

The Journal Register

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PALMER

Pathfinder Tech supt. highlights year of growth

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – From dramatic improvements in student attendance and engagement to sweeping program expansion, community partnerships, and a major district growth project, Pathfinder Technical Regional High School is experiencing what Superintendent Eric Duda describes as one of the most pivotal years in its history. Reflecting on the 2025-2026 school year, Duda pointed to a convergence of long-term planning and tangible results that have transformed the school's culture, academic offerings,

and connection to the region it serves. "This was a perfect example of having things in place for a year or two that were working well, and we started to reap the rewards," Duda said. "We're not always stuck in trying to build it anymore...we're there, and now we can keep growing beyond that." Central to Pathfinder's progress, Duda said, is the district's commitment to its core beliefs: professionalism, perseverance, achievement, teamwork, and honor. Adopted several years ago, those principles

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BRIMFIELD



BREAD-BAKING WORKSHOP rises to occasion

By Abigail McCoy
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BRIMFIELD – The aroma of roasted garlic, herbs, and freshly rising dough filled the Hitchcock Academy on Saturday morning as aspiring bakers gathered for a hands-

on workshop designed to make homemade bread feel less intimidating and more accessible. Led by longtime Brimfield Farmers' Market baker Lee Fernandez, the "Baking Bread Made Easy" workshop invited participants to mix, knead, and

bake their own loaves from scratch while learning the fundamentals of yeast bread. The event, held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., served both as a culinary lesson and a fundraiser

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Turley photo by Abigail McCoy

Lee Fernandez gives her background on cooking and baking to the class before directing everyone to the kitchen.

MONSON



A baby gently pets August the Pekin Duck.

Turley photo by Abigail McCoy

Zoo educator brings wildlife lessons to library

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – Children leaned forward in their seats, eyes wide with curiosity, as a duck waddled across the room, a turtle slowly stretched its neck, and a boa constrictor revealed the surprising mechanics of its powerful body. For many families gathered at the Monson Free Library on Saturday morning, Jan. 24, the experience was more than entertainment; it was a hands-on lesson in biology, conservation, and responsi-

ble interactions with wildlife. The program, presented by Sarah, an educator from the Zoo in Forest Park and Education Center in Springfield, introduced attendees to several animal ambassadors while explaining how zoos contribute to animal welfare and public education. The event, part of the library's ongoing children's programming, drew a full crowd and underscored the community's appetite for interactive learning experiences. "We had 40 people register, and we had a wait

list of probably at least 10 more," said Denise Newland, children's librarian at the Monson Free Library. "It was incredible. The kids just love it. Every year there's something different, and it's so fun to see their excitement." During the presentation, Sarah explained that the Zoo in Forest Park is home to more than 200 animals, including wolves, bison, wallabies, coyotes, and foxes. While visitors often associate zoos with exhibits,

ZOO | page 6

PALMER

ConCom approves Worth St. project

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – The Palmer Conservation Commission met Tuesday, Jan. 20, to address a full agenda that included regulatory approvals, a major sewer infrastructure project, river access planning, and an inquiry involving unpermitted work along Thorn-dike Street. Commissioners Izyk and McConathy were absent; all other members were present.

Certificate of Compliance Approved for Worth Street Project
The commission unanimously approved a Certificate of Compliance for DEP File No. 256-0374, related to work at 185 Worth St. The project involved a bridge crossing over a newly installed culvert beneath a driveway at 285 Ware St. Commission members explained that while a site visit had previously been conducted by former commissioner Justin and others, and the work was found to be acceptable, a formal request for a certificate had never been submitted.

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PALMER

Adult education hosted community paint night

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – Pathfinder Regional Technical High School is expanding its role beyond traditional vocational education by offering new adult enrichment and community programs, highlighted by a paint night held Friday, Jan. 30, at the school's Four Corners location.

The event, which began at 6:30 p.m., drew a diverse group of participants, from friends on a night out to couples and coworkers, reflecting Pathfinder's growing effort to create accessible, low-cost learning and social opportunities for the broader community. Shelly Zayas, Pathfinder's vocational director,

PAINT | page 14



Everyone started out with four brushes, a "Paint Craze" Apron, a watercup to clean brushes, and some reference photos for the painting they'll be making.

Turley photo by Abigail McCoy

MONSON

Monson Finance Committee discusses projects, dives onto FY27 budget process

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Finance Committee met on Feb. 2 to review ongoing financial matters, set expectations for the upcoming budget season, and discuss long-term fiscal challenges facing the town. Committee members agreed to move future meet-

ings, including the upcoming Tri-Board meeting, to a 6:30 p.m. start time and to limit meetings to two hours in an effort to improve efficiency and focus. Town officials emphasized that the change was intended to make meetings more productive and manageable as the town enters a demanding budget cycle. Finance Director Sherri Roberson explained that the

next meeting will focus on the school budget, noting that the school presentation will be a key starting point for broader budget discussions. **Capital Planning and Projects**
Discussion then turned to capital planning, where officials outlined ongoing efforts to develop a structured five-year capital improvement plan. Roberson reported that

the Capital Planning Committee has received a substantial number of requests from departments, particularly from the schools, and that those requests will be shared with the Finance Committee as the process advances. Roberson emphasized the need for a more formal system for ranking capital projects, explaining that the town is working toward a

strategic approach based on criteria outlined in its financial policies. She said the goal is to evaluate projects based on factors such as community impact, safety, and necessity in order to build a strategic long-term plan. "The committee then needs to decide how it impacts the community, how it impacts safety, the true need of it," Roberson said, explain-

ing that projects will ultimately be ranked and scheduled within a five-year framework. The committee also received an update on the new fire station project. Roberson

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Valentine's bake sale set for Feb. 10

MONSON – Friends of the Monson Free Library will hold a Valentine's Day bake sale on Tuesday, Feb. 10 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or until sold out in the DeSantis Community Room. Members of the Friends will bake special treats for the sale, including specially decorated cookies and bars, homemade pies and

bread, cakes, chocolates, and granola.

Proceeds from the sale will be used to support library programs, including story hours, teen activities, museum passes, and various special events. Membership cards will be available for those who wish to become members of the Friends.

M-PACT Annual Meeting on Feb. 24

PALMER – The public is invited to attend the annual meeting of Municipal Public Access Cable Television (M-Pact) on Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. at 1659 North Main Street in Palmer.

All residents of Monson and Palmer are eligible to be members of the M-Pact Corporation.

Membership is for one year, renewable annually. Members elect the Board of

M-Pact and only members are eligible for nomination to the Board of Directors. Three Directors, one from Palmer and two from Monson will be elected for three-year terms.

Please join us and add your ideas and energy to make our local Public Access Cable Station even more involved in the communities of Monson and Palmer.

For more information, please call (413) 283-7373.

Brimfield to mark 250th Anniversary

'Spirit of Brimfield - 250 Years of Freedom'

BRIMFIELD – Save the date! On Saturday, June 13, 2026, a community-wide celebration marking the 250th anniversary of our nation's freedom will take place in Brimfield. In recognition of this year's historic milestone, a full day of remembrance and celebration

is planned. All are welcome to attend the day's events, which include the following: Revolutionary War themed cemetery tours, a ceremony at the town common gazebo, a parade, and fun-filled festivities at the Brimfield Winery. The evening will close out with a spectacular fireworks display.

Additional details and updates will be available through the Friends of Historic Brimfield event website: www.fohbrimfield.org. Tax-deductible dona-

tions can also be made in support of this celebration through this website, and in gratitude, donors will be recognized in the event program. Donations can also be mailed to: Friends of Historic Brimfield, P.O. Box 52, Brimfield, MA 01010 with "Spirit of Brimfield" in the memo.

This event is currently being sponsored by the Massachusetts Army National Guard and Classic Hits 97.7 fm. If you or your company are interested in any lev-

el of corporate or business sponsorship, please visit the event website at www.fohbrimfield.org. Additional volunteers are needed for both planning and to help with activities during the event, or if you are interested in putting a float in the parade, contact Friends of Historic Brimfield at (413) 239-0288 for more information.

Be sure to save the date for this celebration of the founding of our country! More information will follow.

Robert Rivest to perform at Senior Center

BRIMFIELD – Join us for a fun 60-minute, interactive program with Robert Rivest at Brimfield Senior Center on Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 10:30 a.m. Robert includes humorous stories from his childhood, classic mime skits, and comic improvisation. Robert also shares some insightful tips on using breathing, move-

ment, and laughter, as a way to cultivate more happiness and joy in our lives.

Robert Rivest is the creator and founder of Wellbeing Laughter and The Rivest Method of Joyful Living. He is an internationally admired performer, teacher, and public speaker. Robert is a talented mindfulness & stress relief educator, an engaging

corporate wellness presenter, a comic mime artist and a gifted laughter yoga master trainer.

Since 1990 Robert Rivest has given over 10,000 presentations in Europe, Asia, Africa, and across the United States. His mission is to use mindfulness, laughter, and the performing arts to bring greater health, happi-

ness, and joy to individuals and organizations around the world.

A light lunch will be served immediately after the program. Please call the senior center at 413-245-7253 prior to February 6th to register.

There is no cost for this program but space is limited.

Magic Time! - Illusions & Humor Magic Show to be held on Feb. 21

Jeff Kempton returns to St. Paul's Church

PALMER – In the quiet heart of winter, when days are short and people naturally draw closer to warmth and light, St. Paul's Church of Palmer is opening its doors to imagination, laughter, and shared delight. On Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, at 2 p.m., the church will once again host Magic Time! — Illusions & Humor, a family-friendly magic show featuring the playful artistry of magician

Jeff Kempton.

Magic Time! will take place on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, at 2 p.m., in St. Paul's Fellowship Hall, located at 1060 Central Street, at the corner of Park and Central Streets, in Palmer. Admission for children is free, with a suggested \$5 donation for adults. Popcorn, drinks, and snacks will be available.

The event is being offered as a community outreach, with a special focus on welcoming families during the winter season. Rev. Steve Sousa, minister of St. Paul's Church, sees Magic Time! as

part of the church's broader commitment to hospitality and connection. "Magic Man Jeff has delighted children and adults alike in recent years with his wonderful blend of illusion, sleight of hand, humor, and balloon creations," Sousa says. "We eagerly anticipate this year's show. It's a simple gift to our community — an afternoon where laughter, imagination, and warmth take center stage."

More information about St. Paul's Church of Palmer and its community offerings can be found at www.StPaulsPalmer.org.

Smola opposes interest charges

BOSTON – State Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee) has joined a group of legislators in formally urging the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to reject a request from investor-owned utility companies that would allow them to charge interest on deferred gas and electric bill payments this winter.

The letter, sent to DPU officials, opposes the utilities' proposal to assess "carrying costs" on customers whose February and March bills are subject to temporary rate reductions that would be repaid later in the

year. Lawmakers argue that while the deferrals may provide short term relief, they do not represent true savings and allowing interest charges would further burden ratepayers.

"Massachusetts families and seniors are already paying some of the highest energy rates in the country, and many are struggling just to keep up," said Representative Smola. "Asking customers to pay interest on deferred bills that provide no real savings is fundamentally unfair and completely unacceptable. This proposal shifts even more cost onto the people who can least afford it."

Representative Smola noted that the existing deferral process already allows utility companies to fully recover the cost of winter energy usage later in the year, making additional interest charges unnecessary.

In the letter, legislators urge the Department of Public Utilities to reject the request outright and to stand with Massachusetts consumers by ensuring that temporary rate relief does not become an added financial penalty.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617) 722-2100.

