

# The Journal Register

SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

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**PALMER**

## C4R looks to the future in 2026

Volunteers needed to continue watershed council

By Paula Ouimette  
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PALMER – The Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council held its spring kick-off meeting to reflect on the work that has been done to ensure the health of the area's rivers, and also to look ahead to the future.

Community members and volunteers joined Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council Coordinator Keith Davies and Events Coordinator Jim Emerson at the Palmer Historical Cultural Center in Three Rivers on Sunday afternoon, close to where the rivers in the watershed meet up. These rivers include the Swift, Ware, Quaboag and Chicopee.

"They all meet right here within a half mile of each other," Davies said.

The Chicopee River Watershed is the largest in the commonwealth and the largest in the Connecticut River basin. Despite its geographic area, this watershed is often overlooked.

"It's the largest watershed in Massachusetts," Davies said. "It's also one of the least recognized in the state."

Davies said the council needs a dedicated core

group of volunteers to keep a focus on the watershed, and continue to grow its mission.

"We need long term commitments and people to really engage," he said.

C4R | page 7



Turley Photos by Paula Ouimette  
**Keith Davies, coordinator of the Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council, gave the history of the council at the spring kickoff meeting held at the Palmer Historical Cultural Center.**

**MONSON**



Turley photo by Abigail McCoy  
**Roseanne Vincigurra showing off her quilt.**

## First Church brings community together with dinner fundraiser

By Abigail McCoy  
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MONSON – Corned beef, cabbage, carrots, potatoes, Irish soda bread and live fiddle music filled the First Church of Monson last Saturday, Mar. 21, as the congregation welcomed the community for its annual St. Patrick's Day dinner, a tradition that has become both a celebration and an important fundraiser for the church.

Now in its fifth year, the event was organized by the church's Board of Trustees

and served as a fundraiser for the church's general budget, according to Suzanne Kelley, chair of the board of trustees.

Kelley said the dinner has grown into a popular community gathering, with attendees returning not only for the meal but also for the festive atmosphere created by live Irish music.

"This is a fundraiser for our general budget," Kelley said. "It's put on by the trustees. We cook all the food here... nothing is catered. It's all home-cooked."

The church's kitchen was busy throughout the day as volunteers prepared the traditional meal from scratch, putting what Kelley described as the church's "massive kitchen" to full use. Guests were treated to a buffet-style dinner featuring corned beef and cabbage alongside classic accompaniments, followed by cupcakes for dessert.

In addition to the meal itself, the evening included a performance by Sarah the

DINNER | page 16

**PALMER**

## ConComm learns Earth Day plans

By Abigail McCoy  
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PALMER – The Palmer Conservation Commission covered a wide range of business during its March 17 meeting, from the resignation of one of its members and a wetlands compliance matter in Breton Estates to a continued public hearing for a proposed expansion at Palmer Healthcare Center and plans for several upcoming community environmental events.

The meeting, held on Mar. 17, opened with Chair Donald Blais Jr. greeting attendees and noting the holiday before the commission moved into its first major item of business: the resignation of Commissioner Travis Canary.

Blais read Canary's resignation letter aloud, explaining that Canary had accepted a new job that created scheduling conflicts with both public meetings and commission working sessions. In the letter, Canary wrote that serving on the commission had been "a wonderful experience" and said he was proud to have served the community, adding that his resignation was effective immediately.

Commission members thanked Canary for his ser-

CONCOMM | page 12

**PALMER**

## School Committee hears budget proposal

By Abigail McCoy  
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PALMER – Mounting financial pressure, expanding academic opportunities and concerns about school space shaped discussion at the Palmer School Committee's March 18 meeting, where members heard detailed student updates, reviewed the district's preliminary fiscal year 2027 budget and approved revisions to Palmer High School's Program of Studies.

**Superintendent Report**

The most sobering portion of the meeting came during Superintendent Matthew Francis' presentation on the district's preliminary FY27 budget, which he said reflects deepening financial strain and continued mismatches between what the district says it needs to maintain services and what town officials are recommending.

Francis began by reaffirming the district's mission of educating, inspiring and empowering students in a supportive environment rooted in respect, kindness and community. He then outlined a series of cost drivers and revenue challenges facing the district.

BUDGET | page 15

**MONSON**

## Select Board interviews two finalists for police lieutenant

By Abigail McCoy  
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MONSON – The Monson Select Board convened a special meeting on Wednesday, March 18, to interview two internal candidates for the Police Department's vacant lieutenant position, a role that opened following Chief Gasparini's promotion.

After a multi-phase recruitment and assessment pro-

cess involving an outside consulting firm, the board heard from Sgt. Adam Szymanski and Sgt. Jane Bailey, both veteran members of the Monson Police Department with decades of law enforcement experience and deep ties to the community. At the close of the interviews, board members praised both applicants and voted to delay a final appointment until a later meeting so they could review their notes

and the consultant's report more thoroughly.

Town Administrator Jennifer Wolowicz, speaking on behalf of the town's process, explained that the search was designed to be structured and objective from the start.

"In 2025 we had a special town meeting where funds were appropriated for a consultant," she said. "And the consultant's name is Public Safety Consultants. And we

engaged in the assessment and search with their firm. And there were four phases to the recruitment."

Wolowicz said the process ultimately narrowed the field to two local finalists.

"The candidates have been whittled down to two applicants," she said. "And I am proud and happy to say that the two applicants are actually internal applicants that are going to be interviewed tonight

by the Select Board."

According to the board's overview, the recruitment unfolded in four phases. The first involved project initiation, in which town officials and Chief Gasparini worked with the consultant to establish job descriptions and qualifications tailored to the Monson Police Department. The second phase focused on preliminary

FINALISTS | page 12



Turley Photos by Paula Ouimette  
**The Monson Police Department was represented by Gwen Gasperini, Nick Gasperini and Paul Mayo. See story and more photos on page 3.**

**PALMER**

## Opacum Land Trust draws record crowd for breakfast

By Abigail McCoy  
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PALMER – Conservation supporters from across South Central Massachusetts filled Pathfinder Technical High School for the Opacum Land Trust's 26th annual meeting breakfast, an event that celebrated the organization's growing reach, highlighted ongoing land protection ef-

forts and called on residents to stay engaged in preserving the region's natural resources.

