubles league on Monday nights is halfway through the 2025-2026 candlepin league season.

This league's season is split into three rounds, and the bowlers are currently in round two. In first place is the team of Jess Mondor & Tim Brayton with 32 wins in round two. In second place with 31 wins is the doubles team of Erik Pellett & Ryley Burdett.

During week 18, Pellett & Burdett bowled against Bromberg & Daley. In game one, Bromberg & Daley won by a score of 281-275. Erik Pellett scored 112 in a losing effort in game one.

In game two, Pellett & Burdett won by a score of 290-251. In game three, Bromberg & Daley won by a score of 283-272. Eric Bromberg finished the match with 115 and a three-game series of 315. Total pinfall was won by Pellett & Burdett with a final score of 837-815.

Talamini & Carden bowled against Rando & MacDougall in week 18. In game one, Rando & MacDougall won by a score of 265-240. In game two, Rando & MacDougall won again by a score of 275-222. Duncan MacDougall bowled 110 in game two.

In game three, Rando & MacDougall won with a three-game sweep over Talamini & Carden, 245-230. The final score was 785-692 in favor of Rando & MacDougall.

Mondor & Brayton bowled against Dunnack & Clough in week 18. In game one, Dunnack & Clough won by a score of 256-235. In game two, Mondor & Brayton won by a score of 272-261. Jesse Mondor scored 113 during his team's victory.

In game three, Mondor & Brayton won by just one point, 271-270. Mondor bowled 107 to close out the match. Dunnack & Clough won total pinfall with a final score of 787-778.

Clauson & Santora bowled against Johnson & Derie. In game one, Johnson & Derie won by a score of 260-234.

In game two, Clauson &

Santora won by a score of 266-249. Gary Santora responded well with a 121 game to get his team back in the match.

In game three, Johnson & Derie won by a score of 278-254. Craig Johnson finished the match with a 120 game during his team's victory. The final score was 787-754 in favor of Johnson & Derie.

Halbedel & Fontaine bowled against Wooden & Janton in week 18. In game one, Wooden & Janton won by a score of 301-262. Peter Janton started off strong with an opening game of 141.

In game two, Halbedel & Fontaine won by a score of 272-259. Aaron Fontaine bowled 131 to help his team get the win.

In game three, Halbedel & Fontaine won again by a score of 285-255. Janton finished with a 102 and a three-game series of 348. Fontaine finished with 140 to go with his previous scores of 121 and 131 for a series of 392. Fontaine's teammate, Aaron Halbedel, finished with 118 and a series of 346.

The final score was 819-815 in favor of Halbedel & Fontaine.

Bruins snap T-Birds winning streak

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The Springfield Thunderbirds (12-13-4-2) suffered another gut-wrenching defeat late in regulation, 3-1, against the Providence Bruins (23-6-1-0) on Sunday.

Springfield's power play got two early reps in the first four minutes of play, and the man advantage capitalized as Matt Luff unleashed his team-leading 11th of the season at 4:32 of the period, making it a 1-0 game off set-ups from Dillon Dube and Samuel Johansson.

The Bruins had a wonderful shift following Luff's goal that nearly tied the score, high-

lighted by a Victor Soderstrom point shot that rang the post behind Vadim Zherenko.

Providence would get even as they also struck on their second power play of the period, as Dans Locmelis beat Zherenko from the left circle at 13:35 after a Fabian Lysell one-time attempt careened right to the waiting rookie winger.

The Bruins' defense suffocated the T-Birds' attack in the middle period, keeping the visitors to only two shots on net, but Zherenko was tremendous in his own right, denying all 10 Providence shots in the period. Among Zherenko's best pieces of work was a clutch stop on a

low-slot tester from Locmelis.

The 1-1 stalemate carried all the way into the game's dying minutes, but for the second time in three meetings in Providence, the Bruins found a way to break the tie late in regulation when Frederic Brunet uncorked a slapper that eluded Zherenko with just 1:11 remaining.

The T-Birds offense, which managed only 17 shots all night and just seven after the first period, could not get an equalizing response, and Riley Tuft polished off the night with an empty-netter just 13 seconds after Brunet's game-winning goal.

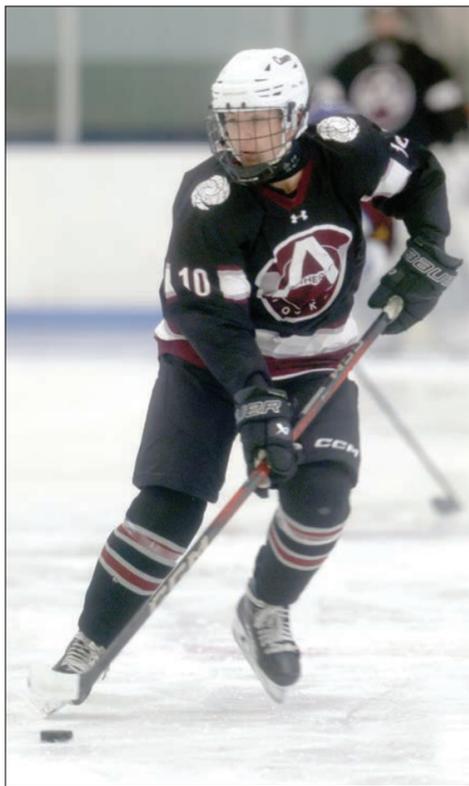
Hurricanes, Pacers battle to draw

HOLYOKE – On Saturday, Dec. 27, Amherst Regional hockey, which co-ops with Pathfinder Tech took on division rival Chicopee, which is also a multi-school co-op. The two teams slugged it out and finished in a 4-4 draw. For Amherst, Graham Arguin had two goals while Sawyer Ferro and Landon LaCrois had the single goals. Chicopee got two goals each from Anthony Bonafilia and Aidan Nadeau. Amherst is now 3-4-1 while Chicopee is just 0-4-2.