Smola supports bill requiring life-saving defibrillators at sporting events

Backs amendment to assist with community costs

BOSTON – State Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee), recently supported legislation that would require at least one automated external defibrillator (AED) to be available at local sporting events to ensure a quick response should an athlete or spectator suffer a medical emergency.

"Having an AED readily available at sporting events

can make the difference between life and death when a medical emergency strikes," said Representative Smola. "This legislation is about ensuring a rapid response to cardiac incidents and giving athletes, families, and spectators the reassurance that lifesaving equipment is close at hand."

House Bill 4993, which received initial approval from the House of Representatives on a vote of 154-1 on January 28, requires an AED to be available at any "public stadium, sports center, gymnasium or other facility hosting or providing athletic or sporting

events" at all times, with at least one trained employee or volunteer capable of operating the device in attendance. The designated employee or volunteer must be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an AED in accordance with American Heart Association, Inc. or American National Red Cross standards.

During floor debate, Representative Smola supported an amendment, filed by Representative Paul Frost (R-Auburn), to ensure the new AED requirements do not create an unfunded mandate. The

amendment, which was defeated on a vote of 26-130, called for the creation of a Massachusetts AED Communities Fund to assist cities and towns with the costs related to the purchase of AEDs and the associated infrastructure needed to ensure the devices remain fully charged. The Department of Public Health (DPH) had been designated to administer this fund, which would have been subject to appropriation.

Representative Smola also supported a second Frost amendment to provide an exemption for communities and

sporting events taking place at fields or facilities that do not have access to a permanent power supply. The amendment was defeated on a voice vote.

According to Representative Smola, DPH will be responsible for promulgating regulations and guidelines to implement House Bill 4993's provisions. School-sponsored athletic events taking place at a school gymnasium are ex-

empt from these provisions, since public schools are already subject to certain AED requirements under Chapter 443 of the Acts of 2017, a state law that took effect in 2018.

House Bill 4993 now moves to the Senate for its consideration.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617) 722-2100.

DEADLINE

The Journal Register 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.

CORRECTIONS The Journal Register will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on Page 2 or 3. To request a correction, send an email to: journalregister@turley.com, or call (413) 283-8393.

Corrections may also be requested in writing at: Journal Register, Attn: Editor, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA, 01069

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Gail Ward Olmstead hosts lecture at Hitchcock

By Abigail McCoy
amccoy@turley.com

BRIMFIELD – The Hitchcock Free Academy continued its long tradition of combining lifelong learning with cultural enrichment on Wednesday, Jan. 21, welcoming guests for a midday lecture and luncheon centered on the life, work, and personal story of legendary landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

The program, held at the academy and beginning at 12:30 p.m. following a noon lunch, featured Massachusetts author Gail Ward Olmsted, who delivered a wide-ranging presentation on Olmsted's legacy while also highlighting her critically acclaimed historical novel, *Landscape of a Marriage*. Reservations were required for the event, which cost \$10 per person, with an additional fee for a prepared lunch. Attendees were also invited to bring their own bagged lunches.

Frederick Law Olmsted, widely regarded as the father of American landscape architecture, was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on April 26, 1822. His influence on the American landscape is vast and enduring, most famously through his co-design of Central Park in New York City in 1857. His portfolio also includes the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina; the grounds of the United States Capitol and the White House; the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, known as "The White City," in Chicago; and the Main Quad at Trinity College in Hartford. Olmsted was also informally involved in the design of Forest Park in Springfield.

Olmsted retired in 1895, and his firm was continued by his sons, John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., under the name Olmsted Brothers. The firm remained active until 1980, leaving behind more than a century of influence on parks, campuses, neighborhoods, and public spaces across North America. Olmsted died in 1903.

Ward Olmsted, who is married to a descendant of Olmsted, brought both scholarly insight and personal connection to the talk. She explained that *Landscape of a Marriage* focuses on Olmsted's 44-year marriage to his wife Mary, offering a fictionalized but deeply researched look at the private life behind the public accomplishments. The novel explores the complexities of their relationship, including the challenges of balancing



The main room was filled with people sitting in chairs ready to learn about Frederick Law Olmsted.

family life with Olmsted's demanding career.

During her presentation, Ward Olmsted described Olmsted as a "late bloomer" whose path to landscape architecture was anything but direct. Although he attended Yale, he never graduated due to severe bouts of poison sumac and other health issues. Before beginning his landscape career around age 40, Olmsted worked as a merchant seaman, farmer on Staten Island, journalist and editor, anti-slavery writer, Civil War administrator with the U.S. Sanitary Commission, and even a gold mine manager in California. While in the West, he played a role in helping establish Yosemite as a state park.

Despite having no formal training in landscape architecture, Olmsted was largely self-taught and inspired by European public parks, particularly Liverpool's People's Park. His philosophy emphasized the importance of public access to green space, believing that every city needed what he called a "beating of green heart."

Among his most notable projects, Ward Olmsted highlighted Central Park, which transformed 843 acres of marshland, slaughterhouses, and informal settlements into one of the world's most iconic urban parks. The project employed roughly 20,000 workers and introduced more than 270,000 trees and shrubs to Manhattan. She also discussed the Emerald Necklace in Boston, a 1,100-acre network of connected parks stretching seven miles through the city, as well as Prospect Park in Brooklyn, Elm Park in Worcester, Mount Royal Park in Montreal, and park systems in cities including Cleveland, Portland, and Seattle.

Olmsted's personal life was equally complex. He married Mary, the widow of his younger brother, in 1859 after his brother died of tuberculosis at age 32. Olmsted ad-



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Hitchcock Free Academy Director Cindy Skowrya starts off the presentation by informing everyone of future events there at the academy.

opted Mary's three children and later had two more with her, including Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who went on to become a prominent landscape architect and conservationist. Olmsted's stepson, John Charles Olmsted, later became the first president of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Ward Olmsted also shared lesser-known anecdotes, noting that Olmsted once declined an offer to run for vice president in 1872 and was known to be something of a hypochondriac. In his later years, he lived at McLean Asylum in Hartford, the grounds of which he had designed earlier in his career, though his plans were never fully realized.

Signed copies of Ward Olmsted's books were available for purchase following the talk, and attendees were encouraged to stay for questions and discussion, which extended beyond the hour-long presentation.

In addition to the Olmsted lecture, Hitchcock Free Academy Director Cindy Skowrya used the event to highlight upcoming programs and opportunities. Plans are underway for a February speaker series, potentially



Ward Olmstead shows off many pictures as she tells their story, including pictures of Olmstead's wife, Mary.



Some of Gail Ward Olmstead's books that people could buy if they were interested.



Gail Ward Olmstead after the presentation introducing her books and doing a small reading from one of them.



Gail Ward Olmstead begins her presentation "Designing America: The Olmsted Effect."

featuring Wally Percy, with the final date dependent on children's programming schedules. The academy is also expanding its educational offerings with new weaving classes led by former high school teacher Tricia Bryant, including ankle weaving, flat loom weaving, and a future course using large looms.

Other upcoming programs include a "Harvesting Flavor" series, a bread baking class taught by a retiring farmers market vendor, and a stained glass workshop scheduled for February. The academy is also encouraging community members to join its email list to stay informed about new offerings.

Looking ahead to 2026, Hitchcock Academy Director Cindy Skowrya shared plans to continue popular programs while introducing new opportunities. The academy will maintain its summer concert series, with the possibility of adding additional performances, and will continue its children's summer programming. Homesteading classes, introduced last year, are also being expanded in response to growing interest in food production and self-sufficiency.

Skowrya also noted early work on grant applications aimed at improving the academy's outdoor recreation spaces, including pickleball and tennis courts, to make

them more accessible. Additional daytime classes are being planned to accommodate varied work schedules, and annual events such as the car show in October and the plant sale in early May will return. The academy's farmers market is also being refreshed with new vendors following recent changes.

Together, the lecture on Frederick Law Olmsted and the academy's program announcements underscored Hitchcock Free Academy's ongoing commitment to education, culture, and community engagement; honoring history while continuing to evolve to meet local interests and needs.

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Viewpoints

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

Am I entitled to more Social Security as a Veteran?

Dear Rusty:

I served in the U.S. Army from July 1964 to July 1967. Am I eligible for a higher Social Security payment?

Thank you. Signed:
Vietnam Era Army Vet

Dear Army Vet:

Please accept my sincere thanks for your military service. I believe you are referring to the "Special Extra Credit for Military Service," which has been the subject of many published articles. That refers to a special Social Security accommodation available only to those who served in the military during specific periods of time, but it does not add to your monthly Social Security payment. Rather, it adds to your military earnings record for the years you served, which may or may not result in a higher Social Security benefit when you later claim Social Security.

Here's how it works in your case:

Serving between 1964 and 1967, if you told Social Security of your military service when you applied for Social Security benefits or gave them a copy of your DD-214, they would have added up to \$1,200 per year to your military pay record. FYI, those who served after 1966 were automatically given earnings credit for their military service years. However, whether those special extra credits would affect your monthly Social Security benefit depends on your lifetime earnings record when you later claimed Social Security.

When you applied for benefits, Social Security reviewed your lifetime earnings and used the highest earning 35 years of earnings over your lifetime (adjusted for inflation) to calculate your "Primary Insurance Amount" or "PIA," which is what you get if you claim benefits to start at your Social Security full retirement age. If, after your military service, you had 35 or more years of earnings which were higher than your earnings while serving in the military, Social Security would have used your later higher earning years to calculate your benefit, and your military earnings would not have had an effect on

your Social Security benefit. However, if any of your military earnings including the "special extra credits" were among the highest over your lifetime, then those higher military earnings would be included when calculating your Social Security benefit.

So, whether you would benefit from these "special extra credits for military service" depends largely on your earnings history after you were discharged from active duty. If your military earnings were among the highest earning years over your lifetime, and you provided SSA with a copy of your DD-214 when you applied for Social Security, then your current SS benefit already includes consideration of your military service. FYI, Social Security should have asked about your military service when you applied. If you didn't tell SS about your military service when you applied for Social Security, or if you aren't sure, you should contact the SSA at 1.800-772-1213 and ask if you were given those "special extra credits for military service" for your 1960s military service years when you applied for Social Security. But if you had at least 35 years of higher earnings after you left military service, your current SS benefit is already based on those later higher earning years, and you will not get any additional Social Security benefit because of the "special extra credits" for your military service years.

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.



Onion culture, continued

This morning, after reading last week's column, my mom commented, "Boy, I didn't realize onions are so challenging to grow."

Oh no, I truly hope that the column did not convey that message. I've been growing onions for years, and find them no more challenging than any other vegetable that you start indoors.

I hope I didn't discourage anyone. In fact, I hope just the opposite happened, whereby everyone purchased some seed to give growing onions a whirl.

Read on to learn more from where we left off last week.

Growing on

How does one achieve lots of top growth so that by seasons' end a big bulb will result? Provide sufficient moisture and nitrogen, and lots of it, but only early in the gardening season.

Amend a 100 square foot area with a bushel of aged manure or finished compost prior to planting, then top dress when plants are six-eight inches high and again for the last time three weeks later. Fish emulsion is a great foliar fertilizer for this purpose.

Because onions have limited top growth and are relatively shallow rooted, it makes it hard for them to compete with more aggressive plants for moisture and nutrients. For that reason, be sure to address enemy #1: weeds!

I have found that a hand held circle hoe is great for getting into the narrow space between plants as well as within the rows. Perform this task once or twice a week and you will be weed-free all summer.

You can also apply grass clippings or chopped up leaves as mulch. It will reduce weeds and conserve moisture,

and, as it breaks down add valuable organic matter to the soil.

As the summer solstice draws near, the need for nitrogen drops as the bulb switches from top growth to bulbing up. From this point on, no additional fertilizer is necessary and watering can be cut back some.