Held for the third year at Pathfinder, the breakfast drew one of the largest turnouts in the event's history, 140 people, according to Amy Adams, Opacum Land Trust's director of development and community engagement.

OPACUM | page 8



Turley photo by Abigail McCoy  
**Attendees lined up to enjoy a buffet provided by Chef Laura Rogers and her husband Eric.**



# Monson middle school student Nora Muhs performs in NYC

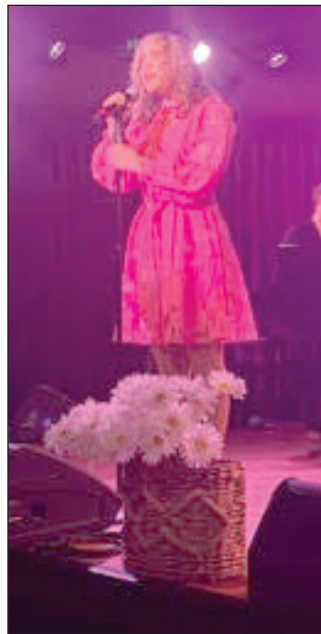
MONSON – A local Granite Valley Middle School student was chosen to perform in New York City this weekend. Sixth-grader Nora Muhs was chosen out of applicants from an international pool of talented youth hoping to find their way to the big stage in NY with the Broadway Star Project. The Broadway Star Project is a New York City-based initiative where top teachers, coaches, and mentors help young performers turn their aspirations into reality through intensive training, real-world experiences, and a supportive community, all guided by Broadway and Hollywood professionals. Nora was chosen alongside only 12 other kids to perform their own song as well as a music number together with only two days of training. Nora and her family caught the train to NY

and experienced the schedule of a Broadway performer culminating in her debut on stage at The Green Room 42 where she opened the show singing, “It Might as Well Be Spring” for their Spring Playlist Cabaret. While there, Nora met and worked with artists such as Sharon Wheatley, as well as talent scouts and agents who attended the show. “I learned so much. It was so much fun, and I can’t wait to do more,” Muhs said.

Because of her performance, Nora has been invited to audition for their summer intensive program where she hopes to continue her journey. Locally, Nora is performing in the original musical For Love! For Liberty, which will be performing on Apr. 11 in Lexington at the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum and Library.



Submitted photos by Holly Norwick  
Muhs was among students invited to perform in NYC.



Above, Nora Muhs was featured singing in NYC. Left, Nora Muhs is slated to appear in the play “For Love! For Liberty!” on Apr. 11. Scan QR code above for tickets.

# Monson Garden Club offers xeriscaping

MONSON – Monson Garden Club is sponsoring its Guest Night program Xeriscaping with Master Gardener Kathi Garipey on Monday, April 6 at 7 p.m. in First Church of Monson on High St. in Monson.

Xeriscaping is the art of landscaping with plants that require little water for upkeep. This process helps with water conservation while beautifying an area.

Kathi contributes to community enrichment and education as a lead teacher for Massachusetts Horticultural Society and education coordinator for Mass

Audubon. She is actively involved in the Attleboro Garden Club and Massachusetts Master Gardener Association. As a master gardener she shares research-based horticultural knowledge and experience with the public.

This program is open to the public with light refreshments to be served. A suggested donation of \$5 will include a chance to win plants for sustainable gardening. It is funded in part by a grant from the Monson Cultural Council, a local agency of the Mass. Cultural Council.

# Keep Homestead to open April 12

MONSON – The Keep Homestead Museum on 35 Ely Road in Monson, will open for the season on April 12 with the program Indian Baskets of the Northeastern Woodlands with Lorraine German.

Lorraine, owner of Mad River Antiques in North Granby, Conn. will discuss the development of basket making among Native Americans in New England and New York in-

cluding their stylistic differences.

This program starts at 1:30 p.m. in the barn and is open to the public free of charge through donations are welcome. The museum will be open for viewing of new displays and for light refreshments from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

The Friends of Keep Homestead Museum meeting will take place after the Open House at 3:30 p.m.

**For Love!  
For Liberty!**  
An Original Family Musical  
Saturday, April 11  
4:00 pm & 7:00 pm  
SCOTTISH RITE MASONIC MUSEUM & LIBRARY  
33 Marrett Rd, Lexington, MA

# Mass Button Show set for April 11

THREE RIVERS – Massachusetts State Button Society’s spring meeting will be hosted by the Metropolitan and Monson Button Clubs on Saturday, April 11 at the Amvets Post 74 on Main St. in Three Rivers from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the day’s activities and to purchase buttons and button related items from 9 am to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. There will be no button sales during the break from noon to 1:30 p.m. as lunch, a business meeting, and auction will take place.

Morning visitors will be treated to coffee and refreshments provided by the hosting club; bring your own brown bag lunch, and dessert will be provided. There is no admission fee, and all are welcome.

# Knox Trail Event to be held April 18

PALMER – Knox Trail 250 Event will be held Saturday, April 18 at the Palmer Public Library. 1976 Quilt on Display - 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Students from Palmer High School Class of 1978, as well as other Massachusetts towns along the Henry Knox Trail, submitted embroidered squares to become part of this commemorative quilt project. This venture was organized by Palmer’s Bicentennial Committee. The quilt will remain on display until library closing at 2 p.m.

Dennis Picard Knox Trail Presentation - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Local Historian, Dennis Picard will share details of the 1775/1776 Henry Knox wintry ex-

pedition as it passed from the Massachusetts town of North Egremont through Springfield, Palmer, and on to Boston. Though a piece of our local lore, some parts of this saga are still debated and remain controversial. Dennis has a personal connection with this event in our history, as he participated in one portion of the recreation of this trek during the bicentennial of 1976. Please join us for this special presentation and learn more about this daring mission.

These programs are free to the public, but space is limited and registration is requested. Register by visiting: [www.palmerlibrary.org/events](http://www.palmerlibrary.org/events) Drop-ins welcome if space allows.

# Three Rivers Chamber holds dinner

THREE RIVERS – The annual Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce dinner was held on Thursday, March 12, at Villa Rose Restaurant in Ludlow.

Chamber President Matthew Lemieux welcomed the attendees after the dinner. “We have had a year of achievement,” said Lemieux.

The nominating committee presented its upcoming year’s slates of officers. The slates were read and passed by the attending membership.