Right, Ethan Mooney makes his way up the ice.



Alexander Marlin crosses center ice.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Noah Latulippe makes a quick pass.



Jason Kim watches play as guards the Amherst goal.

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Warriors offense struggles in loss to Minnechaug

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

FISKDALE – Putting the ball into the basket was a major factor in the only meeting of the regular season between the Minnechaug Regional and Tantasqua Regional boys' basketball teams.

The Falcons did manage to make 12 two-point field goals and five 3-pointers leading to a 44-26 non-league victory over the Warriors inside the Tantasqua Field House, last Saturday afternoon.

"It wasn't a very pretty game, especially offensively, but we still found a way to walk out of here with a win," said Minnechaug head coach Mike Orzech. "Our half-court offense wasn't very good, but we played very well defensively. We still have a lot of work to do if we want to compete against the better teams in Western Mass this year."

Minnechaug, who won their fourth consecutive game, had a 5-1 overall record following the road win. The Falcons scored 50 or more points in their first four victories of the season. They also scored 48 points in a loss to Amherst in the annual Pioneer Valley Tip-off, which was held at the Mullins Center located on the UMass Amherst campus.

The Warriors (1-4) lost their fourth game in a row since defeating Bay Path, 57-20, at home in the season opener on December 16. They made eight two-point field goals and two 3-pointers in the game.

"I thought we defended well against them," said Tantasqua head coach Scott Dion. "Our main issue in today's game was that we just couldn't put the ball in the basket. That's something we'll need to fix."

The Warriors faced the Falcons without senior captain Sam Pieczynski, who's their leading scorer. He missed his second game with an injury. In the three games that Pieczynski has played in this season he has scored a total of 44 points.

"Not having Sam on the court during the past couple of games has hurt us, Dion said. "We're hoping to have him back next week."

Since the first meeting between the two Regional high schools took place on the hardwood during the 2021-22 regular season, the Warriors have a slight 3-2 edge in the series. The Falcons' only other victory in the series came at home by the final score of 46-44 on February 1, 2023.

Two of the Warriors three victories over the Falcons were by three points or less.

One of the reasons why the series was started is because Mike Orzech's younger brother, Nate, is the Warriors junior varsity/assistant varsity coach. Nate Orzech is also the varsity football coach at Tantasqua. The Orzech brothers were outstanding athletes at Ware High School.

"We used to scrimmage against Tantasqua before playing them in the regular season," Mike Orzech said. "Tantasqua has had some very good teams in the past and coach Dion is a very good coach. It has been a lot of fun competing against them during the past couple of years."

Nate Orzech's j.v. team suffered a 45-38 loss to the Falcons.

The Falcons varsity team, who won for the first time at the Field House, held the lead from start to finish in last Saturday's contest.

Things started out well for the visitors as senior Caden Duke (10 points) buried a 3-pointer 15 seconds into the opening quarter.

The score remained 3-0 until Minnechaug junior Darren Duah (3points) made a foul shot in the middle of the opening quarter.

With 2:45 remaining in the quarter, the Warriors broke the ice following an inside hoop from junior Sean Allen (5 points).

The Warriors wouldn't get any closer than that as the Falcons put together a 7-0 run during the final two minutes



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Darriel Correa comes up with a rebound.



Thomas Eldred attempts a three-pointer.



Matt Does tries to get around a pair of guards to shoot.



Gavin Perron considers which way he'll get around an opponent.



Sean Allen attempts an off-balance layup.

of the first quarter. Freshman Cohen Nelson (4 points) hit a short jumper, and senior Andrew Grasso buried a 3-pointer from the left side. Then with 0.3 seconds showing on the scoreboard clock, senior Landyn Eldridge delivered an inbound pass from the right sideline to Grasso, who was standing under the hoop. Grasso, who finished the

game with 10 points, managed to get the shot off before the buzzer sounded.

It gave the visiting team an 11-2 lead entering the second stanza.

The Falcons held a 15-2 advantage less than two minutes into the second quarter following inside hoops from senior Miles Fergus (6 points) and Eldridge, which were his

only points of the game.

The Warriors outscored the Falcons, 8-5, during the final six minutes of the first half.

Trailing, 20-10, at half-time, Tantasqua senior Drew Wright scored a pair of inside baskets at the start of the second half. He finished the game with a team-leading eight points.

Then an Allen lay-up

closed the gap to 20-16 with 4:35 left in the third quarter.

Duke hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer ending the third quarter, which increased the Falcons lead to 29-20 entering the final eight minutes.

The Warriors cut their deficit to six points (29-23) following a 3-pointer from Wright before the Falcons finished the game with a 15-3 run.