Harvesting

In early fall your onion tops will begin to yellow and bend at the necks. As mentioned earlier, reduced daylight has signaled the plant to go into dormancy.

When half have bent, bend the rest and allow them to remain in the garden just a few more days. If no rain is in the forecast, pull them up and lay them on edge in place, turning on occasion. This will begin the curing process.

Should rain threaten, they can easily be protected with a tarp or moved under cover.

After three days to a week of sunshine it is time to move them to an airy, dry location such as a shed to cure for an additional two-three weeks. Should this time frame include lots of rain or humidity, sometimes a household fan can help the drying process along.

Dry onions will definitely be the best for long term storage.

Storage

You have a good idea that your onions are ready for storage when the necks have withered away and the outer skin is dry and starts to slip. Nineteenth century gardeners would have braided and hung them in the root cellar,

where cool and dry conditions would, fingers crossed, keep them fit for use as needed into the spring months.

Onion braids have modern day appeal—they look pretty and it is easy to simply tug the perfect size onion from the braid as you need it. The key to success is to attach twine or string to at least one of the braiding strands — this will give your braid strength, not to mention a way of hanging it up.

We can also store onions in mesh bags or old hosiery in a household location that remains close to freezing and relatively dry. My unheated mudroom works great.

Here simply cut the tops to one inch prior to bagging up. When you are going through them to cut, or braid, be sure to separate out those with double bulbs, as well as those whose necks remain thick; neither will be good keepers and should be used first.

This is also a great time to think about good traits and the prospect of saving some of your best onions for seed production.

Save the seeds

Saving the seeds of your open-pollinated, non-hybrid onions is the next frontier for allium aficionados. In the north, we employ what is called the "bulb to seed" method.

Our bulbs are harvested normally and stored over the winter, and when the ground is ready for planting, three or four of your best onions are replanted three inches apart. Soon a flower stalk will form. It can get quite tall (three-five feet!) so place a stake for support early on and tie it off as you need to.

After the flower head has formed be on watch for the black seeds to ripen and loosen up — you want to catch them before they shatter. This can be accomplished by clipping a few sections of the head at a time.

Dry in an airy spot for a few days before storing in paper envelopes in a cool, dry location for use the following spring. Be advised that to avoid cross pollination, only one variety of onion can be in flower at a time; it is fine, however, to have first year onions in the garden.

Onion seeds are viable for one-two years.

Now that you know the ins and outs of onion culture, embrace the challenge and try growing onions from seed this year.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

In the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid



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Please send opinions to:

The Journal Register
Letter to the Editor
24 Water St., Palmer MA 01069,
or by e-mail to:

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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.

Have a heart: Tips for Valentine's Day

We seem to love Valentine's Day. Americans are expected to spend \$27.7 billion on Valentine's Day this year, a tad more than last year, according to Capital One Shopping. The statistic I find most interesting is that 34% of that spending — \$9.5 billion — will be for gifts that are ultimately unwanted by their recipients.

So today, I will propose some Valentine's Day ideas that cost nothing and may well be more meaningful than candy, flowers or sappy cards. Have a heart, and try one of these "gifts" for yourself or a loved one.

Volunteer: Volunteering contributes to your community and to your own well-being. Research has found that giving of yourself reduces stress and blood pressure; promotes physical activity; helps cultivate emotional well-being; and



your health

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column



promotes mindfulness and an attitude of gratitude.

You get as much as you give, in other words. Find opportunities near you at idealist.org or search "volunteer opportunities near me" on your web browser.

Listen: Research shows that two out of every five people who have had a major cardiac episode experience symptoms of clinical

depression, according to Northwestern University Medicine. The American Heart Association says 33% of patients who have had a heart attack experience depression.

The combination of depression and cardiac disease can lead to poor outcomes. If a friend or loved one is diagnosed with heart disease or has a heart attack, one

of the kindest things you can do is listen carefully to them. If you detect signs of depression, you can suggest — gently — that they consider being screened by their doctor.

Learn hands-only CPR: Especially since the pandemic, people are hesitant to share germs with a stranger, and I can't blame them. The good news is that compression-only CPR — or hands-only CPR — is the preferred form of cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

While someone dials 911, bystanders can perform quick, strong compressions in the center of the chest to the rhythm of "Stayin' Alive," the BeeGees song, until first responders can arrive.

If started immediately, hands-only CPR has been shown to double or even tri-

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

Wales Public Library February Events

- Feb. 7 – National Take Your Child to the Library Day 9 a.m. to 12 noon
- Feb. 7 – Sweets for the Sweet Cookie Decorating 1 p.m.
- Feb. 9 – Library Trustee Meeting 6 p.m.
- Feb. 10 – Mom’s Morning 10:30 a.m.
- Feb. 10 – Friends Group 4:30 p.m.
- Feb. 16 – Closed
- Feb. 17 – Drop-In Craft 2 to 3 p.m.
- Feb. 18 – Drop-In Craft 2 to 3 p.m.
- Feb. 19 – Drop-In Craft 2 to 3 p.m.
- Feb. 25 – Story Time 12:15 p.m.
- Feb. 28 – Wool Needle Felting 12 p.m.

Vendors for the Baystate Wing Hospital Gift Shoppe 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

ONGOING

2025-2026 Drama & Dance Program 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.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

‘Death by Cupcake’ murder mystery dinner takes place Feb. 7

BELCHERTOWN – The Belchertown Historical Association is holding its annual murder mystery dinner on Saturday, Feb. 7 at Tony and Penny’s Restaurant in Ludlow. The show will begin at 6:30 p.m. followed by the dinner buffet at 7 p.m. Guests can arrive as early as 6 p.m.

This year’s show, written by Paula Hilton, is entitled: Death by Cupcake. We look forward, as always, to the hilarious antics of the BUCC Players from the Belchertown United Church of Christ.

restaurant business.

The tickets are \$47 each and include the show, dinner and dessert. There will be a cash bar.

Tickets are available at Cold Spring Discount Liquors (on the Belchertown Common) or by contacting Sally Shattuck 413-230-2022 or sallyshattuck54@gmail.com.

Plan a night out of dinner and entertainment while supporting our historical association, the United Church of Christ, Belchertown and a favorite local

HEALTH | from page 4

ple a person’s chance of survival. CPR classes are widely offered by the Red Cross and American Heart Association, as well as at YMCAs and recreation centers.

Take part in a clinical trial: This is a different form of volunteerism. Clinical trials offer an opportunity to help researchers find better ways of preventing and treating diseases, improving health for all. Without clinical trial volunteers, many of the medicines and scientific discoveries we enjoy today wouldn’t exist.

At any given time, there are tens of thousands clinical trials taking place around the country and virtually. WGC CenterWatch (centerwatch.com) lets you browse study topics and find clinical trials near you.

Celebrate friendship: I’ve written before about the importance of social relationships, and friendships in particular, in keeping our spirits up, our hearts full and our brains working.

So whether or not you have a special someone to celebrate Valentine’s Day with this year, take time for alternate observances, such as Galentine’s Day or its gender-neutral variation, Palentine’s Day. They fall, technically, on February 13 – but you can pick any day in February to celebrate friendships, check up on each other’s health and well-being, share healthful recipes and swap health and fitness tips. Maybe share a glass of wine, too.

Thank a nurse: Nursing is my life’s work, formerly as a critical care nurse and now as a patient advocate who trains nurses to become advocates. I know how critical nursing is to good patient outcomes. According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, though, more than 138,000 nurses have left the workforce since 2022 and almost 40% intend to leave by 2029.

Health-care consumers may not be able to do much about working conditions, pay and administrative problems, but we can help to make nurses’ lives better. When

you’re in the hospital or doctor’s office, thank your nurses for their time and care. You can also show your appreciation by nominating a nurse for the DAISY Award, a program that celebrates and recognizes nurses by collecting nominations from patients, families and co-workers. Learn more at daisyfoundation.org.

Valentine’s Day began as a saint’s feast day and now celebrates all forms of relationships. Make it yours.

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.



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Proceeds To Benefit the Palmer Public Library

In the classroom

COLLEGE NOTES

Johnson makes fall 2025 Dean's List

WILLIMANTIC, CT – Eastern Connecticut State University recently released its Dean's List for the fall 2025 semester, in which 1,311 students were recognized for maintaining high GPAs.

Among them is Hannah Johnson of Holland, a full-time junior who majors in Physical Education.

To qualify for Dean's List, full-time students must complete a minimum of 12 credits in letter-graded courses with an average GPA of 3.5 or higher in the semester. Part-time students are eligible if they've accumulated 15 or more credits of letter-graded coursework with an average GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Event to empower students and families on college financing Feb. 12

SPRINGFIELD – The ERC5 Town Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce an upcoming collaborative event to demystify the college financing process for students, parents, and guidance counselors.

This event will feature contributions from prominent community leaders, including Amie (Guerra) Miarecki, President of Junior Achievement of Western Mass, Dawn Creighton from Liberty Bank, and the dedicated team at American International College. The ERC5 is also a key partner in this initiative.

Navigating the financial aspects of college can often feel overwhelming, particularly when it comes to understanding the paperwork, scholarships, grants, work-study options, and federal student loans. This event is designed to provide essential information and resources to help families make informed decisions about

financing higher education.

- Date, Thursday, February 12, 2026

- Time: 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- Location: American International College (AIC)

Schwartz Campus Center
999 State Street,
Springfield

- Registration: Learn How to Fund Your College Education - Feb 12, 2026 - #chamber_master_head



ing# - ERC5 Chamber

Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with experts who will share insights on available financial aid options and answer questions about the college financing process. The goal is to empower attendees with the knowledge they need to successfully navigate the financial choices for higher education.

Join us for this invaluable opportunity to learn and connect with others in your community. Together, we can make the path to college more accessible and less daunting.

Holyoke Community College scholarship season open for 2026-2027

HOLYOKE - The Holyoke Community College Foundation is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The application deadline is Friday, March 13, 2026.

Last year, the HCC Foundation awarded 410 scholarships worth about \$364,000 to 379 incoming, current, and

transferring HCC students. Some students received multiple scholarship awards. The average scholarship award is typically around \$900.

Students must be currently enrolled at HCC or have been accepted for the upcoming academic year to be eligible for scholarships.

Applicants only need to fill out a single online form

to be automatically matched with the scholarships they are most qualified to receive. There are scholarships for new students, current students and students transferring to other institutions, scholarships based on financial need, scholarships for students in specific majors, scholarships for residents of certain communities, and

scholarships that recognize academic achievement.

To view scholarship opportunities and begin the application process, please go to: www.hcc.edu/scholarships.

The HCC Scholarship Resource Center, on the first floor of the Donahue Building (Room 158), is open Monday through Friday, 9

a.m. to 5 p.m., to help current and incoming students navigate the process of applying for scholarships.

The HCC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that works to advance the college's mission, vision, and values. Founded in 1968 as the Friends of Holyoke Community College, in response to a devastating fire that forced the

college to rebuild on a new campus, the Foundation now manages assets of more than \$20 million, the largest community college foundation endowment in Massachusetts.

Questions should be directed to the HCC Foundation office at 413-552-2182, or by email to scholarships@hcc.edu.

ZOO | from page 1

she emphasized that the institution plays a critical role in providing permanent homes for animals that cannot survive in the wild.

"Many of the animals we care for were injured, orphaned, or kept illegally as pets," she explained. "They can't be released back into the wild, so the zoo becomes their forever home."

She also used the opportunity to teach children how to safely and respectfully interact with animals. Attendees were instructed to gently touch animals only when permitted, using two fingers on their backs, and were reminded never to approach wild animals in nature.

"That's one of the most important lessons," Sarah told the audience. "Wild animals should always be left alone in their natural habitats."