The thirteen members of the Board of Directors voted on were Matthew Lemieux, Carol Seaver, Christina Hazzard, Vicki Baldyga, Patricia Mathiew, Roger Dugay, John Janulewicz, Alissa Chapin, Micheal Matthiew, Micheal Rondeau, Cheryl Moriarty, Diane Vadnais and Stephen Chiacchia.

Trustees of the Chamber approved were Fred Orszulak, Vicki Miner, John Sasur and Leon Wlodyka.

The Nominating Committee recommended the following executive positions and were approved by the membership, Matthew Lemieux as its President, Carol Seaver as its Vice President, Christina Hazzard as its Secretary, Vicki Baldyga as its Treasurer and Fred Orszulak as its Auditor.

Long standing member Michael Matthews was awarded Three Rivers Chamber member of the year, “he was nominated in honor of his many civic contributions,” said Lemieux.

Chamber members J. Stolar Insurance Agency and Mustang Seats were both honored as Businesses of the year. Both businesses were cited for numerous civic outreaches that bene-

fited Three Rivers and the community of Palmer.

The Richard Rondeau award was presented to Stephen Chicchia. Steve has been a member of the chamber for 40 years during that time he has served as a board of director for 32 years, held offices of treasurer and auditor, served on the Bylaw committee, 60th Anniversary Committee, and Investment Committee. He currently is on the finance committee and is instrumental when making the annual budget. He volunteers at many events, his favorite being Christmas on The Common. Steve served on the Three Rivers Prudential Committee and was on the town’s School Reuse committee.

Lemieux closed the meeting with a positive look to the upcoming year, excited about upcoming events and activities.

## 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](mailto:journalregister@turley.com) or call the office at 413-283-8393 by noon on Mondays. We appreciate the cooperation of our readers.

## The Library Loft

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# Polar Plunge: Community supported Special Olympics

By Paula Ouimette  
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WARE – Ware Police Officer Jeannine Bonnayer organized another success Polar Plunge for the eighth year, with proceeds to benefit the Special Olympics of Massachusetts.

Special Olympics Massachusetts gives student-athletes of all abilities a chance to participate in Olympic-style events.

This past Saturday, more than 40 people braved the 32-degree water of Beaver Lake to raise \$7,815 for the nonprofit organization – a number that keeps climbing as donations continue to roll in.

A total of nine teams participated, including the Monson Police Department represented by Gwen Gasperini, Nick Gasperini and Paul Mayo. This is the fourth year the department members have participated in the event to support an organization that is close to their hearts.

The Monson Police Department participates in a number of fundraisers to benefit the Special Olympics of Massachusetts.

Old Mill Pond Elementary School in Palmer had a team this year called the Plunging Goddesses. Made up of Julie Bamber, Laurie Manning, Lisa Newton, Jemma Thompson and Devin Burns, the Plunging Goddesses have been preparing for an event such as the Polar Plunge since last year.

The team members have been practicing weekly cold-water immersions since last March, with the Goddesses reaching the four-minute mark in the Swift River just a few days prior to Saturday's event.

Joining them was Holyoke fifth-grader Dylan Rivas, who was able to match the Plunging Goddesses' impressive endurance in the frigid water.

The Plunging Goddesses were the second highest earners at this year's Polar Plunge, raising close to \$1,200.

Another newcomer to Ware Polar Plunge was WESTCOMM Regional Dispatch Center, with a team made up of Penny Ryan, Anthony Massoia and Gregory

Wallace. The Dispatch-Sicles raised an impressive \$657.43, earning them fourth place for team fundraising efforts.

The Beaver Lake Littles team was made up of several returning plungers, as well as some first timers. This team was the top earner, raising over \$2,400.

The top individual plunger was Kristin Siok with \$700, followed closely by Dennis Birks with \$600.

Bonnayer thanked all of the Polar Plunge participants for braving the cold water and supporting Special Olympics of Massachusetts, as well as those who generously donated to the cause.



Turley Photos by Paula Ouimette

The Plunging Goddesses were represented by Palmer's Old Mill Pond Elementary School staff and parents. Shown standing from left were Julie Bamber, Laurie Manning, Lisa Newton, Jemma Thompson and Devin Burns. Kneeling was Holyoke fifth-grader, Dylan Rivas.



Monson Police Department's Paul Mayo was all smiles after taking the plunge.



Gwen Gasperini of the Monson Police Department's team, was the first to reach the water.



Ryan Semione of Ware reacted to the cold water.



Dylan Rivas braved the cold for several minutes with the Plunging Goddesses.

## St. Paul's Church celebrates 150 years of faith, service, and community

PALMER – This spring, St. Paul's Church of Palmer (Unitarian Universalist) marks a remarkable milestone: the 150th anniversary of its founding—a century and a half of spiritual life, community service, and quiet resilience at the heart of Palmer.

To commemorate the occasion, the congregation will host a special Rededication Service on Sunday, April 19 at 10 a.m., welcoming neighbors, friends, and the wider community to take part in this meaningful celebration.

Founded in 1876 in the spirit of Universalist faith—a

tradition rooted in the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person—St. Paul's has long been a place of welcome, reflection, and connection. The historic church building, now a familiar landmark in Palmer, was constructed a few years later, becoming a visible and enduring home for a growing and dedicated congregation.

Through changing times—shifts in industry, population, and culture—St. Paul's has remained a steady presence, offering not only worship, but also companionship, compassion, and a sense of belonging.

The April 19 service will include a ceremonial rededication of the church and its mission, honoring both its rich past and its renewed purpose for the future. The congregation will also welcome Massachusetts State Senator Jake Oliveira, who will be in attendance to present an official State Senate Citation recognizing the church and its congregation “for the 150 years you have provided a sanctuary, guidance, and support to the community.”

Today, St. Paul's continues to live out its mission in vibrant and practical ways. The church hosts a wide

range of community-centered programs, including its popular monthly “Bread & Belonging” free supper, which brings together people from across the region for a warm meal and fellowship. The church also offers meditation and mindfulness gatherings, grief support groups, events for children and youth, and concerts spanning a variety of musical genres. A longstanding highlight is the church's well-known Giant Tag Sale and thrift shop, which has served the community for decades and draws visitors from throughout the region.

“These past 150 years

are not just about a building,” said Rev. Steven Sousa, minister of St. Paul's Church. “They are about people—generations of individuals who have come here seeking meaning, offering care, and building community. This rededication is both a celebration of that legacy and a renewed commitment to being a place of openness, compassion, and hope in the years ahead.”