Worcester Railers lose as comeback fall short

WHEELING, WV — The Worcester Railers HC (13-12-1-1) fell to the Wheeling Nailers (21-7-1-0) on Friday, Jan. 2 by the final score of 3-2, in front of a crowd of 1,972 at WesBanco Arena. The Railers will take on the Nailers next on Friday, January 30th. Puck drops at 7:05 p.m.

Wheeling scored the first goal on the night from Logan Pietila (2-0-2) who scored for the Nailers to bring the score up 1-0. Worcester evened the score with a goal from Cole Donhauser (1-0-1). Wheeling quickly put themselves back on top of the board with their second goal 89 seconds later off another shot from Logan Pietila (2-0-2). Another goal from the Nailers broadened their lead 3-1 on a power play goal from Randy Hernández

(1-0-1). Lincoln Hatten (1-0-1) brought the game back down to a one-goal lead for the Nailers as goaltender Tristan Lennox was pulled on a Railers' power play. Hatten's goal gave the game its final score of 3-2.

The first period was a back-and-forth battle for the puck. Both Wheeling and Worcester came out fighting with an offensive approach, the former of which managed to outshoot the latter by a five-shot margin of 12-7. Worcester faced one too many men penalty and one delay of game penalty. Both penalties were successfully fought off by the Railers, which left

Wheeling still in search of their first point of the night to close the first. Worcester also faced a first-period shutout from

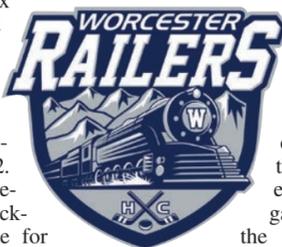
Wheeling net-minder Taylor Gauthier.

Wheeling quickly broke the tie as Nailers' center Logan Pietila tipped the puck over the shoulder of Railers' goaltender Tristan Lennox just 25 seconds into the second period. Worcester worked to even the score on their first power play opportunity of the night, a hooking call on Bogdans Hodass. The 5-on-4 play led Cole Donhauser to tip a shot from Michael Suda past Gauthier to tie the game one-

all. The Nailers did not keep the tie on the board for long. Pietila grabbed another goal to bring the new score up to 2-1 Nailers. The Nailers and Railers came to blows to close the second as Tanner Schachle took a seat in the box alongside Nailers' captain Matt Quercia after an encounter on the ice. Anthony Hora and Max Dorrington were both sent to the locker room for individual misconducts. The horn signaled the end of the second as Adam Samuelsson batted off Connor Lockhart. Samuelsson skated away with a two-minute roughing minor to open the third period. Shots to close the period were 21-24 in favor of Wheeling. Total penalties for the period were 7 for Wheeling and 5 for Worcester.

Worcester opened the

third period down a man from Samuelsson's penalty that carried over from the close of the second. With Worcester shorthanded, Wheeling capitalized on the power play with a goal from Randy Hernández for the 3-1 Nailers lead. Worcester would see three more power-play chances in the third, none of which would be fulfilled with a goal. Down by two with five minutes to go and the net empty, Lincoln Hatten narrowed the gap back down to a one-goal affair on the power-play. Despite the comeback effort from the Railers, Wheeling skated away with the 3-2 victory. Final shots for Worcester were 32 to Wheeling's 33. The Railers closed the game with seven penalties, while the Nailers led the night with 10 infractions for themselves.



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PALMER | from page 9

Tech, Pittsfield, and Minnechaug Regional.

The Lady Indians also won a game at the Palmer High School gymnasium for the first time since they celebrated a 60-38 victory over the Lady Panthers on December 21, 2016.

"This win feels great because this could've been my last time playing a game in this gym," said Ware senior Madi Slattery, who's been a member of the varsity squad since she was in the eighth grade. "We lost to Palmer by one point here in last year's Division 5 state tournament, which ended our season. This is a huge rivalry game."

Another Palmer-Ware girls' basketball game that Slattery will probably always remember was last year's 42-39 overtime home win in a non-playoff game.

"That's probably my favorite game of my entire varsity basketball career," Slattery said. "I can still recall every detail, and it was special winning the game in our gym."

Slattery, who's the Lady Indians point guard, is the only senior listed on her team's roster. She didn't score

any points in the first meeting of the 2025-26 regular season between the two squads.

Sophomore Amelia Orszulak, freshman Naomi Torres, and freshman Gloria Cotaj combined to score 30 first half points, which helped the visiting team build a 19-point halftime lead.

Orszulak led the way offensively for the Lady Indians with 12 points, which she scored during the first 16 minutes of the contest with the help of three 3-pointers.

Cotaj netted all 10 of her points in the first half. Torres also reached double digits by scoring eight points in the opening half and adding two more in the second half for a total of 10 points.

Freshman Gabby Kaczuka picked up the slack offensively for the Lady Indians during the second half by scoring seven of her nine points. Freshman Daisy Laverdiere also contributed offensively in the second half with six points.

The Lady Panthers (2-4, 2-3), who don't have any seniors listed on their roster, were led offensively by freshmen Anabelle and Evelyn Ladue, who are twins.