The program featured several animals, each offering a unique glimpse into different branches of the animal kingdom.

August the Pekin Duck, a large domestic duck, quickly became a crowd favorite. Unlike wild ducks, Pekin ducks cannot fly and depend on humans for survival. Found abandoned as a duckling, August is now about two-and-a-half years old and lives permanently under human care.

Sarah explained that ducks are warm-blooded animals with body temperatures higher than humans. Their feathers trap heat for insulation, while a specialized oil gland waterproofs their plumage, preventing hypothermia. When content, August expressed happiness in an unexpected way, by wagging his tail.

Darwin the African side-neck turtle introduced children to the world of reptiles. Unlike mammals and birds, turtles are cold-blooded and become sluggish in cold temperatures. Sarah explained that Darwin's shell is not merely armor but a living part of his skeleton, formed from ribs and sensitive to touch.

"He's called a side-neck turtle because he tucks his head sideways instead of pulling it straight back into his shell," she said.

Darwin's adaptations include the ability to hold his breath for more than an hour, strategically placed nostrils for breathing while submerged, and even the capacity to aestivate, which means



Sophia Skinner pets Darwin the side-necked turtle.

Turtle photos by Abigail McCoy



Clover the opossum clings to the zoo educator, Sarah.



Noelle the groundhog roamed around the ground before being picked up to be pet by everyone.

burying himself and slowing his metabolism during dry seasons.

Noelle the groundhog, also known as a woodchuck, offered insight into local wildlife. Although groundhogs are common in backyards, Noelle's story was anything but ordinary. She was rescued by a wildlife rehabilitator after developing a neurological condition that affected her balance and fear response, making it unsafe for her to live in the wild.

Her diet consists primarily of leafy greens and root vegetables, supplemented by specialized pellets. Sarah highlighted her impressive survival skills, noting that groundhogs are expert diggers, swimmers, and climbers, equipped with strong, continuously growing front teeth typical of rodents.

Clover the opossum introduced children to North

America's only native marsupial. A nocturnal omnivore, Clover eats a wide range of foods, from fruits and vegetables to carrion. She came to the zoo after being kept as an illegal pet, which prevented her release into the wild.

Sarah explained that opossums play an important ecological role, consuming large numbers of ticks and helping control insect populations. Due to their low body temperature, they are naturally resistant to rabies. Clover's gripping feet and strong prehensile tail help her climb, though she does not hang upside down as often portrayed in popular culture. Her young develop in a sideways-facing pouch, a distinctive feature of marsupials.

The most dramatic moment of the program came with Yzma, a Colombian red-tailed boa constrictor. As Sarah carefully displayed the



Clover the opossum was reluctant to leave her cage without being fed some grapes first.

snake, she explained that boa constrictors are non-venomous obligate carnivores, relying on tiny teeth to grip prey before constricting it.

"They squeeze their prey and swallow it whole," she explained, describing the snake's two-part jaw structure that allows it to open its mouth wide enough to consume animals larger than its head.

Yzma's slow metabolism means she eats only once every one to two weeks, digesting everything, including bones and fur. Cold-blooded like other reptiles, she relies on external heat sources for warmth. Sarah also demonstrated how snakes use their forked tongues to "smell," collecting scent particles and transferring them to a specialized organ in the roof of their mouths.

Estimated to be between eight and ten years old, Yzma

was surrendered to the zoo by previous owners who could no longer care for her. Sarah used her story to caution against impulsive exotic pet ownership.

"Snakes can live 25 to 30 years and continue growing throughout their lives," she said. "They're a long-term commitment, and many end up needing new homes."

The event was part of a collaborative relationship between the Monson Free Library and the Zoo in Forest Park. Newland explained that the library maintains museum passes for the zoo, and when those passes were renewed, zoo staff reached out about scheduling an educational program.

"It was a wonderful collaboration," she said.

The program was funded through the Friends of the Library, which supports both special events and museum

passes for patrons.

Sarah also shared information about the zoo's seasonal schedule. The Zoo in Forest Park is currently closed for the winter but typically reopens on weekends around Easter, expanding to daily operations around Mother's Day. The zoo is located in Forest Park in Springfield.

Newland encouraged families to continue taking advantage of the library's children's programming. Upcoming events include International Take Your Child to the Library Day on Saturday, Feb. 7, featuring story time, crafts, snacks, and book giveaways.

Other regular programs include Lego Time on the first Thursday of each month, Baby Time on Wednesday mornings, and Toddler Time on Friday mornings. During February vacation, the library will host "Artful Mechanisms" with J. Mankita on Thursday, Feb. 19, funded by the Monson Cultural Council, for children ages 8 to 12. A popular "stuffy sleepover" event is also planned for late March.

For Newland, the wildlife program captured the essence of what library programming can achieve.

"The kids love it," she said. "Seeing their excitement, and the animals up close, makes it such a special experience for everyone."

BREAD | from page 1

for the Hitchcock Academy. "This is the first time I'm doing this as a fundraiser," Fernandez said. "It's for Hitchcock. I've been the baker here for their farmers market for the last 10 or 12 years, and I'm retiring, so this felt like a nice way to give back."

Participants were offered a choice between honey wheat oatmeal bread and Italian bread infused with roasted garlic and herbs such as rosemary, oregano, thyme, and garlic. Throughout the workshop, Fernandez demonstrated techniques for making yeast dough, shared tips for achieving the right texture, and guided attendees through the process of shaping and baking their loaves.

"The goal is to show people how easy yeast bread really is," she explained. "It's not hard to do, but most people are terrified to work with bread. Once you understand it, it's incredibly satisfying."

In addition to bread, Fernandez also demonstrated recipes for some of her farmers market favorites, including scones and muffins, offering participants a broader glimpse into home baking techniques.

Rather than focusing on rigid recipes, Fernandez encouraged bakers to trust their senses.

"The most important thing is moisture," she said. "Your dough should be really moist—almost pourable. That's what gives you a tender bread."

She explained that environmental factors such as humidity can affect dough, meaning bakers must learn to adjust rather than follow measurements blindly. "On dry days, you need more moisture. On rainy days, you need less," she said. "You have to learn the feel of the dough and know when it hits its sweet spot."

Fernandez also challenged the idea that bread requires hours of kneading.

"You don't have to spend hours on it anymore," she said, gesturing toward a stand mixer. "KitchenAids can do the work. Bread doesn't have to be complicated."

Fernandez's passion for baking is deeply rooted in her childhood and family history.



Fernandez adds flour to her stand mixer.



Fernandez welcomes the students to touch the ready dough so everyone knows the proper consistency they are looking for in their dough.

She recalled learning to cook at an unusually young age alongside her grandmother, Ida.

"I started cooking when I was about two years old," she said. "My sister was born with a heart murmur, so my parents were focused on her. My grandmother taught me how to cook."

Her grandmother's cooking, she said, was simple but memorable.

"She was a no-frills cook," Fernandez recalled. "Saturday night suppers were roast beef, vegetables, potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, and gravy. But her desserts were spectacular: meringues, sponge cakes, gooey brownies."

In contrast, Fernandez described her mother's early cooking skills with humor.

"A gourmet meal in our house was canned tomato sauce with sliced hot dogs over instant rice," she said

with a laugh. "She didn't really learn to cook until later in life."

Despite her early exposure to cooking, Fernandez admitted that bread-making once intimidated her.

"I was terrified of making bread at first," she said. "But I learned from someone who showed me it wasn't actually hard. That changed everything."

Beyond technique, Fernandez spoke about her motivation for teaching people to bake at home, particularly in an era of heavily processed foods.

"One of the reasons I do this is because so much of our food today is polluted with chemicals," she said. "Anything you buy in the grocery store is affected by that."

She pointed to commercial flour as an example.

"Most people don't realize that almost every flour you buy commercially is bleached



Fernandez shows each tool used for making a standard loaf and continues lecturing on the importance of proper ingredients.



Using a spatula Fernandez scoops the dough into a pre-buttered loaf pan.

and contains additives like sodium bromate," she said. "It's a known carcinogen in many places and banned in most countries, but not here."

For Fernandez, baking from scratch is not just about taste, but about health and control over ingredients.

"With two grandchildren, I feel inspired to cook really clean," she said. "Making your own bread is one way to do that."

Fernandez's retirement from full-time baking was a recurring theme throughout the workshop. After years of working weekends at the farmers market, she said she



Fernandez shows how the dough should be pressed to the sides of the tin before the first rise in order to expand evenly.

wanted to reclaim time with her family.

"I have grandchildren who are four and seven," she said. "If I'm working all weekend, I don't have time with them anymore. This is my chance to change that."

Though she described the workshop as a potential one-time event, she did not rule out future classes.

"Possibly," she said when asked if she might offer more workshops. "We'll see. People have also asked me about jam-making classes."

By the end of the afternoon, participants left the Hitchcock Academy carrying

warm loaves of bread and new confidence in their baking abilities. For many, the workshop was not only an introduction to bread-making but also a reminder of the value of slowing down and creating food by hand.

"People love my bread," Fernandez said simply. "So I thought, why not teach them how to make it themselves?"

As the scent of fresh bread lingered in the historic building, the event captured something deeper than a cooking lesson: a blend of tradition, community support, and the enduring joy of home-made food.



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Holyoke Medical offers diabetes education and support group

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Medical Center will host an ongoing bilingual Diabetes Education and Support Group for community members with diabetes. Diabetes education will be provided at each meeting with a Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist or member of the HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center team. The group will meet every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the Holyoke Medical Center Medical Office Building Conference Room located at 11 Hospital Drive, 3rd Floor, in Holyoke.

“Being educated and having a better understand-

ing of diabetes enables people to be more successful in controlling or even reversing the progression of their disease. Support group members will be able to discuss struggles and solutions they have found while managing their diabetes with others going through similar experiences,” said Corina Valvo, RN, BSN, CDCES, Diabetes Program Coordinator for HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center.

For more information or questions regarding the Diabetes Education and Support Group, please contact the HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center at 413.534.2820.

Clark Art Institute hosting Valentine's Day program

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Saturday, Feb. 14, the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., offers special activities in celebration of Valentine's Day.

Visitors are welcome to visit the galleries to find all the forms of love in the permanent collection—from tender brushstrokes to flirtatious figures. Head to the Museum Pavilion to write a note about the artwork that pulls at the heartstrings and share it on the “art lovers” response wall,” where

notes from others will also be on view. Then, at 1 p.m., they enjoy a love-inspired gallery tour of the Clark's collection led by a Clark educator. The tour meets in the Museum Pavilion.

These activities are free. Tour capacity is limited. People should pick up a ticket at the Clark Center admissions desk, available on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, people may visit events.clarkart.edu.

Obituaries

Joseph John Malzenski Jr., 66



WALES – Joseph John Malzenski Jr., 66, passed away in Springfield on Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026. He was lovingly brought into this world on May 9, 1959 in Springfield by his late parents, Joseph Malzenski Sr. and Mary Ann (Bradleski) Malzenski, both of Palmer. He is survived by his wife, Carol Blair, of Wales; his sister, Tina (Malzenski) Raymond and brother-in-law, Richard Raymond, of Palmer; nieces, Mary (Raymond) Mazur and Emily Raymond, both of Ware; and his nephew, Philip Raymond, of Palmer. He also leaves behind his cat “Randy”, many cousins whom he loved very much, and countless friends that he cherished many moments with over the years.

Joseph grew up in Palmer and attended Pathfinder Tech School, graduating in 1977. Immediately following his graduation, he began working at Monson State Developmental Center in Monson. There he performed many duties, mainly

as the locksmith for the facility until it's closure in 2012. Joseph then worked as a locksmith at UMass Amherst until his retirement from the state in 2019. Joseph then went on to work for the Town of Wales at the Wales Transfer Station for 5 years until his retirement from there.