The service will blend elements of tradition with a spirit of inclusivity and reflection, in keeping with the church's Unitarian Universalist identity. All are welcome,

regardless of background, belief, or previous connection to the congregation.

As St. Paul's looks toward the future, the 150th anniversary serves not only as a moment of remembrance, but also as an invitation—to reconnect, to rediscover, and to participate in a living community that continues to grow and evolve.

The Rededication Service will take place Sunday, April 19 at 10:00 AM at St. Paul's Church of Palmer, 1039 Thorndike Street.

For more information, visit [www.StPaulsPalmer.org](http://www.StPaulsPalmer.org) or call 413-886-2668.

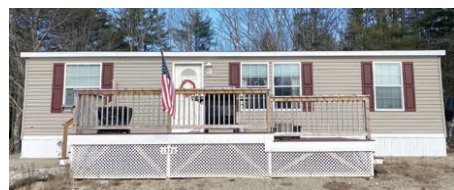
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## Viewpoints

## SOCIAL SECURITY

## Matters

By Russell Gloor

## Social Security reduced my monthly payment

Dear Rusty:

My last Social Security payment decreased by about \$400, so I went to my online SS account and found a November 2025 letter explaining that my 2024 tax return showed a greatly enlarged Adjusted Gross Income.

Thus, SSA decided to withdraw monies, as of January 2026, from my bank account because I'd owed far more monies to them. The letter itemized my greatly diminished 2026 SSA monthly payment, explaining should my next tax return show a regular AGI, then SSA would return my SS income to regular amounts and return every prior month's deficits? Said letter also mentioned an optional recourse, that of compiling an "Appeal" to regain my ongoing decreased income. The extra amounts now withdrawn for Medicare Parts A and D alone are outrageously high. I'm a retired senior citizen on a fixed income.

According to SSA, my having sold a piece of land in 2024 allows SSA to decrease my SS income. Has this become a common practice against U.S.A. senior citizens? Thank you in advance for your input.

Signed: Feeling Wronged

Dear Feeling Wronged:

From what you have shared, it appears that your SS benefit amount has been affected by a provision known as Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount. IRMAA isn't really a Social Security issue, rather it is a Medicare premium thing. But when IRMAA applies, it reduces your net Social Security payment because Medicare premiums are automatically taken from your Social Security benefit, thus making your net SS payment less.

If you look at your gross Social Security payment at your online "my Social Security" account you will see that your gross SS payment did not change, but your Medicare premium did, thus affecting your net SS payment. IRMAA, essentially, makes Medicare a "means tested" program, where those with a higher AGI can pay a higher Medicare Part B (and Part D) premium.

However, IRMAA is usually based on AGI from two years prior to the current year because your current AGI information isn't available from the IRS when Medicare premiums are determined in October of each year. FYI, you

may have received a notice in the mail in early December telling you what your 2026 Social Security and Medicare amounts would be.

In a nutshell, the land you sold in 2024 apparently increased your AGI to exceed the base IRMAA thresholds, which are \$109,000 if you file your taxes as a single or \$218,000 if you file your income tax as "married/jointly." And the IRMAA supplements are "progressive" (higher if your AGI is more), so if your Medicare premiums went up by about \$400 about twice the 2026 standard premium, it's likely that your 2024 AGI was over \$137,000 if you filed as a single or over \$274,000 if you filed as "married/jointly." FYI, you can see the 2026 IRMAA brackets/premium amounts at this link: [www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/medicare-premiums.html](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/medicare-premiums.html)

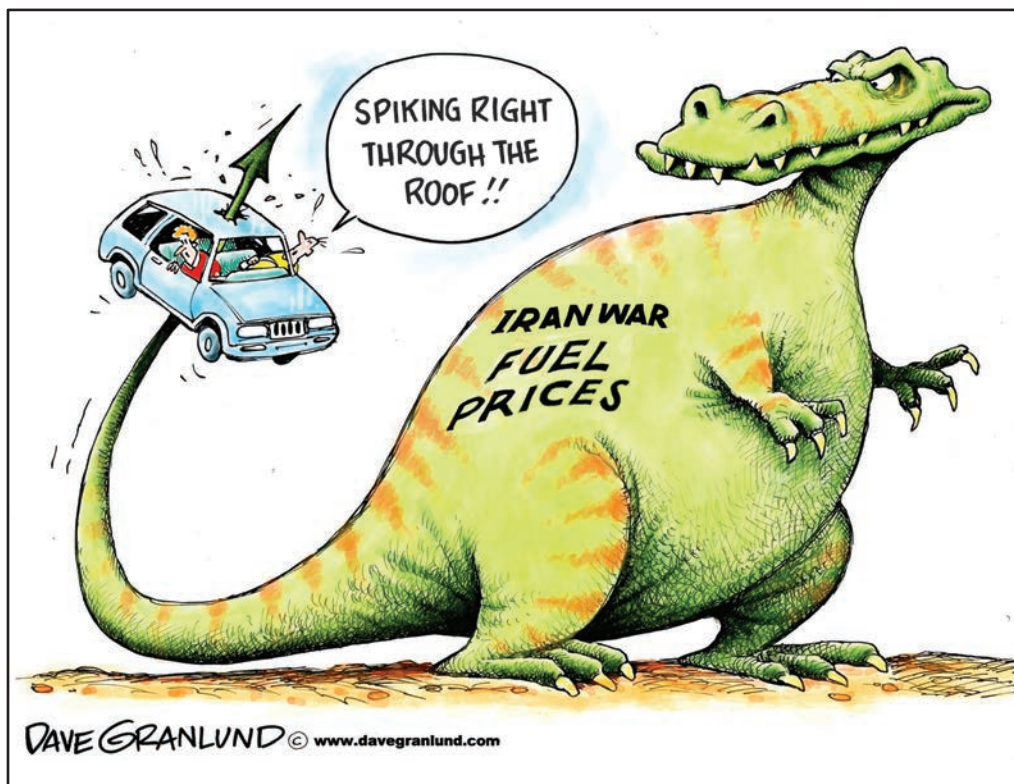
A couple of additional points:

Your Medicare premiums will, indeed, revert to the standard amounts for 2027, if your 2025 AGI amount is under the IRMAA threshold for your tax filing status.