Anabelle Ladue scored 11 of her game-high 18 points during the second quarter,

which kept the home team within striking distance. Evelyn Ladue just missed reaching double-digits, as she finished the contest with nine points. Eighth grader Haley Lainey scored five of her seven points in the final quarter.

The only time that the home team held the lead was 3-2 less than a minute into the opening quarter when Anabelle Ladue banked home a 3-pointer from the right side.

The Lady Indians scored the next 13 points.

With 5:28 left in the first quarter, Orszulak was fouled while making a 3-pointer from the right corner. She made the free throw completing the rare four point play giving the Lady Indians a 12-3 lead.

Orszulak hit another 3-pointer from the right corner two minutes later, pushing the lead into double digits for the first time (15-3).

Cotaj made a pair of field goals at the end of the quarter making the score 24-5.

The Lady Panthers other two points came on foul shots by Evelyn Ladue and eighth grader Christina Reed (1 point).

The Lady Indians largest lead of the first half was 30-7 two minutes into the second quarter following Orszulak's



Addyson Petrashewicz goes for the layup attempt.



Evelynn Ladue goes for the free throw.



Christina Reed tries to bring down the rebound.

third 3-pointer.

"Being able to build a large lead in the first half was fantastic," Slattery said. "We never really let them back into the game after that, which is something that coach Orszulak always talks about."

Anabelle Ladue did score nine unanswered points, which helped slice the Lady Panthers deficit to 30-16 with 2:20 left in the first half.

Ware held a 37-16 lead following a jumper from junior Reaghan Jacobs with 18 seconds left in the first half.

Then Anabelle Ladue ended the 7-0 spurt with an inside hoop just before the buzzer sounded.

The Lady Indians added four points to their lead during the third quarter, as

they outscored the Lady Panthers, 15-11.

The only points scored by Ware during the final eight minutes of the contest was a free throw from Laverdiere.

Palmer scored the final nine points of the game, but they couldn't get any closer than 13 points.

The Lady Indians will be looking to sweep the season series when they host the Lady Panthers at Paul Orszulak Gymnasium on Friday night.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com Harper Brouillette heads for the basket.

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Obituaries

Joan C. (Marcy) Allen

Joan C. (Marcy) Allen, born on May 26, 1933, in Springfield, Massachusetts, peacefully departed this life on Dec. 28, 2025, with her loving family by her side. A devoted family member, teacher, musician, and friend, Joan's spirit will be dearly missed.



Joan was predeceased by her parents, Kenneth and Helen (King) Marcy; her brother, Ronald Marcy; and her husband of 41 years, Richard L. Allen in 1995. She is survived by her sons, David and Mark, along with Mark's wife, Sue. She also leaves her grandchildren, Meghan Matczak and her husband Chris, and Samuel Allen and his wife Maddy; her great-grandchildren, Makenna, Leanna, and Sadie Matczak, and Eli and Archer Allen; and her sister-in-law, Judi Marcy and her children Suzanne and Glenn. Joan held a special place in her heart for her many dear friends, sharing lifelong bonds that

made the most of her time there with the wonderful and caring staff.

An active member of St. Paul's Universalist Church in Palmer for over 80 years, Joan's family has a long-standing involvement with the church that spans generations. Guided by her faith, she was known for her kindness and loving demeanor, leaving a lasting impact on those who knew her. Calling hours were held on Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Beers & Story Palmer Funeral Home. A celebration of Joan's life was held the following morning, Jan. 8, 2026, at 11 a.m. at St. Paul's Universalist Church in Palmer. Burial will be held privately. In lieu of flowers, donations in Joan's memory may be made to St. Paul's Universalist Church, 1060 Central St., Palmer, MA 01069. Joan C. Allen will be lovingly remembered for her warm spirit, how she made people feel, the respect she inspired and the lasting legacy she leaves behind.

heart and married Richard during his Air Force years in Darmstadt, Germany. Joan dedicated over 28 years to serving as the organist, choir director, and Minister of Music at the First Congregational Church in Brimfield. She taught piano and organ to untold numbers of students in the Brimfield area. Joan found great friends during her 13 years working as a research librarian at Old Sturbridge Village. She started teaching yoga classes back in 1974, well before it was a mainstream activity. She even taught chair yoga classes during her years at Quaboag on the Common in West Brookfield. She

Samuel E. Koran Jr

1942-2025



MONSON – Samuel E. Koran, Jr., 83, affectionately known to many as Sam, passed away peacefully at home on Dec. 30, 2025, surrounded by his loving family, after dealing with Parkinson's Disease for many years. He was born on September 17, 1942 in Palmer, Massachusetts, where he began a lifelong journey of hard work and devotion to family.

From a young age, Sam helped his father and uncle at Koran's Dairy, learning the value of hard work early on. This experience laid the foundation for his own successful venture, Koran's Farm, a dairy farm, where he also operated a snowmobile business there for years. Later on, he renovated the former snowmobile shop to create a beautiful farm stand and gift shop where he and his wife became known for growing some of the best corn in the area, filling their greenhouses, growing various produce, strawberries, hay and Christmas trees to provide all year long. Sam also worked for the State of Massachusetts

plowing snow for over 30 years.