Affectionately known as “Joe Mal” by his many friends and family, he had various interests and passions. He was an avid outdoorsman and loved to hunt and fish. He would go up

to Maine every year for a few weeks with his pals on their yearly hunting trip, which was always a very cherished time by him. He also loved hunting for “treasures” and it was always a thrill for him when he found one. His love for fishing was a lifelong endeavor and one of his proudest moments was finally being able to buy a fishing boat for the ocean. It was there he spent a lot of his retirement with his nephew and many friends, most notably on the coasts of Rhode Island, Connecticut and Cape Cod, as well as fishing any other body of water he could wet a line.

Joseph was an incredible handyman who could fix or build anything and if he couldn't, he would try his hardest to figure out how. He always made sure he had every tool for the job, was always prepared, and wouldn't leave home without making sure he had everything he needed. For those who knew him, he was a great storyteller. He had a unique way of

telling stories where he would use his entire body to animate his words and using many inflections of his voice that had friends and family in tears of laughter over the years. He was also quite the romantic and adored his wife Carol and their storybook romance, showering her with affection and thoughtful gifts over their years together. He was incredibly generous to anyone he met and always would put anyone's needs before his own, always departing with “Happy Trails”.

Joseph loved routine and would always make sure to join his friends at the Monson American Legion every Friday to play his numbers and have a beer. Joseph would routinely unwind after a long day in front of the TV with his signature Marlboro Reds and a Heineken. A celebration of life will be held at a later date and in lieu of flowers, donations can be made at Dakin Humane Society, 171 Union St. Springfield, MA 01105.

The Journal Register OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries. One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice (with a word limit of up to 500 words) and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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

Joyce A. Piechota, 77

PALMER – Joyce A. Piechota, 77, passed away Jan. 31, 2026. She was born on May 14, 1948 in Monson to the late Clarence and Theresa (Beauchemin) Pikul. Joyce was a lifelong resident of Palmer and graduated from Palmer High School. She dedicated her time to caring for her home and raising her family.

Besides her parents, Joyce was preceded in death by her husband, Eugene Piechota, in

2015. She is survived by her son, Todd Piechota; daughter, Tracie Fradet and her husband, Paul; grandchildren, Eva and Amelia Fradet; and her siblings, Clarence Pikul, Jim Pikul, Steven Pikul, and Betty Gatesman.

A period of visitation will be held on Monday, Feb. 9, 2026 from 4-6 p.m. with a catholic service to begin at 6pm at the Beers & Story Palmer Funeral Home.

DEATH NOTICES

Joyce A. Piechota

Died Jan. 31, 2026
Services Feb. 9, 2026
Beers & Story Funeral Home

Joseph John Malzenski Jr.,

Died Jan. 27, 2026
Celebration of life
to be held at a later date

Monson Fire Logs

The fire log for the Monson Fire Department for the week of Jan. 26, 2026, through Feb. 1, 2026. The department responded to 31 EMS calls and 8 Fire calls.

On **Monday, Jan. 26** at 5:29 p.m., the department responded to 220 Moulton Hill Road for the public assist. The department returned to service at 7:15 pm.

On **Monday, Jan. 26** at 7:15 p.m., the department responded to 47 Blanchard Road for the Co alarm. The department returned to service at 6:37 p.m.

On **Wednesday, Jan. 28** at 1:21 p.m., the department responded to 92 Woodhill for the public assist. The department returned to service at 2 p.m.

On **Wednesday, Jan. 28** at 3:43 p.m., the department responded to 31 T-Peck

Road for the fire alarm. The department returned to service at 3:59 p.m.

On **Wednesday, Jan. 28** at 4:33 p.m., the department responded to 31 T-Peck Road for the fire alarm. The department returned to service at 4:54 p.m.

On **Thursday, Jan. 29** at 3:59 p.m., the department responded to Lakeshore drive for the MVC. The department returned to service at 5:29 p.m.

On **Friday, Jan. 30** at 11:02 p.m., the department responded to the area of 34 Main Street for the gas leak/odor. The department returned to service at 2:09 a.m.

On **Saturday, Jan. 31** at 10:57 a.m., the department responded to 3 Stewart for the public assist. The department returned to service at 11:22 a.m.

Palmer Police Logs

Sunday, Jan. 18

7:23 a.m. – Animal complaint, High St.

10:12 a.m. – Hazardous condition, Walnut St.

12:31 p.m. – Arrest – Jose Ricardo Centeno, 33, charged with operating a vehicle with a suspended license, driving an unregistered vehicle, trafficking more than 10 grams of fentanyl, possession of a Class B drug, possession of a Class A drug, possession with the intention to distribute a Class B drug

10:27 p.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Main St.

10:30 p.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Shearer St.

Monday, Jan. 19

7:42 a.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Park St.

10:29 a.m. – Annoying phone calls, Main St.

11:43 a.m. – Harassment, Baptist Hill St.

2:00 p.m. – Larceny, Main St.

3:47 p.m. – Annoying phone calls, Main St.

4:35 p.m. – Accident w/ personal injury, Ware St.

Tuesday, Jan. 20

6:19 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Depot St.

8:18 a.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Thorndike St.

10:04 a.m. – Fraud, Green St.

11:33 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Wilbraham St.

1:47 p.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Gates St.

4:20 p.m. – Fraud, School St.

Wednesday, Jan. 21

1:16 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Fenton St.

7:16 a.m. – Accident, hit and run, Thorndike St.

7:47 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Thorndike St.

10:51 a.m. – Arrest, Amanda Bryant, 42, arrested on a warrant

11:39 a.m. – Trespass complaint, Main St.

12:23 p.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Arrest – Shanna Mary Toutant, 40, charged with operating under the influence of liquor, marked lanes violation, and negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

4:38 p.m. – Accident, hit and run, Thorndike St.

8:25 p.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Arrest – Elijah James Tessier, 28, charged with assault and battery on a family/household member

11:02 p.m. – Burglar alarm, Oak St.

Thursday, Jan. 22

8:55 a.m. – Assault, Quaboag Valley Co-Op

5:40 p.m. – Burglar alarm, Springfield St.

Friday, Jan. 23

5:19 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Springfield St.

1:47 p.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Boston Rd.

Saturday, Jan. 24

4:56 a.m. – Fire alarm, N. Main St.

11:49 a.m. – Accident w/ property damage, Belanger St.

PROJECT ■ from page 1

“This was a bridge crossing over a brand-new culvert that was put in underneath the driveway,” a commission representative said, noting that the plans and drawings were reviewed and conditions had been met.

With no questions from the commission, members voted 5-0 to approve the certificate.

Water Street Kayak Access Discussed

The commission discussed permitting considerations for a proposed town-supported kayak access point near the Water Street playing fields, an area already designated by the town for river access.

With a new Department of Public Works director in place, the town sought guidance on the proper permitting process. The proposal would involve limited vegetation clearing and minor grading to

reduce an existing drop of approximately 1.5 feet to make river access safer and easier.

Commission staff explained that the work could likely proceed through an administrative “de minimis fill” approval, provided the disturbance remains minimal and materials are properly documented.

“If you're requiring residents to follow certain procedures, the town should follow the same procedures,” a commissioner emphasized.

Members expressed appreciation that DPW reached out in advance and agreed to review the site once conditions allow, with the goal of completing work within the next month or two in preparation for spring use.

Public Hearing Held on Thorndike Street Sewer Siphon Replacement

The commission opened a public hearing on a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) submitted by Tighe & Bond on behalf of

the Town of Palmer for the Thorndike Street Sewer Siphon Replacement Project.

Project environmental scientist Isabelle Arthur Long explained that the existing sewer siphon, installed more than 60 years ago as a temporary solution, has exceeded its useful life and will be replaced with a gravity sewer system.

“The town is seeking to replace it with a gravity sewer, which will last longer and be easier to maintain and flush as needed,” Long said.

The project includes extending sewer service into Shearer Street, where no public sewer currently exists, and constructing a new pump station near the intersection of Lawrence and Shearer streets to move wastewater uphill to Longview Street.

Long noted that most of the work will take place within paved public rights-of-way, with the pump station being the only component partially located within the

100-foot buffer zone and 200-foot riverfront area associated with Dumplin Brook and Ice House Pond, also known as Mongo Pond.

The project qualifies for exemptions under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, including exemptions for utility replacement and sewer facility construction. Approval was therefore sought primarily under Palmer's local wetlands ordinance.

Construction is expected to begin in late spring or early summer and take less than a year.

Big Y Representative Raises Concerns

During the hearing, Curtis Thornton, representing Big Y Foods, raised concerns about potential water service interruptions and water quality impacts during construction.

“We are a food facility and we do need water to pretty much service the community,” Thornton said, asking whether shutdowns could be

scheduled after hours and whether contaminants might require flushing.

Long responded that only two short shutdowns, lasting less than a day, are anticipated to accommodate sewer connections, and emphasized that the project involves wastewater infrastructure, not drinking water.

“I'm really more on the wetlands side of this,” Long said, adding that she would connect Big Y representatives with the project engineer and future contractor to coordinate logistics and minimize disruption.

Commissioners also stressed the importance of sharing contractor contact information with affected businesses.

With no further questions, the commission voted unanimously to close the public hearing and issue a Negative Determination under Boxes 3 and 5 of 310 CMR, meaning the work does not require a Notice of Intent, sub-

ject to standard conditions.

Unpermitted Work at 3006 Thorndike Street

Later in the meeting, a new property owner addressed the commission regarding unpermitted work at 3006 Thorndike St., where a small footbridge was constructed over a brook and a dog fence is planned.

“I didn't know I needed a permit for it,” the owner said. “If I need to get a permit and do everything right, I have no problem with that.”

Commission staff explained that the property lies within the 200-foot riverfront area and that even small structures require review. The owner agreed to meet with the conservation agent to prepare an application, likely an RDA, and provide photos and project details. Fencing may qualify for an exemption, depending on final design.

“It looks really nice,” one commissioner said of the footbridge, “but it's just the proper way to do things.”

SPORTS

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Boys come away with win

GRANBY – Last Wednesday evening, Palmer and Granby boys basketball matched up with the score staying close until Palmer pulled away in the third quarter and eventually won 68-50.

Dylan Doherty would lead all scorers in the game with 21

points. Taydem Haley added 17 for Palmer and Stephen Fredette scored 10.

For Granby, Zavien Fernandez led the Rams with 12 points, with Raymond Colon scoring 11 points. Granby fell to just 1-13 this year while Palmer is now even at 7-7.

Griffin Nawrocki sends a long pass away.



Stephen Fredette makes a pass after capturing the defensive rebound.



Gavin Smola makes a pass after getting a rebound.



Taydem Haley looks for a path around his opponent.



Dylan Doherty makes a no-look pass.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Aria Nompleggi sends a free throw away.



Isabelle Braden gets the open layup.

Palmer wins on the road

LUDLOW – It has been a tough stretch for Ludlow High School girls basketball, and last Thursday night, the Lions had another tough loss, falling to Palmer 51-35 to fall to 2-13 on the season.

Palmer improved to 5-8

with the win. Aneysha Donais would lead Ludlow with 10 points while Harper Brouillette had a huge game with 18 points for Palmer. Aria Nompleggi finished with 11 points and Anabelle Ladue had 10 points.



Anabelle Ladue sends a three-point shot to the hoop.



Addyson Petrashewicz tries to overcome a block and shoot.



Harper Brouillette enters the paint.



Ava Durocher squares up a shot.