There is no premium for Medicare Part A, which is coverage for inpatient hospitalization care, because you are receiving Social Security benefits. However, there is a premium for Part B of Medicare (which is coverage for outpatient medical services) and you must also separately pay a premium for Part D, which is coverage for prescription drugs offered by private insurers. And these IRMAA supplements apply even if you have a Medicare Advantage plan from a private insurer.

Unfortunately, your only "recourse" is, as SSA suggested, to appeal the IRMAA supplement, but that is usually successful only if you can prove you had a "life changing event," which caused (or will cause) your AGI to be less than that used to determine your IRMAA surcharge. Your best option at this point will likely be to appeal using a "Request for Reconsideration" (Form SSA-561) asking that your 2026 Medicare premium be based on a recent year's (e.g., 2025) lower income.

Finally, IRMAA isn't really a new thing – it was enacted in 2003, effective in 2007. But it does have a profound effect on many seniors, as I explained in this article I recently published on the topic: <https://amacfoundation.org/irmaa-a-medicare-surprise/>.



## Plants to celebrate Easter and then some

It's hard to believe that in just a little over a week we will be celebrating the Easter holiday!

I am sure that many readers will be either receiving the Easter lily as a gift or purchasing one for someone else. Its pure white, intensely fragrant blooms are emblems of new life and hope for the future – I can think of no better symbol of the holiest day on the Christian calendar than this one.

If you find yourself in the market for an Easter lily this week, select one that is deep green and has more buds than open flowers. It should be proportionate in height and not top heavy.

If outdoor temperatures remain chilly, be sure to cover the plant well upon exiting the store, and don't leave it in the car while you do other errands!

Once home, the Easter lily prefers temperatures around 65 degrees and bright but indirect light. Water thoroughly, but allow the soil to dry out in between waterings.

Be careful for the decorative foil or plastic wrapper – sometimes water will pool in the bottom, keeping the soil too moist. If you like how the wrapper looks, poke some holes at the base and place the pot on a shallow saucer to catch any water that drips out. Dump the saucer as needed. You can also remove the wrapper and allow the pot to drain in the sink for a few minutes after each watering.

To prolong the life of your plant, be sure to remove the anthers before the pollen ripens. This will also prevent the pollen from staining the pure white flowers and your nose!

As flowers start to wither, cut them off – this will keep it looking its best and redirect energy back to the bulb.

Once the soil warms, the Easter lily can be plant-

ed outside in full sun and well-drained soil. Sink the bulb with foliage and stem attached, to a depth of three inches and water well. After the original foliage dies, cut it back to the soil surface. New growth will soon emerge. Lilies benefit from a layer of mulch to keep their roots cool. Although they are quite hardy, do provide some winter protection in the form of straw, evergreen boughs or the like.

With any luck you will be delighted with big, beautiful white flowers next summer. Although lilies bloom in spring under the controlled conditions of the greenhouse, they bloom naturally during the summer months.

Another good and widely available option for Easter gift giving is a pot of spring bulbs.

With tulips, daffodils and hyacinths to choose from, there will no doubt be a fragrance and flower color that appeals to you. Be sure to choose them in bud, rather than full flower because warm household temperatures will cause them to burst into bloom in no time.

To maximize indoor bloom time, enjoy in your living space during the day, but move to a basement, spare room or garage each night where temperatures are cooler, but not freezing!

The great thing about forced bulbs is that they can be enjoyed in the house this Easter and next year in the garden.

Daffodils and hyacinth are the most dependable repeat bloomers. Tulips (depending on the type) may bloom great the following season but then take a few years off-time to recharge before blooming again.

If you wish to plant your

bulbs outside, remove spent flowers as they wither and allow the foliage to brown. At this point stop watering and let the bulbs dry out. They can be planted outdoors in spring, or saved until the fall for planting as you normally would.

Sometimes I get the job done in spring, although it does feel odd to be doing it then, simply so I won't forget to plant them in the fall!

Primroses are plentiful at florist shops and nurseries this time of year as well, and they too make great Easter gifts. Even though they are usually sold in small pots, it's hard to miss their brightly colored flowers poking up through basal foliage.

They come in almost every color of the rainbow.

Many types of primrose make great garden plants; check the label to make sure the one you purchase is hardy before planting it outdoors. I have had a clump of primroses blooming for years now that started out as a potted plant.

An inexpensive but cute gift idea is to insert a pot of primroses into a basket and fill in around it with Easter "grass," this way it can be enjoyed as a centerpiece before it makes its way to the garden.

These days I prefer green paper "grass" purchased at the craft store, or make your own by use of a shredder. It is less problematic for pets.

As you plan for Easter, make these plants part of your celebration, and enjoy them in the garden thereafter!

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](mailto:pouimette@turley.com) with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

native species of trees such as aspen, birch (paper and yellow), elm, eastern hemlock, sugar maple, etc. in springtime. Other birds such as ruby-throated hummingbirds, bats and insects also drink from these "sap taps."

People who burn wood most likely have seen the neat rows of holes drilled by the sapsucker in some of the wood from their pile.

The drumming of the yellow-bellied sapsucker is very distinctive, consisting of a roll with clearly separated taps at the end and sometimes at the beginning "tap-tap trrrrrrrrrrrr ta-ta-tat-tat." Both sexes drum. Ritual tapping at the lower rim of the nest hole is a rather

common acoustic signal.

The yellow-bellied is the only sapsucker seen in the eastern half of the U.S. and across the northern forests. These sapsuckers are migratory, which is a fairly rare trait for woodpeckers. They live in a variety of habitats from low-lying floodplains to mountainous forests at 10,000 feet. Their breeding range extends from Alaska to Newfoundland and south along the Appalachians. They winter across the East from New Jersey west to Texas and all the way south to Panama.

A common breeding display involves males



Yellow-bellied sapsucker

An Oakham resident saw a yellow-bellied sapsucker also known as yellow-bellied woodpecker at her suet feeder earlier



this month.

They have a long pointed bill and the typical black and white feather pattern of the downy and hairy woodpeckers. Sapsuckers are larger than downy woodpeckers and smaller than hairy woodpeckers. The yellow feathers are muted and not that visible as the resident noted. They also have vertical,

white wing patches. Both adult males and females have a red forehead. However the male has a red throat and the female, a white throat. Their young have brownish coloration, but they do have the white wing patches

As the name sapsucker implies, these woodpecker drill holes, row after row, to get at the sap found in many

## The Journal Register

## TEAM

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@ Journal Register

WEB

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Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length, and guest columns between 500-800 words. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require that the person submitting the opinion also include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must confirm authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, or defamation of character.