Sam attended Monson Public Schools and was a communicant of St. Patrick's Church. He was an active member of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau, Flower Growers Association, and the New England Vegetable and Berry Grower's Association, connecting with fellow farmers. His personality shone brightly, marked by a hardworking spirit and the ability to wear many hats to provide for his family. In addition to his dedication to farming, he had a wide range of interests. He enjoyed flying, holding a private pilot's license, and was a fan of NASCAR, and some of the best times were simply sharing a good meal with friends and family.

Sam is survived by his beloved wife, Sheila M. (Smart) Koran, with whom he shared 61 wonderful years of marriage. He leaves behind his daughters, Denise Koran-Klisiewicz and her husband Donald Klisiewicz, Lisa Koran, and Kimberly Goudreau and her husband Damien and his loving granddaughter,

Tessa, whom always enjoyed helping Grandpa. He is further survived by his sister, Patricia Mainville, along with several nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends who will remember him fondly. He was preceded in death by his parents, Samuel E. Koran and Ann M. (Bradlenski) Koran.

Sam will be remembered for his unwavering work ethic, his love for his family, and the impact he made in his community. His spirit will live on in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

Lombard Funeral Home has been entrusted with the arrangements. Visiting hours were held Monday, Jan. 5, 2026 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the funeral home located at 3 Bridge St. in Monson. Tuesday Jan. 6, 2026, family and friends gathered at the funeral home from 9 to 9:30 a.m. to form a funeral procession to St. Patrick's Church for a Funeral Mass at 10 a.m. with burial at Hillcrest Cemetery in Monson.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research or to the Monson Fire Department. For online condolences please visit www.lombardfuneralhome.com.

DEATH NOTICES

Joan C. (Marcy) Allen
Died Dec. 28, 2025
Services Jan. 7, 2026
Beers & Story Funeral Home

Samuel E. Koran Jr
Died Dec. 30, 2025
Services Jan. 5, 2026
Lombard Funeral Home

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DEADLINE

The Journal Register has changed its firm deadline for public submissions to Mondays. To get your submission in for that week's edition space permitting, email Editor at journalregister@turley.com or call the office at 413-283-8393 by noon on Mondays. We appreciate the cooperation of our readers.



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- If so, then join our team! Turley Publications is looking for an outgoing, energetic person interested in selling advertising for our community newspapers. The right candidate will assume an established territory with a portfolio of customers.

You must be a self-starter with excellent communication and organizational skills. Basic computer skills are required. Previous print sales experience is preferred but we will train the right candidate.

Turley Publications, a locally owned family business, offers a competitive commission structure, 401k, and health plan.

Send resume & cover letter to:

Jamie Joslyn
24 Water Street
Palmer, MA 01069
Email: jamie@turley.com



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Holyoke Wilds LLC, a licensed cannabis cultivator and product manufacturer in Holyoke, MA, is seeking reliable individuals for general cultivation and product manufacturing positions. Duties include assisting with plant care, trimming, cleaning, product manufacturing, and other general tasks within the facility.
Start Date: Within the next few weeks to months
Pay: Varies based on experience. Ranges from \$16 to \$20 per hour.
Requirements: Applicants must be 21 or older and eligible to work in the United States. Background checks are required under state cannabis regulations.
Interested candidates should email holyokewildsjobs@gmail.com with their contact information and brief work history.
Holyoke Wilds LLC is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or veteran status.

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination.

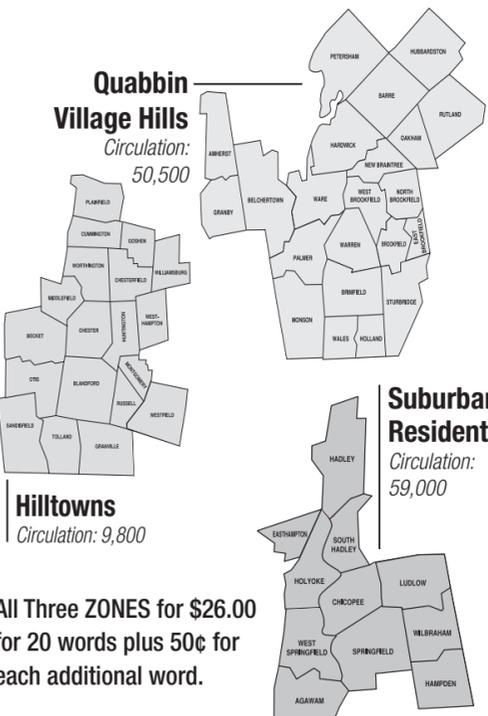
This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban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

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29 Base Price \$30.50	30 Base Price \$31.00	31 Base Price \$31.50	32 Base Price \$32.00
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Public notices

Town of Monson Planning Board LEGAL NOTICE

In accordance with Chapter 40A, M.G.L. §11, the Monson Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, January 20th, 2026, at 7:00 P.M.** in the **Auditorium of Granite Valley School, 21 Thompson Street**, to review a petition for a Special Permit for an Estate Lot as provided by §6.5 of the Monson Zoning Bylaws for Gleb Leiderman. The property is zoned Rural Residential and is located on Paradise Lake Road identified on Assessors Map 74 Parcel 23A as shown on a plan prepared by Heritage Land Surveying & Engineering, Inc dated 01/20/2025 and revised 02/20/2025. A copy of the application is on file with the Planning Board and available for viewing during regular office hours.