Pioneers unable to come back against Duggan

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

SPRINGFIELD—After defeating John J. Duggan Academy by 19 points in a home game at the beginning of January, the Pathfinder Tech Lady Pioneers made the trip to Springfield last Thursday night looking to sweep the season series.

Things didn't go according to plan for the Lady Pioneers, who were hoping to move above the .500 mark. The Jayhawks built a 15-point lead in the middle of the second quarter and held off the Lady Pioneers during the second half for a 47-37 home victory in a Tri-County North League contest.

"I'm very disappointed because we defeated them pretty easily in our first meeting," said Kevin Aldrich, who's been coaching the

Pathfinder Tech girls' basketball team for the past twenty years. "If we don't qualify for the postseason tournament or contend for the league title, this will be one of the games that we'll look back on. The players probably thought it would be another easy game. Give Duggan a lot of credit because they played very hard against us. They just wanted it a little more than we did."

The Lady Pioneers (5-6) will need to win at least four of their remaining regular season games to clinch a berth in the Division 5 state tournament for the third consecutive year.

A year ago, Pathfinder Tech defeated Boston United, 57-36, in a preliminary round home game before losing at the Renaissance School in the round of 32. It marked



Addison Doktor grabs an offensive rebound.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Candlepin League News

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

Bondsville League

WARE – The Wednesday Night Bondsville League at Roll-A-Way Lanes has reached week 20 of the season.

Fire Mountain stays hot and maintains its #1 seed position with a record of 89.5-50.5. Sandri moved to second place with a record of 81-59 and Night Hawks are in third place at 80-60.

Spare Parts Bud bowled against P&J Meats during week 20. In game one, P&J Meats won by a score of 487-469. Kristy Temple of P&J Meats bowled well starting with 115 and her teammate Paige Stabach began with 116. Madison Jebb of Spare Parts Bud bowled her best game of the season with 110.

In game two, Spare Parts Bud won by a score of 504-501. Jebb broke the century mark again with 101. Stabach continued to stay in the 110s with 111 in game two.

In game three, P&J Meats won by a score of 507-494. Temple finished with 114 and a series of 331. Stabach finished with 103 and a series of 330. John Jebb finished strong with 111. The final score was 1495-1467 in favor of P&J Meats.

Cannonballs bowled against Team UMass in week 20. In game one, Team UMass was the winner by a score of 471-457. Game two was also won by Team UMass, 453-444.

In game three, Team UMass won for a three-game sweep over Cannonballs, 505-438. Keith Ferenz of Team UMass finished with a good game of 116. The final score was 1429-1339 in favor of Team UMass.

Flaming Bowling Balls bowled against the Snappers in week 20. In game one, Flaming Bowling Balls won by a score of 513-497. Andy Tombor of Snappers bowled well with 139 in the first game. Don Paulus of Flaming Bowling Balls began with 119.

In game two, Flaming

Bowling Balls won again by a score of 469-445. Kevin Krasnecky of Snappers had the highest game of 108 in game two.

In game three, Flaming Bowling Balls win to sweep the Snappers, 454-448. Krasnecky finished with 120 and a series of 341. Paulus finished with 109 and a series of 333. The final score was 1436-1390 in favor of Flaming Bowling Balls.

Night Hawks bowled against Zeke's Freaks in week 20. In game one, Zeke's Freaks defeated Night Hawks by a score of 482-455. A 120 was bowled by Dave Smig of Night Hawks. Pete Ducharme of Zeke's Freaks began with 112.

In game two, Night Hawks won by a score of 464-457. Gavin Sinclair of Night Hawks bowled 113 during the team's win. Ducharme bowled a 109 in a losing effort.

In game three, Zeke's Freaks got the win, 466-443. Ducharme finished with 108 and a series of 329. The final score was 1405-1362 in favor of Zeke's Freaks.

Registration now underway for QVBL

SOUTH HADLEY – Registration has opened for the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, held its first meeting of 2026 to prepare for the upcoming season.

For the 2026 season, the cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season schedule.

During the 2025 season, the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a week-night game to allow players an opportunity to play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will re-

turn along with a 16th game with an opponent to be determine as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

For returning players to the league, the deadline is Mar. 22 at 12 noon to be reg-

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Turleysports

Athlete of the Week

Harper Brouillette

Palmer High School

Brouillette had 18 points to lead Palmer High girls basketball in a victory over Ludlow last week.

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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PIONEERS | from page 9

the first time that the Lady Pioneers had won a state tournament game since the MIAA changed the postseason format prior to the start of the 2021-22 regular season.

The Lady Pioneers probably won't be one of the eight teams who'll be competing in the Western Mass. Class C tournament, which starts next week.

Junior Megan Clark and senior Addison Doktor each finished with 14 points in the road contest against the Jayhawks (4-8).

Doktor, who fouled out late in the fourth quarter, scored 34 points in the first meeting with Duggan, which was a 50-31 victory on January 2. She made 16 field goals and two foul shots in that contest.

In the second meeting, Doktor scored eight first half points on four inside hoops. She only made two field goals and two free throws in the second half.

Clark doubled her point total from the home win against the Jayhawks. She scored nine second half points in last Thursday's contest.

The Lady Pioneers only other scorers were junior's Ciara Green (4 points) and Taylor Allen, who scored all five of her points in the fourth quarter.

The only time that Pathfinder Tech held the lead was at 2-0 less than a minute into the opening quarter following a Doktor inside hoop.

Doktor also made a put-back basket, which sliced the Lady Pioneers deficit to 11-8 with 2:10 left in the opening quarter.

When Pathfinder scored again with two minutes remaining in the first half, they were trailing, 23-8.

"We struggled offensively in the first half," Aldrich said. "We should've scored 50 or 55 points in this game. We just kept allowing them to get into their defensive sets. They played a man-to-man defense against us, which we didn't handle very well."

The Jayhawks reeled off twelve unanswered points during that ten minute stretch.

Senior Rosemary Santos scored 15 of her game-high 28 points for the home team during the first 16 minutes.

She scored 10 points in the first meeting.

No other Duggan player scored more than six points in the home win.

Clark finally ended the Lady Pioneers scoring drought with a 3-pointer from the left side.

Doktor also added an inside basket and a put-back, which sliced Pathfinder Tech's deficit to 25-15 at half-time.

Pathfinder Tech battled back as they outscored Duggan, 10-5, during the third quarter.

With 2:25 left in the third, Green hit a jumper in the lane, which closed the gap to 28-25 before Santos made a lay-up.

The Lady Pioneers were trailing 30-27 less than two minutes into the final quarter following a Green lay-up. They couldn't get any closer than that, as Duggan built a 41-32 lead with the help of an 11-5 run.

"We've been playing very well lately," Aldrich said. "I really didn't expect this outcome. We just need to bounce back from this loss."

It was Duggan's first win against Pathfinder Tech since 2023.



Cassandra Nykiel tries to get her hands on the ball. PathGirlsB



Megan Clark attempts a bank shot.



Taylor Allen hustles down the court.



Ciara Green heads down the court.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Mustangs lose on road to Granby

GRANBY – Last Thursday evening, Monson High School girls basketball was defeated by Granby 58-26.

Cali Zielinski led Monson with nine points.

The Mustangs are 1-11 on the season.



Mia Cancel works around the perimeter.



Grace Berry takes a shot.



Cali Zielinski makes her way down the court.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

MEETING | from page 1

announced that Fire Chief Brian Harris successfully secured a \$1 million federal grant for the project, reducing the amount the town will need to borrow for the \$6.6 million facility.

“It’s a million dollars that will go toward the fire station project,” Roberson said. “That will take a million off of what we’ll have to borrow.”

She noted that the project remains on time and under budget, with completion expected in May, and that updated projections on the cost to taxpayers will be prepared to reflect the grant.

Budget Review Process

As the town begins its budget review process, Roberson explained that departments were instructed to submit “level of service” budgets to establish a baseline for essential operations. She said full draft budgets will be available electronically in advance of departmental presentations, with printed versions designed to include expenditure data and prior-year comparisons.

Roberson acknowledged that the town is likely to face a budget shortfall and said departments will be asked to revisit their requests to identify potential reductions.

“At this point, the goal is to send the budgets back to departments to have them take a look and see if there’s anything that they can go without, because naturally there’s a shortfall,” she said.

Committee members also raised questions about historical budgeting patterns, requesting a five-year look back at departmental budget surpluses in order to better understand how much money is consistently returned to the town at the end of each fiscal year. Members noted that understanding these patterns could help reduce reliance on free cash and improve long-term budgeting accuracy.

Town Financial Update (Mini Tri-Board Discussions)

Roberson provided a broader financial update based on discussions held through the “Mini Tri-Board,” a work-

ing group consisting of representatives from the Finance Committee, Select Board, School Committee, and town staff. She said the group has been meeting regularly since last June to improve communication and align perspectives on long-term financial planning.

Roberson described rising costs as a persistent challenge for Monson, citing wages, health insurance, utilities, and operating expenses as major drivers of budget growth.

“The cost of providing basic municipal services continues to rise every year,” she said, adding that many of these costs are unavoidable because the town is legally required to meet state standards for public safety, education, infrastructure, and staffing.

She also highlighted the growing gap between municipal costs and state aid, noting that state funding formulas have not kept pace with the true cost of running a town.

“The state aid formulas are outdated and are not reflecting the true cost of running a town today,” Roberson said.

Because Monson has a limited commercial and industrial tax base, she explained, the town relies heavily on residential property taxes for revenue. When costs rise and state aid falls short, the burden shifts to local taxpayers.

Roberson referenced reports from the Massachusetts Municipal Association that describe a “perfect storm” of fiscal pressures facing communities across the state. She pushed back against the notion that rising taxes are caused by inefficiency or mismanagement.

“This is not a political issue, it’s a mathematical one,” she said, emphasizing that municipal budgets are already lean and that the town has pursued cost-saving measures such as regionalization, service consolidation, and participation in the Group Insurance Commission.

Looking ahead to FY27, Roberson outlined potential budget strategies, including a possible override, reductions

in services or staffing, or the use of town reserves. She stressed that the goal is not to promote any single solution but to clearly explain the consequences of each option so residents can make informed decisions at town meetings.

“The community deserves a clear understanding of what these options mean for the town and school services,” she said.

Roberson also highlighted the immediate impact of weather-related costs, noting that Monson has already exceeded its snow and ice budget.

“We’re well over \$50,000 that that storm cost,” she said, adding that the town has surpassed its \$200,000 snow and ice allocation by \$100,000.

Specific Financial Items & Projections for FY27

The committee reviewed several key financial indicators and projected cost drivers for FY27. Roberson provided an overview of stabilization account balances and free cash levels and indicated that town officials will take a deeper look at policies governing these accounts.

She also highlighted several major budget pressures, including the pending Pathfinder Regional High School assessment, a projected 10% increase in pension costs, and uncertain health insurance increases under the GIC.

Roberson explained that the pension increase is partly the result of timing issues related to contract negotiations and reporting requirements.

“We’re being hit at almost 10% because of that,” she said.

Westcomm costs, cherry sheet estimates, and other revenue projections were also discussed as part of the town’s evolving budget outlook. Roberson confirmed that, based on current departmental requests, a budget shortfall already exists.

To improve communication and data sharing with the committee, Roberson announced that she will distribute a questionnaire to members to better understand how they prefer to receive financial information and what types of data are most useful to them.

QVBL | from page 10

istered for the 2026 season in order to be guaranteed a roster spot. There will be open practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for March 29 and April 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on April 4 following that practice.

The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall league last year, the league will also have a fall league in September and October this season.

The registration is live at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed.

Aside from the weeknight and Mother’s Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother’s Day, Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Playoffs will be in August.