Please send opinions to:

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

[journalregister@turley.com](mailto:journalregister@turley.com)

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](mailto: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.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

E-mail items to [journalregister@turley.com](mailto: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](mailto:journalregister@turley.com).

## UPCOMING

### VENDORS FOR THE BAYSTATE WING HOSPITAL GIFT SHOPPE

#### March Vendors

March 30 - Wicked Good Treats  
March 31 - Geriations & Sew On

#### April Vendors

April 1 - Cork Elegance  
April 2 - Generations of Cookies  
April 8 - How Charming  
April 16 - Weleful Weavers  
April 21 - Wicked Good Treats  
April 23 - Hobbit Hollow Herbs  
April 30 - Jewelry for Diane

#### March 28

Join Here Today Adopted Tomorrow for our “Spay” ghetti Supper Fundraiser on Saturday, March 28, 2026, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Parish Center, 1076 Thorndike St, Palmer, MA. Enjoy a delicious dinner prepared by a professional chef, mingle with fellow cat lovers, and support our shelter cats and community programs. Advance Tickets: \$15 adults, \$10 seniors & kids. Enter our raffle for fun prizes and take part in a night of good food, great company, and feline-friendly fun. Can't attend but want to help? Consider becoming a sponsor! Learn more at <https://www.heretoday-sanctuary.org/supper>.

#### March 30

Public Supper to benefit the Ware Community Garden. Hosted by Ware Grange and Ware Senior Center. Enjoy a dinner of Chicken Marsala, roasted potatoes, carrots, salad, roll, drinks, and cream puffs for dessert. \$15 per person. Join us on Monday, March 30, from 6 to 7 p.m., at the Ware Senior

Center, 1 Robbins Rd, Ware, MA. Please RSVP in advance to [waregrange164@gmail.com](mailto:waregrange164@gmail.com) or call 413-284-1135. Join us for a good meal in support of the creation of Ware's new community garden.

#### March 31

Who Wants to Sing? Palmer Public Library Community Room at 6 p.m. Please join us for this fun event! Bring a song with a rousing chorus and enjoy a (provided) cup of tea. This program is free and registration is not required.

#### April 14

Financial Fitness: The Power of Budgeting - Palmer Public Library Community Room at 6:30 p.m. Could Budgeting Be Your Superpower? Join Edward Jones Financial Advisor Lucille Germain for an exploration of the power of budgeting. We will examine your wants and needs and talk about personal spending and savings goals. Many think budgeting equals constraints, but a budget can help put you in control. Are you ready to give budgeting a try? This program is free and registration is not required.

## ONGOING

2025-2026 Drama & Dance Program Beginning September 11th and running through May on Thursdays at PHCC. Does your child love dancing and acting? Have they always been interested but never tried? All levels and ages 5 plus welcome. (Drama students must be able to read.) Also offering Adult Hip Hop & Lyrical Dance Classes. Students must be available for show date in May. Date TBD. Adult class students can dance in show or choose not to as long as requested ahead of time. Contact: [trulytorie2000@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:khm@keephomesteadmuseum.org) or visit [keephomesteadmuseum.org](http://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 Beau-lieu 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](mailto: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.

## Spring Clothing Drive in collaboration with Cradles to Crayons

March 29 through April 10

PALMER – Spring is in the air and Project 351's Spring Service Clothing Drive is in full bloom. This transitional season from frigid winters to warmer and longer days ahead marks a period of growth and new beginnings, not just for the environment but the renewed energy of children across the Commonwealth through increased outdoor activities. That's why Palmer High School, St. Paul's Church, and the Palmer Public Library, encourage you to mobilize friends and family in acts of generosity and joy by providing new/ gen-

tly used children's clothes, shoes, and winter essentials along with monetary donations to support children in their developmental years as they journey through life.

These past winter storms have been a harsh reminder of the hardships children who lack the necessary essentials they need to thrive struggle through.

Questions? Contact [jannat.khan@alumni.project351.org](mailto:jannat.khan@alumni.project351.org), [30odrewnowski@palmerschools.org](mailto:30odrewnowski@palmerschools.org)

Project 351 is a state-wide, nonprofit organization which unites ambassadors from all 351 cities and towns across Massachusetts for years of unison, action, and leadership through services elevating our communities.

## BIRDS | from page 4

pointing their bills skyward as they showcase their red throat patch for an interested female. Though both sexes are involved with excavating nesting cavities; males do most of the work. Occasionally, sapsuckers visit bird feeders for suet.

### Bald eagle and turkey vultures

Early this month, a Worthington resident sent an email. He said he had a “lucky and thrilling sighting of an eagle, white tail obvious, cir-

cling on high with three turkey vultures and he called it “intra species cooperation” or more likely, the eagle using the vulture's ability to find carrion.

I saw three turkey vultures along Route 122 in Barre near Vernon Avenue on March 16. I saw two turkey vultures in Oakham on St. Patrick's Day. Their return is a sign of spring.

### Robins

Huge flock of robins. Last week, I saw a huge flock of robins, probably close to 100 birds fly over head along Route 32 in Gilbertville. Rob-

ins overwinter in this area, but large flocks are the returning robins that migrate.

### Canada geese

The Canada geese are also returning. I saw quite a few geese in a cornfield in Spencer last week. I also saw about a dozen or saw fly overhead.

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

## POETRY CORNER

### March In The Air

On past the meadows,  
And over the trees...  
I am the heroic month, tis said -  
The spirit of the breeze.  
In the cold winds acoming -  
Even this can be shown:  
That try you as I do -  
...The soul has a companion.

Tho' hardly seen, or known -  
Like a stranger turned out;  
Be untamed as ever -  
You can still skip and shout:  
Far from the world, come join me...  
For I am about.

– Charles Barnes



### March Traveller

March – March – March – March, – O'March  
We wait for all year long;  
The wind is now wild of foot  
The feet making song.

But it is we cannot march,  
To this warm chill, but race along,  
With rain, – or squalls that whiten air –  
And, only take us where we belong.