Craig Sweitzer, Chairman
01/01, 01/08/2026

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. HD25E0051PP CITATION

To Margery J. Wilburn, of Carroll County, Taneytown, Maryland, as herself and as Personal Representative of William Stanton; James E. Stanton, as himself and as Personal Representative

of Sandra Stanton, Jacqueline A. Stanton, and Donna Stanton, all from Hampden County; Ralph I. Stanton, Jr., and Prudence Neilsen, both of Worcester County; Janet Arborio, of Hartford County, and to all other persons interested.

A petition has been presented to said Court by Charles L. Stanton, of Brimfield, representing that they hold as tenants in common in an undivided part or share of land lying in Brimfield, in the County of Hampden, setting forth that they desire that all of said land may be sold at private sale or public auction for not less than Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) Dollars, and praying that partition may be made of all the land aforesaid according to law, and to that end that a commissioner be appointed to make such partition and be ordered to make sale and conveyance of all, or any part of said land which the Court finds cannot be advantageously divided either at private sale or public auction, and be ordered to distribute the net proceeds thereof after full adjudication of the equitable claims contained in said petition and supplemental memorandum filed with the Court.

If you desire to object thereto, you or your attorney, should file a written appearance in said Court at Springfield before ten o'clock in the forenoon on the **5th day of March 2026**, the return day of this citation.

WITNESS, BARBARA M. HYLAND, Esquire, First Justice of said Court, this 31st day of December 2025.
01/08, 01/15, 01/22/2026

Palmer Conservation Commission PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Wetland Protection Act, MGL c.131 s.40, and the Town of Palmer Wetlands Bylaws, the Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing at 6:40 P.M., Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at the Town Building, 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA to consider a Request for Determination of Applicability for the Thorndike Street Siphon Replacement project. The project will replace existing sewer infrastructure within the Thorndike Street right-of-way, extend new sewer utilities into the Shearer Street right-of-way, and construct a new pump station on Shearer Street. The project would impact the 200-foot Riverfront Area and the 100-foot Buffer Zone to Bank Bordering Vegetated Wetlands. The applicant making the request is Tighe & Bond on behalf of the Town of Palmer.

Any interested person wishing to be heard on the application should appear at the time and place designated.

Donald Blais, Jr., Chair,
Palmer Conservation Commission
01/08/2026

Town of Monson Planning Board PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 5, the Monson Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, January 20, 2026,**

at 7:10 P.M. in the Auditorium of Granite Valley School, 21 Thompson Street, Monson.

The purpose of this hearing is to hear and act upon a proposed new zoning district entitled "Planned Village District". This district is intended to guide the redevelopment of approximately 108 acres of the former Monson Developmental Center and includes amendments to the zoning map and bylaw text, definitions, dimensional and use regulations, and design standards applicable to the area.

The land proposed for a zoning map amendment from Reserved Land (RL) to the Planned Village District (PVD) is shown on a plan entitled "Plan of Land in Monson, MA", prepared by Northeast Survey Consultants, dated April 12, 2023, and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 397, Pages 121-125. This land description is further amended by an Approval Not Required plan entitled "Plan of Land in Monson, MA", prepared by Northeast Survey Consultants, dated April 11, 2025, and recorded in said Registry in Plan Book 403, Page 30.

Owner and Applicant: Westmass Area Development Corporation

A copy of the proposed bylaw may be viewed during regular office hours at the Planning Board Office or at the Town Clerk's Office, in addition to the Planning Board's web page.

Craig Sweitzer, Chairman
01/01, 01/08/2026

Local grants awarded for Town of Palmer

PALMER – The Palmer Cultural Council has announced the award of 18 grants totaling \$14,776 for cultural programs in Palmer. Below is a complete list of recipients and grant amounts.

The Local Cultural Council Program is the nation's largest grassroots cultural funding network, supporting thousands of community-based projects in the arts, humanities, and sciences every year. The state legislature provides an annual appropriation to Mass Cultural Council, a state agency which then allocates funds to each community. A board of municipally appointed volunteers makes decisions about which activities to support at the community level. New members are welcome and can contact us at palmerculturalcouncil@gmail.com for more information.

Grants will support many grassroots activities: concerts, field trips for schoolchildren, 250th American Independence programs, nature and science education programs. Nearly half of LCC funds support educational activities for young people and the other half split between community events and programs for our senior population.

This year's grants include:

Celtic Celebration –

Council on Aging \$275
Arts in the Park – Palmer/Monson Family Network - \$325

Palmer Cemeteries Tour - \$500

Connie Francis Story – Council on Aging - \$400

Musically Married – Council on Aging - \$200

Bad News Jazz & Blues Orchestra - \$750

Palmer's 250th Historical Memorials & Monuments of Palmer - \$1,500

4th Grade Field Trip – Basketball Hall of Fame - \$1,500

Patriot Fanfare Brass Ensemble Concert - \$975

7th Grade Field Trip – Hanover Theater - \$750

5th Grade Ecology Field Trip, Saco ME - \$1,000

3rd Grade Field Trip to Old Sturbridge Village - \$2,000

2nd Grade Field Trip to Springfield Science Museum - \$1,771

Old Mill Pond Beginner Band Initiative - \$1,000

Name That TV Tune – Council on Aging - \$280

Totality Music Program – Council on Aging - \$250

Mike & Beth Cabaret – Council on Aging - \$300

Western Mass Brass Band – 250th Celebration - \$1,000

Palmer Cultural Council Funds of \$197 for a program for students who are not attending the Washington, DC trip.