This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.

NOTICE

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

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- ▶ 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.
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Musical instruments, guitars, horns, keyboards, vintage electronics, jewelry, coins, watches, military cameras, sports memorabilia, art, sterling, signs, automotive, hunting, advertising, radios, ham radio equipment, audio equipment, toys, one item or entire estate.

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BUYING Bottles, Crocks, Jugs, Pottery, Costume Jewelry, Toys, Games, coins, sterling, Glassware, Silver-plated items, watches, Musical instruments, typewriters, sewing machines, tools, radios, clocks, lanterns, lamps, kitchenware, cookware, knives, military, automotive, fire department, masonic, license plates, beer cans, barware, books, oil cans, advertising tins, hunting, fishing, signs, and more.

Donald Roy (860) 874-8396

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SNOW REMOVAL
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HELP WANTED

The Resident Care Facility at Saint Joseph's Abbey, 167 North Spencer Road, Spencer, MA has an opening for a **PART TIME FACILITY COOK.** Hourly wage negotiable depending on experience and related skills. Requirements: High School Diploma or GED. Ability to speak and read English required. Must be able to understand written policies and procedures. Must be able to work unsupervised while following food safety protocols.

For more information and to apply, contact **Wally Connor, Facility/HR Manager** at (508) 885-8700 Ext. 550 or by email: wally@spencerabbey.org

2026 TAX TIME

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MAIL TO: Classifieds, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069 DEADLINES: FRIDAY AT NOON
or call: 413-283-8393

| CATEGORY: | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 Base Price \$26.00 |
| 21 Base Price \$26.50 | 22 Base Price \$27.00 | 23 Base Price \$27.50 | 24 Base Price \$28.00 |
| 25 Base Price \$28.50 | 26 Base Price \$29.00 | 27 Base Price \$29.50 | 28 Base Price \$30.00 |
| 29 Base Price \$30.50 | 30 Base Price \$31.00 | 31 Base Price \$31.50 | 32 Base Price \$32.00 |
| 33 Base Price \$32.50 | 34 Base Price \$33.00 | 35 Base Price \$33.50 | 36 Base Price \$34.00 |
| 37 Base Price \$34.50 | 38 Base Price \$35.00 | 39 Base Price \$35.50 | 40 Base Price \$36.00 |

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Circulation: 50,500

Hilltowns
Circulation: 9,800

Suburban Residential
Circulation: 59,000

All Three ZONES for \$26.00 for 20 words plus 50¢ for each additional word.

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Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Number of Weeks: _____ X per week rate = \$ _____
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OUR CLASSIFIEDS REACH 50 COMMUNITIES EVERY WEEK!

The Town of Huntington is seeking a part-time Town Hall **Floater/Selectboard Administrative Assistant/Assistant Town Clerk.** \$20-\$22 per hour based on experience. 15 hours per week. Application and complete job description are available online at www.huntingtonma.us or by emailing admin@huntingtonma.us. Position is open until filled. Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Wilbraham United Church is hiring a part-time, experienced **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/BOOKKEEPER.** Apply to **Wilbraham United Church, Attention: Alesia; 500 Main Street; Wilbraham, MA 01095.** More information at www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/about-us-2/

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

AGAWAM APARTMENT SUBLET. 1st Floor, 2BR, 1BA, electric heat, laundry, off-street parking. \$1345/mo includes water, trash removal. Available 3/1/26. Good credit score 650+, references. Dog 40lbs or less \$50/mo., cat \$25/mo. Elaine 413-544-4330.

PALMER: 1 BR Apt.
No Pets/No Smoking.
BRETON ESTATES
413-283-6940

FOR RENT

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 advertised 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.

GREAT VALUE!
ALL 3 ZONES NOW FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!
Make checks payable to Turley Publications

Public notices

Town of Wales Notice of Public Hearing

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. Ch. 40A Section 11 and Wales Zoning By-laws Sections 8.4 the **Wales Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on February 26, 2026, at the Wales Senior Center, 85 Old Stafford Rd., Wales, MA 01081 at 5:30 PM**, on the application submitted by Corrine & William Matchett III, for modification to existing conditions issued for a Class II Car Dealers License located at 45 Union Rd in Wales. Any person interested and wishing to be heard on this application should refer to the town website (www.townofwales.net) under planning board agenda, if you have any questions or concerns please email planning@townofwales.net 02/05, 02/12/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No.
HD98P0392GR1
In the interests of
Tanya Krutka
Of Monson, MA
RESPONDENT
Incapacitated Person/
Protected Person
CITATION GIVING NOTICE
OF PETITION FOR
REMOVAL OF A
GUARDIAN OF AN
INCAPACITATED
PERSON**

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by **Dept. of Developmental Services of Springfield, MA** in the above captioned matter requesting that the court:

Remove the Guardian of the Respondent.

The petition asks the court to make a determination that the Guardian and/or Conservator should be allowed to resign; or should be removed for good cause; or that the Guardianship and/or Conservatorship is no longer necessary and therefore should be terminated. The original petition is on file with the court.

You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of **02/13/2026**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. **If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.**

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoumire, First Justice of this Court
Date: January 16, 2026

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/05/2026

**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.
HD26P0156EA
Estate of:
Adam John LaViolette
Date of Death: 11/25/2025
CITATION ON PETITION
FOR FORMAL
ADJUDICATION**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and**

Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Allison L Mackenzie of Belchertown, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Allison L Mackenzie of Belchertown, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/23/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

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

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoumire, First Justice of this Court.
Date: January 23, 2026

Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
02/05/2026

TOWN OF BRIMFIELD PUBLIC HEARING

The Brimfield Select Board will hold a public hearing on the following pole and wire locations petition filed by National Grid on **Monday, February 23, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.** for the following:

Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid. requests permission to locate poles, wires, and fixtures, including the necessary sustaining and protecting fixtures, along and across the following public way:

Shaw Road

Reason: Shaw Road – Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid to install 1 SO Pole on Shaw Rd beginning at a point approximately 896 ft southwest of the centerline of the intersection of Little Alum Rd.

Persons with an interest in this public hearing are asked to appear at the Brimfield Elementary School, 22 Wales Road, Brimfield, MA on the date and time affixed to this notice.

Martin J. Kelly
Select Board, Chairperson
Town of Brimfield
02/05, 02/12/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No.
HD24P1736PM
In the matter of:
Margaret A. Mileskie
of Thorndik, MA
Protected Person/
Disabled Person/Respondent
CITATION GIVING
NOTICE OF
CONSERVATOR'S
ACCOUNT**

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, you are hereby notified pursuant to Rule 72 of the Supplemental Rules of the Probate & Family Court, that the **First** account(s) of Kelly A. Ambrogio, Esq. of West Springfield, MA as Conservator of the property of said Respondent has or have been presented to the Court for allowance.

You have the right to object to the account(s). If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance

and objection at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of **02/26/2026**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to object to the account(s). If you fail to file the written appearance and objection by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you, including the allowance of the account(s).

Additionally, within thirty days after said return day (or within such other time as the Court upon motion may order), you must file a written affidavit of objections stating the specific facts and grounds upon which each objection is based and a copy shall be served upon the Conservator pursuant to Rule 3 of the Supplemental Rules of the Probate & Family Court.

You have the right to send to the Conservator, by registered or certified mail, a written request to receive a copy of the Petition and account(s) at no cost to you.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. **Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.**

Witness, Hon. Claudine T. Stoumire, First Justice of this Court.
Date: January 22, 2026

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/05/2026

ADVERTISEMENT

The **Monson** Housing Authority, the Awarding Authority, invites sealed bids from Contractors for the Family 705-1, Development for the **Monson** Housing Authority in **Monson** Massachusetts, in accordance with the documents prepared by **GCE Architecture**.

The Project consists of: **Replace windows and exterior doors and remediate lead materials.**

The work is estimated to cost **\$ 81,800.00 and Alternate #1 is estimated to cost \$-11,000.00**

Bids are subject to M.G.L. c.149 §44A-J & to minimum wage rates as required by M.G.L. c.149 §§26 to 27H inclusive.

General Bids will be received until **1:00 p.m., Friday, February 27, 2026** and publicly opened, forthwith.

All Bids should be delivered to: www.Projectdog.com online. Hard copy bids will not be accepted by the Awarding Authority. E-Bid tutorials and instructions are available within the specifications and online at www.Projectdog.com. For assistance, call Projectdog, Inc at (978)499-9014, M-F 8:30AM-5PM and received no later than the date & time specified above.

General bids shall be accompanied by a bid deposit that is not less than five (5%) of the greatest possible bid amount (considering all alternates) and made payable to the **Monson** Housing Authority.

Bid Forms and Contract Documents will be available for pick-up at: www.Projectdog.com or for pick-up at: Projectdog, Inc., 18 Graf Road, Suite 8, Newburyport, MA 978-499-9014 (M-F 8:30AM-5PM). **Enter Project Code 872459 beginning February 4, 2026** in the project locator box. Select "Acquire Documents" to download documents, review a hard copy at Projectdog's physical location, or request a free project CD.

Contractors requesting Contract Documents to be mailed to them shall include a separate check for \$25 per set, payable to the Awarding Authority, to cover mail handling costs.

The job site and/or existing building will be available for inspection between 10 A.M. and 10:30 A.M. on **Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 290 Main Street, Monson**. Parking is limited.

For an appointment call: **no appointments.**
01/29, 02/05, 02/12/2026

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE
Premises: 11 Christine Street, Palmer, MA 01069

By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Randall E Paxton to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for First Federal Savings Bank of Boston, and now held by **U.S. Bank National Association**, said mortgage dated September 12, 2014 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 20424, Page 171, as affected by a Loan Modification dated June 7, 2016 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 21287, Page 50; as affected by a Affidavit dated March 2, 2023 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 24927, Page 586; said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Nominee for First Federal Savings Bank of Boston to U.S. Bank National Association by assignment dated September 18, 2015 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 20876, Page 399; for breach of the conditions in said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at **Public Auction** on February 19, 2026 at 01:00 PM Local Time upon the premises, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

The following real property situate on the Southerly side of proposed street, known as "Christine Street" Town of Palmer, Hampden County, Massachusetts, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at an iron pipe which is located S. 78 degrees 06 minutes E. a distance of four hundred thirty-six (436) feet from an iron pin in the Easterly line of Flynt Road and at the Northwesterly corner of land formerly of Albert L'Heureux, now believed to be of Stephen Stoneberger, all as shown on "Plan of Land in Palmer, Mass. owned by Charles T. Carter, dated August, 1957, Theodore P. Drazek, R.L.S." recorded with the Hampden County Registry of Deeds, Book of Plans 70, Page 28; thence running

S. 78 degrees 06 minutes E. a distance of one hundred fifty (150) feet to an iron pin; thence turning and running

N. 18 degrees 54 minutes E one hundred fifty and no/100 (150) feet to an iron pin in the Southerly terminus of a proposed street known as "Christine Street" thence turning and running

N. 78 degrees 06 minutes W along the line of said proposed street one hundred fifty and no/100 (150.00) feet to an iron pin; thence turning and running

S. 18 degrees 54 minutes W. along land of Charles Carter et al one hundred fifty and no/100 (150) feet, more or less to the place of beginning.

Together with the right in common with the Grantors and other, to use the proposed street, as shown on said plan for all purposes of travel.

Being the same premises conveyed to the mortgagor by deed recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds simultaneously herewith.

The description of the property contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication.

For Mortgagor's Title see deed dated September 12, 2014 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 20424, Page 168.

TERMS OF SALE: Said premises will be sold and conveyed subject to all liens, encumbrances, unpaid taxes, tax titles, municipal liens and assessments, if any, which take precedence over the said mortgage above described.