O' say it is somewhere up ahead,  
And not far beyond the bend –  
The heart skips a youthful beat:  
On what travels do you send?  
And let us love you 'til we ache,  
And these days never end.

– Charles Barnes



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# Local filmmaker premiered latest movie

By Richard Murphy  
Correspondent

AGAWAM – The movie industry in Western Massachusetts may not be large, but fans and participants are not without passion for film, or whatever digital medium that cinema is captured on currently.

On March 14 the audience began arriving well before the evening's event was to begin, and why not.

The impresario locally is Ludlow native Geno McGahee, and people were arriving for his latest production, "Dark Places". Dark as part of the title is apt as McGahee is known mostly for horror productions.

That does not mean he is not without the ability to work in other genres. Not exactly a fan of the Hallmark style, he did make a "Christmas Invitation", which may not be considered a tribute, but was fun.

"Deadly Western" was horror with aspects of what used to be called horse operas. His team of actors, used to working in the Bay State, traveled out west, rode horses, made a western and came home.

Also out in Cali, he would make "Fatal Justice", an homage to McGahee's favorite film, "Twelve Angry Men".

This night, the premiere would be at Agawam Cinemas in the town of that name. Dedicated movie theaters are rapidly vanishing in this age of streaming, so it was a pleasure to experience a night out at the movies.

At a little past 7 p.m. everyone moved into one of the two theaters and took their seats as the movie began.

Lindsey DeLand as Natalie, is a beginning college student. She meets Jason, played by Jake Tyler, a boy next door type guy, or so it seems. They click and begin a relationship, but not too fast.

At home, things are not going smoothly for Natalie's family. Eric Michaelian, portrays her dad, James, who is under stress due to an over-demanding workload. He is compensating with alcohol.

Gabbie Mendelsohn as Liz, the mom, is doing all she can to keep things together, and it is not going well.

Natalie is fortunate to have a bestie, Debbie, played by Rita Marie Spence, not that in the end Debbie will be able to prevent the denouement.

Jason and Natalie develop their relationship as events unfold.

James avoids going into rehab but will not be able to save himself.

Natalie, worried about her dad, goes to the police, played by Lorrie Bacon, as detective Amy Trent, and partner Phil Godeck as Detective Adams. The duo is sympathetic and hear her story. After they heard her and she is leaving, she wishes them luck in finding the murderers of one of her professors. Professor Warren, played by Gus Bottazzi has been found dead.

Detective Trent insists she sit back down. The professor had attempted to proposition Natalie, and the detectives suspect she knows something.

Detective Amy admits that she is not unhappy with the demise of the professor. In fact, she is delighted.

Meanwhile, as the movie goes on, the Goat Head as the personification of Satan and leader of the cult, played by Danell Reese, makes his appearance. If he is not the complete incarnation of evil, he is doing a convincing imitation.

Natalie's relationship with Jason is moving along



Geno McGahee

The cast and crew of "Dark Place", the latest film by Ludlow native Geno McGahee.

and her feelings continue to grow. He invites her to a family early New Year's celebration, and though she has some feelings she might not be in a good place, she agrees.

So, she goes to the family's middle-class home and meets Jason's folks. Dwight an ex-police officer volunteers assistance in finding Natalie's dad.

The family and Natalie discuss it all and it does not all sound benign when Brent Northup as Bill relates his experience with a goat head.

Debbie senses something is wrong and investigates at Natalie's house, and contacts Trent. The detectives are galvanized into action and learn some crucial information about Jason.

The situation at the party finds Natalie in trouble, but she pushes back and the whole situation sees her resist but change as she rises to the occasion.

The detectives arrive at the house and find Natalie, but come to a conclusion that will shock Debbie and the audience.

So, it ended and the audience stuck around for a lively Q & A with McGahee taking many questions about the movie and answering questions about his other

productions as well.

"Dark Places" included interesting music and made good use of various Massachusetts locales. It will be interesting to see what Mc-



"Dark Places" premiered on March 14. The film can be viewed on Tubi.

Gahee does next.

Many of the actors are part of the production team, but Rick Caride does a lot of work, directing lighting among other duties and deserves mention.

"Dark Places" is available on the screaming platform Tubi as are most of the previous Xposse productions.

## St. Paul's to host 'Dance Night'

PALMER – St. Paul's Church will host "Dance Night! with DJ Seagull" for students in grades 6 through 9 on Friday, April 17 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The event is designed to offer a safe, welcoming, and engaging space for middle school youth to gather, socialize, and enjoy an evening of music and fun.

The dance will feature music by DJ Seagull of Berkshire Hills Music Academy, along with refreshments and a relaxed, well-supervised environment. Organizers hope the evening will provide an opportunity for young people in the greater Palmer area to connect with friends, meet new peers, and simply enjoy being together in a positive setting.

The event is sponsored by All Young Voices:

Circle of Friends, a new twice-monthly teen gathering being developed at St. Paul's. The initiative is focused on creating a safe and welcoming space for connection, belonging, and personal growth. Open to all youth, All Young Voices will include elements of mindfulness, creative expression—including music—and thoughtful exploration of life's deeper questions in an inclusive, interfaith spirit.

The group especially hopes to support youth who may feel marginalized or lonely, while remaining open and engaging for all. As part of its growing outreach, All Young Voices plans to offer youth dance nights and similar events multiple times throughout the year.

"All young people need spaces where they can feel comfortable, included, and free to have fun," said organizers of All Young Voices "This is about creating that kind of environment—something that's both enjoyable for youth and reassuring for families."

Admission is \$5 at the door. For the safety of all participants, students must be signed in and signed out by a parent or guardian. Participants will remain on site for the duration of the event and will not be permitted to leave and re-enter.

The dance is open to all students in grades 6–9 from Palmer and surrounding communities.

For more information, visit [www.StPaulsPalmer.org](http://www.StPaulsPalmer.org) or call 413-283-8185.

## In the classroom

### COLLEGE NOTES

#### Favata Named to Dean's List at Georgia Tech

ATLANTA, GA – Matthew Favata of Palmer, Mass. made the Dean's List for the Fall 2025 semester at the Georgia Institute of Technology. This designation is awarded to undergraduate students who have earned a 3.0 or higher academic average for the semester.