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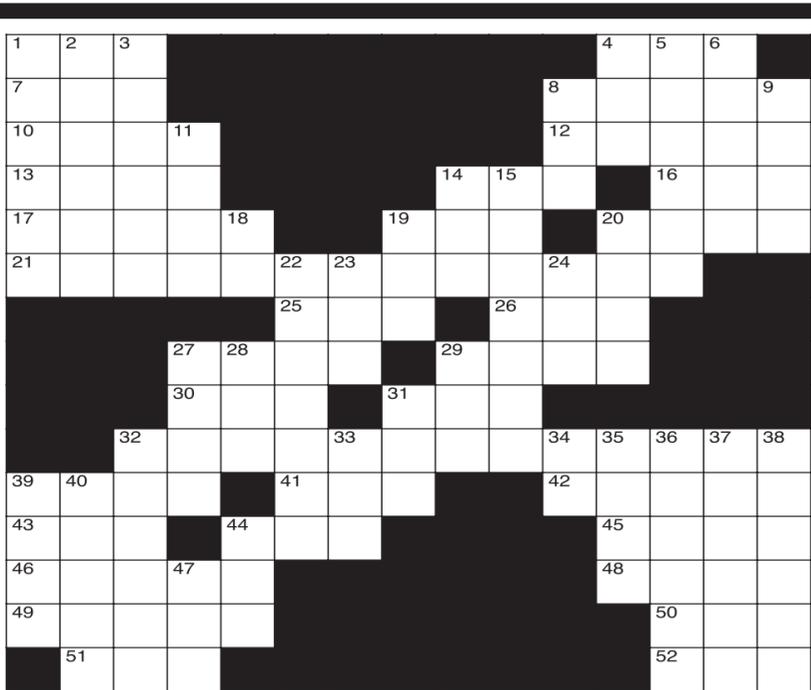
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CLUES ACROSS

- Former CIA
- Language
- Constrictor snake
- Demand
- Rich man
- Short-tailed marten
- Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
- Superconducting super collider
- International group of countries within the Americas
- Sacred state for Muslims
- Shock therapy
- Engrave
- Localities
- Paddle
- Periodical

- Dishonestly gained money
- Gain possession of
- Actor DiCaprio
- High schoolers' test
- Mr. October
- Sign of healing
- One's grandmother
- Entrap
- One who simultaneously buys and sells
- ___ Francisco
- Web-based data provider of marine life
- Type of snake
- Dark mark or stain
- Member of the Salii

- Former measure of length
- CNN's founder
- Witness

CLUES DOWN

- Acquire
- Console
- Hunting expedition
- Pie ___ mode
- Simple shoes for peasants
- Eurasian shrub
- Reciprocal of a sine
- Work together in harmony
- Grenade
- File extension
- Minute pores in a plant
- Medal of Honor
- Make a mistake
- Advance slowly, as if by inches
- Sandwich meat
- An awkward stupid person
- Strong tree
- Commoner
- Electroencephalograph
- ___ Mahal
- Congressman
- Disorderly crowd
- 007's creator
- Fleming
- Atomic #55
- Part of a door
- Short-tail martens
- Baltimore ballplayer
- Cuddle
- Gang in "The Outsiders"
- Of Croatia
- Body cavity
- Get free of

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5-part Business Planning Workshop \$99

Mon. Jan 26 • Wed. Jan 28 • Mon. Feb 2 • Wed. Feb 4 plus a one-on-one individual session.

Starting or growing a business can feel especially uncertain in changing economic times, and having a clear plan can help steady the path forward. The Quaboag Valley CDC Business Planning Workshop is a hands-on series that helps new and growing business owners bring structure to their ideas, understand their options, and plan with greater confidence. Participants learn how to build a support team, create a practical roadmap, explore marketing approaches, and better understand financing and cash flow through guided sessions and a one-on-one financial projection, all designed to support thoughtful decision-making.



REGISTER NOW at QV CDC.org/learn or call 413-967-3001.

St. Paul's Church launches 'Bread & Belonging' supper

PALMER — St. Paul's Church of Palmer is launching a new monthly community supper ministry, "Bread & Belonging at St. Paul's of Palmer," offering a free, home-style meal to anyone in the greater Palmer area who would welcome some good food and friendly company.

The first Bread & Belonging community supper will be held on Saturday, Jan. 24, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in the parish hall at St. Paul's Church in Palmer. The meal is free of charge and open to everyone. A donation jar will be available for those who wish to give, but donations are welcome and never expected.

The meal costs are being sponsored by Gem Exhibits Co. of Palmer and its proprietor, Scott Wharton, whose support is helping St. Paul's

launch this new ministry on a firm foundation.

The opening menu will feature a classic pasta dinner with spaghetti and meat sauce, salad, bread, dessert, and beverages. Going forward, the ministry plans a simple rotating menu that may include a pasta night, a Polish-style dinner (such as gołabki and pierogi), and other home-style supper offerings. The focus will be on meals that are nutritious, basic, cost-conscious, and easy to scale as the number of guests grows.