FIVE THOUSAND (\$5,000.00) Dollars of the purchase price must be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check at the time and place of the sale by the purchaser. The balance of the purchase price shall be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check within thirty (30) days after the date of sale.

Other terms to be announced at the sale.

Brock & Scott, PLLC
23 Messenger Street
2nd Floor
Plainville, MA 02762
Attorney for U.S. Bank National Association
Present Holder of the Mortgage
(401) 217-8701
01/22, 01/29, 02/05/2026

**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.
HD25P0884EA
Estate of:
Robert Francis Reidy
Also known as:
Robert F Reidy
Date of Death: 12/29/2024
CITATION ON
PETITION FOR
ORDER OF COMPLETE
SETTLEMENT**

A Petition for **Order of Complete Settlement** has been filed by **Kathleen F Andre of Wales, MA** requesting that the court requesting that the court enter a formal Decree of Complete Settlement including the allowance of a final account and other such relief as may be requested in the Petition.

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 03/09/2026.

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T. Stoumire, First Justice of this Court.
Date: February 02, 2026

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
02/05/2026

PUBLIC NOTICE RIGHT OF WAY MAINTENANCE

As required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 132B, National Grid (New England Power and/or Massachusetts Electric Company) hereby gives notice that it intends to selectively apply herbicides along specific transmission line rights-of-way in 2026.

The selective use of herbicides to manage vegetation along rights-of-way is done within the context of an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program consisting of mechanical, chemical, natural, and cultural components. In right-of-way vegetation management the pest or target is vegetation (primarily tall growing) that will cause outages and safety issues. National Grid's IVM program encourages natural controls by promoting low growing plant communities that resist invasion by target vegetation. The selective use of herbicides and mechanical controls are the direct techniques used to control target vegetation and help establish and maintain natural controls.

National Grid may utilize any of the herbicides noted the MA Sensitive Materials list. Rodeo, and possibly one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, will be applied directly to the surface of stumps immediately after target vegetation is cut (Cut Stump Treatment). Garlon 4 or Garlon 4 Ultra will be applied selectively to the stems of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Basal Treatment and Dormant stem treatment). Krenite S or Rodeo, mixed with Escort XP, and one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, or Milestone will be applied selectively to the foliage of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Foliar Treatment). Cambistat as a tree growth regulator. Applications shall not commence more than ten days before nor conclude more than ten days after the following treatment periods. The herbicide mixes and additional information about rights of way management in Massachusetts can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/rights-of-way-vegetation-management>

Municipalities that have rights-of-way scheduled for herbicide treatments in 2026:

Brimfield, Monson, Palmer

Municipalities that have rights-of-way that were treated in 2025 but may require some touch-up work in 2026:

Monson, Palmer

TREATMENT PERIODS

| Feb 1–May 30, 2026 | May 30–Oct 15, 2026 | Oct 15–Dec 31, 2026 |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| CST | Foliar | CST |
| Basal | CST | Basal |
| Dormant stem | Basal | Dormant stem |
| | Cut stubble | |

**The exact treatment dates are dependent upon weather conditions and field crew progress.*

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said the paint night is part of a broader initiative to expand adult continuing education and enrichment programming.

“We are trying to expand our adult continuing education to offer more enrichment classes,” Zayas said. “We’re doing paint nights, I have a soap-making day set up, we’re doing ServSafe, and we’re trying to find out what people in the community are interested in and start planning events for them.”

The Four Corners facility, which houses several Pathfinder offices and programs, is becoming a central venue for these new offerings. Friday’s paint night marked one of the first events hosted in the space, and Zayas said the turnout was encouraging.

“We’re really excited,” she said. “Tonight, this is one of the first events that we’re using it for, and we got a good turnout.”

According to Zayas, additional events are already scheduled, including another paint night next month and a soap-making workshop in March. She said community feedback gathered at the event will help shape future programming, with ideas such as jewelry-making classes already being discussed.

“I’ll just continue to

add things that people were talking about here tonight,” she said. “They want to add jewelry making and all these different events, so I’ll be reaching out to the public, trying to get a feel of what things they’re interested in.”

The paint night was led by Mary Beth Reed of Paint Craze, a local business specializing in guided painting events. Paint Craze offers both canvas painting and wine and beer glass painting for public and private parties and fundraisers.

According to the group’s social media description, “We offer both canvas and wine & beer glass painting for public & private parties and fundraisers.”

Participants followed Reed’s step-by-step instruction while socializing and adding their own touches, adding a relaxed, creative atmosphere to the evening.

While the paint night focused on creativity and recreation, Zayas emphasized that Pathfinder’s adult education programming also includes practical career-focused services.

“It’s really good for us to be offering these programs at either no cost or low cost for people who want to get better career options,” she said. “We’re helping them with resumes, cover letters, getting an Indeed account...all that stuff.”



Around 12 people signed up for this relaxed painting event.

She said the combination of professional development and enrichment activities allows Pathfinder to serve a wide range of community members.

“We have people here from Baystate Wing tonight...they’re out for a girls’ night,” Zayas said. “I have people here on a date, a husband and wife. So it’s nice. It appeals to a whole lot of people in the community.”

Zayas said the Four Corners location plays a key role in strengthening Pathfinder’s connection with the community.

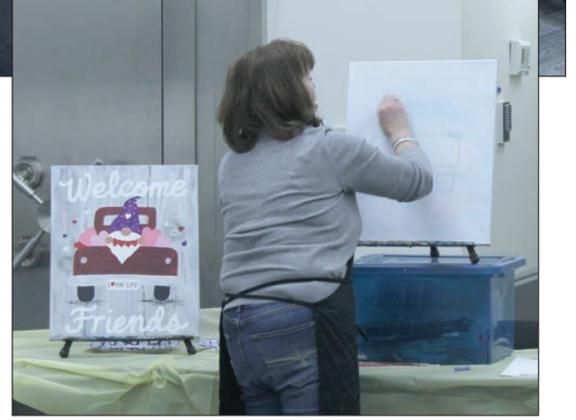
“I am thankful to have

the Four Corners location because it is a wonderful space to hold events for the community,” she said. “It is important to us that we connect with the community and offer classes and courses that provide both fun and educational opportunities for people.”

She added that the events also create opportunities for people from different backgrounds and interests to come together in a shared space.

“It’s just a fun thing to do and get a cross-section of people,” she said. “I’m really excited about being able to offer those things.”

As Pathfinder continues



Reed shows how to create the outline of the truck before starting on the background.

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy

to expand its adult education and enrichment offerings, school officials hope the Four Corners location will

become a regular gathering place for residents seeking both practical skills and creative experiences.

GROWTH | from page 1

have increasingly shaped the school’s identity.

“We’ve really embraced professionalism as a component for our staff, administrators, and students,” he said. “This year feels like the most pivotal year where we’ve accomplished that foundation.”

Duda added that it has been gratifying to see other districts look to Pathfinder as a model.

“When people can look at what we do and say, ‘This makes sense,’ that makes me feel really good,” he said.

Among the school’s most measurable successes has been a dramatic improvement in student attendance. Over the past two years, Pathfinder has significantly reduced chronic absenteeism and daily absences through data tracking and early intervention strategies.

“Our chronic absenteeism rates have plummeted,” Duda said. “We track this every week, we look at data, and we intervene early. Our daily attendance is typically over 95 percent right now.”

Another transformative change has been the school’s phone-free policy, now in its



Pathfinder Technical High School at 240 Sykes Street in Palmer.

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy

second year.

“There are no phones in our building, and we love it,” Duda said. “Students are more engaged, teachers feel more connected, and curriculum moves at a more rapid pace. It’s been a real win.”

Pathfinder is also experiencing unprecedented demand. Under a new state-regulated admissions process, applications opened earlier and close on Feb. 20. With weeks still remaining in the application window, the school has already surpassed

previous application numbers.

“We have a higher application number right now than I’ve ever seen at this point in the process,” Duda said. “That makes me feel really good.”

The surge in interest aligns with the district’s most ambitious project yet: a major expansion announced on Oct. 3 that added approximately 150 new seats.

“This is the biggest expansion this district has ever undertaken,” Duda said. “We’re seeing real growth

from Palmer, Belchertown, Monson, Ware, and all nine of our member towns.”

As part of the expansion, several programs will relocate to a new facility, including health assisting, CAD pre-engineering, electronics technology, and hospitality. Medical assisting will also be added, bringing five programs to the new site by September.

“We’re in full swing,” Duda said. “This project has brought people together: senators, state representatives, town officials, families. I

don’t think a week goes by where I’m not hearing from someone excited about it.”

The district is also awaiting the outcome of a proposed \$5 million state grant, though planning continues regardless of the funding decision.

Pathfinder students are increasingly engaged in large-scale, real-world projects across the region, reflecting the school’s mission to integrate academic learning with hands-on technical experience.

Recent projects include construction of a two-car garage in Warren, the building of a house in Belchertown, and extensive renovations at the Belchertown Fire Station.

“We’ve installed bathrooms and bunkhouses in a multi-thousand-square-foot space,” Duda said. “The town had a quote well in excess of a million dollars. We’ve saved them an incredible amount of money while giving our students incredible experience.”

Students have also completed work in municipal buildings across member towns, including electrical and IT upgrades for Palmer’s building department.

“The whole building is our students’ lab,” Duda said. “We don’t hire out electrical, plumbing, carpentry, or HVAC work. Everything is a learning opportunity.”

Pathfinder’s impact extends beyond high school students through an expanding slate of adult education programs. The district is currently offering free 200-hour training programs in carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, CNC operation, and grounds and equipment maintenance for unemployed or underemployed individuals.

“These programs are really taking off,” Duda said.

Additional offerings include paint nights, ServSafe certification, and other community courses. Pathfinder recently announced a new opportunity for 18-year-old seniors uncertain about their career paths, allowing them to enroll in free technical training courses after hours.

“That’s something we’re super excited about,” Duda said.

Student engagement is also flourishing through extracurricular and academic programs. Pathfinder’s robotics team continues to grow, with students collaborating across technical disciplines to design and build competition robots.

“It’s a massive interdis-

ciplinary project,” Duda said. “We’ve made the world event multiple times in recent years, and we’re hoping to get there again.”

Academically, the school now offers four foreign languages and more than 30 honors and Advanced Placement courses. New and expanding programs include music, art, ceramics, yearbook, and professional skills courses.

“We’ve overhauled our entire program of studies,” Duda said. “Now students have a clear pathway through their academic and technical journey.”

Thanks to increased grant funding, Pathfinder has expanded capacity in high-demand technical programs, allowing every freshman this year to receive their first-choice placement.

“That’s tricky to do,” Duda said. “But it means students can fully immerse themselves in the pathway that’s right for them.”

Participation in SkillsUSA, a national technical skills competition, has also grown significantly. Once limited to certain programs, the initiative now involves students across the entire school.

“We have more students competing at the district and state levels than ever before,” Duda said.

One of Pathfinder’s defining policies is its decision not to charge student fees for sports, parking, or transportation.

“We don’t charge fees here,” Duda said. “I don’t want to see a student not participate in a sport or activity because they can’t afford it. That’s not what we represent.”

He credited the school committee and member towns for supporting the policy, noting the district’s high number of economically disadvantaged students.

“As a superintendent, it makes me so proud,” he said.

As the school year continues, Duda said Pathfinder remains focused on growth, innovation, and community engagement.

“If you want to feel good, all you have to do is walk in the doors here,” he said. “Talk to any of our kids. They’re an inspiration.”

With record enrollment interest, expanding programs, and a major new facility on the horizon, Pathfinder Technical Regional High School appears poised to enter its next chapter with momentum, and a growing regional impact.

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