"Bread & Belonging is meant for anyone who could use a hot meal, anyone who feels a bit isolated or lonely, and anyone who simply wants more connection with neighbors," said Rev. Steven Sousa, minister at St. Paul's. "Our hope is that people will

feel they're coming not to a program but to a shared table where everyone belongs."

St. Paul's has a long history of community care in Palmer. The church founded the food bank ministry that eventually grew into Food Share, Inc., and has hosted many benevolent programs over the years. Roughly ten years ago, the congregation stepped back from serving regular meals, in part due to growing food safety requirements. As St. Paul's approaches its 250th anniversary, leaders say this is the right time to renew that tradition of hospitality in a way that is sustainable and fully compliant with modern standards.

To that end, Bread & Belonging will follow ServSafe food safety standards, and the kitchen will be overseen by staff with ServSafe Manager

certification. The core organizing team includes Adrienne Keefe, who will serve as kitchen supervisor/head chef and brings experience in planning and managing community dinners, and Rev. Sousa, a ServSafe-certified manager responsible for food safety and overall coordination, along with a group of volunteers committed to cooking, serving, and welcoming guests.

"We want people to know that the food will be prepared safely and thoughtfully," said Keefe. "Our goal is to offer simple, hearty meals that feel like sitting down at a family table."

Bread & Belonging is intended to become a regular fixture in Palmer, taking place one Saturday each month from 4:30-6:00 p.m. In addition to the meal itself, the team is ex-

ploring future options such as family movie nights, children's or youth activities, and simple board games before or after supper, creating a safe and relaxed evening environment for all ages.

The ministry is supported by St. Paul's members, local friends, and community partners. St. Paul's gratefully acknowledges Gem Exhibits Co. of Palmer for sponsoring the costs of the first meal, helping to make Bread & Belonging possible from the very start. The church is also seeking additional support to keep the program running month after month.

St. Paul's is inviting:
 • Guests from Palmer, and surrounding communities to attend and share the meal.
 • Volunteers to help with meal preparation, set-up, serv-

ing, hospitality, and clean-up (volunteers share in the meal as well).

Financial supporters, including those who may wish to contribute toward ongoing meal costs or toward audio-visual equipment that can be used during Bread & Belonging and other church programs.

"We believe that offering a seat at the table is at the heart of who we are as a church and as neighbors," said Rev. Sousa. "As we move toward our 250th year, Bread & Belonging is one way we're committing ourselves again to feeding both body and spirit in Palmer."

For more information about Bread & Belonging, to volunteer, to attend, or to discuss donations, please contact St. Paul's Church of Palmer at 413-283-8185 or email: StPaulsUUChurch@gmail.com.



PET PAGE



PET OF THE MONTH Meet Enzo!



He is 4 years old and he is half Havanese and half Biewer. Enzo loves to take walks in his neighborhood to visit his favorite dog and people friends. He also enjoys his regular grooming with his stylist Kim at Porter Road Pet Care. He lives in Wilbraham with Tom and Sheila Slawiak.



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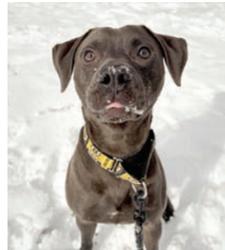
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ATTENTION READERS!
 Send in your pet picture for our "Pet of the Month" and receive a FREE weekend get-away or spa package for your pet courtesy of Porter Road Pet Care. Email your photos to: jwalker@turley.com. Please include your name and your pet's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

Are Your Pets Bored?

When you think about how your pet spends their days, have you considered that they could actually be bored? Both dogs and cats can experience boredom, and they typically exhibit it through negative behavior.

Some signs of boredom to look for in your dog include destructive behavior like chewing, digging, and pawing, as well as whining, barking, and jumping. And although your cat spends a lot of the day napping, they will show repetitive behaviors such as overgrooming, chasing or fighting with other pets, and inactivity or seeming uninterested.

As a result, they tend to make their own stimulation by overeating or shredding fabric or toilet paper. It's important to keep your pets entertained, so here are some ways to prevent boredom in your pets.

For your dog:
Exercise - Most dogs love to go for walks. Try mixing up their routine every few days by changing the time of day and your route. Also, try running or hiking with your dog.
Toys - Longer-lasting chew toys, food puzzles or fillable toys are great options for a bored dog. Fill a food puzzle toy with your dog's favorite treats to keep them busy

and happy.

Mental Stimulation - Teach your pup some new, more complicated commands other than the basics like sit and stay. Play nose games with your dog and hide treats around the house for them to sniff out. You can also engage in more physical play such as fetch and tug-of-war to keep them mentally engaged and on their paws.

For your cat:
Toys - Interactive toys that cats can chase or chew, as well as scratching posts to provide them with an acceptable place to scratch. These toys can often double as

exercise for your cat, especially ones that they are chasing around the house.

Trees & Towers - Cats can be pretty nosy, so place tall cat trees and towers close to windows to keep your cats entertained with what's happening in the neighborhood and do some bird watching!

Mental Stimulation - Engage in treasure hunts with hidden treats around your home or begin training your cat to reinforce and encourage positive behavior.

The most important part of pet ownership is to spend quality time with them.