## Public safety

### Palmer Police Logs

- Sunday, Mar. 15**
- 3:44 a.m. – Unwanted person, Walnut St.
- 4:11 a.m. – Suspicious vehicle, Thorndike St.
- 8:55 a.m. – Animal complaint, Summer St.
- 4:13 p.m. – Trespass complaint, Main St.
- 11:14 p.m. – Vandalism, N. Main St.
- Monday, Mar. 16**
- 7:23 a.m. – Motor vehicle accident, Main St.
- 8:24 a.m. – Fraud, Baptist Hill St.
- 11:25 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Thorndike St.
- 4:29 p.m. – Theft, Beacon Dr.
- 6:49 p.m. – Motor vehicle accident, Palmer St.
- 8:12 p.m. – Disorderly conduct, High St.
- Tuesday, Mar. 17**
- 1:40 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Wilbraham St.
- 2:22 a.m. – Breaking and entering, Hickory Ln.
- 2:48 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Wilbraham St.
- 5:00 a.m. – Motor vehicle accident, Ware St.
- 7:17 p.m. – Burglar alarm, Park St.
- 8:04 p.m. – Weapons violation, Stewart St.
- Wednesday, Mar. 18**
- 12:54 p.m. – Animal complaint, Hovey Rd.
- 7:01 p.m. – Vandalism, Baptist Hill St.
- Thursday, Mar. 19**
- 5:06 p.m. – Burglar alarm, Homestead St.
- 9:34 p.m. – Unwanted person, Homestead St.
- Friday, Mar. 20**
- 12:17 a.m. – Motor vehicle theft, Arnold St.
- 3:45 p.m. – Trespass complaint, Main St.
- 5:37 p.m. – Animal complaint, Pleasant St.
- Saturday, Mar. 21**
- 9:21 a.m. – Animal complaint, Main St.
- 10:54 a.m. – Burn complaint, North St.
- 4:40 p.m. – Disorderly conduct, Chudy St.
- 8:45 p.m. – Animal complaint, Bourne St.

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**Hardwick Crossing Country Club**

GILBERTVILLE – The former Daurmann Country Club, a 9-hole golf course, reopened at 262 Lower Road, known as "Hardwick Crossing" and has a five-star quality restaurant without the price tag.

Hardwick Crossing golf course opened in July 2022 with a manicured course while offering a variety of memberships packages to suit a range of guests and familial needs. This endeavor fulfilled owner Kenneth Vaccaro's dream of reopening the former golf course.

The newly renovated restaurant, known by regulars as "The Clubhouse," opened in September 2022 and provides a full-service bar and gourmet food. Choices include sautee steaks, clam chowder, prime rib, fish and chips Buffalo chicken dip, Buffalo tenders, Gnocchi, Bourbon steak tips and salmon.

The executive chef is Thomas Simmons. He was at Eirikos Brick Oven Pizzeria for eight years as well as Lower Hill Botanical Gardens for many years. Their Sous Chef Neils Anderson took over that position when Simmons got promoted to executive chef. Anderson comes from Starbridge Hotel and Inn's and has been at Hardwick Crossing from the beginning.

A 3,000 square foot banquet venue, which seats 170 people is open for special events and weddings. It has a panoramic view of the golf course. Chef Jeff Nicholas assists in the regular kitchen and runs the events and wedding kitchens. They also have outdoor seating for 125 overlooking the golf course.

The motto they follow at Hardwick Crossing is ingredients are "from the soil, from the field" and "from the family," so fresh and local products are a top priority. General Manager Courtney Lefrande said the restaurant has food delivered six days a week. Alex Symons is Assistant Manager and Cassandra Hobbs, Bar Manager.

They offer products and produce from Gilboa Farms, Milkons Meats, West Boylston Seafood, local farm stands, Flower Yard Farms.

The restaurant is open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. People may follow them on Facebook and Instagram at [hardwickcrossing.com](https://www.hardwickcrossing.com).

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## 'Spay'ghetti Supper fundraiser

PALMER – Here Today Adopted Tomorrow (HTAT) invites all animal lovers to our annual "Spay"ghetti Supper fundraiser at the St. Thomas Parish Center in Palmer on Saturday, March 28, 2026.

Enjoy a delicious chef-prepared meal while helping the very cats in our community! Whether you're a true party animal or simply want to make a difference, it's a great way to support a good cause with friends and family. Plus, enjoy raffles, prizes, and

plenty of fun throughout the evening.

Each year, HTAT sees more cats pawing at its doors for help. As prices rise, everyone feels the strain—but many people don't realize that rising costs affect pets, too. It's not just veterinary care that has exploded; as food and housing prices rise, many loving pet owners find themselves struggling to keep up. When life becomes overwhelming, cats can be the ones caught in the middle.

The "Spay"ghetti Supper takes place at the St. Thomas Parish Center in Palmer on Saturday, March 28, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Advance tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors and kids under 12, while limited door tickets will be available at \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors and kids. To purchase tickets, visit [www.heretodaysanctuary.org](http://www.heretodaysanctuary.org) or call 413-324-8224. Visit [www.heretodaysanctuary.org](http://www.heretodaysanctuary.org) to learn more about our community assistance programs.

## Town of Brimfield to mark 250th

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](http://www.fohbrimfield.org). Tax-deductible donations 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 Brim-

field, P.O. Box 52, Brimfield, MA 01010 with "Spirit of Brimfield" in the memo.

If you or your company are interested in any level of corporate or business sponsorship, please visit the event website at [www.fohbrimfield.org](http://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.

## Town of Palmer announces nomination papers available

PALMER – The Town Clerk of Palmer will have nomination papers available the week of March 9.

The available seats on the June 9, 2026 town election are as follows:

- Councilor at Large 1 seat**  
3-year term
- Councilor at Large 1 seat**  
1-year term
- District Councilor PCT#1**

- 1 seat**  
3-year term
- Planning Board**  
2 seats  
3-year term
- School Committee**  
2 seats  
3-year term

Last day to obtain Nomination papers is April 16, 2026. Nomination papers must be filed with the Registrar, no later than April 21,

2026. Fifty valid signatures are required. The fifty signatures must be registered voters in the Town of Palmer; the District Councilor Precinct # 1 seat requires fifty signatures of registered voters from Precinct #1.

If you have any questions regarding filing requirements on above seats, please reach out to the Palmer Town Clerk's office.

## Monson nomination papers available for town election

MONSON – The Monson Town Clerk's Office announces that nomination papers are now available for the Annual Town Election to be held on June 9, 2026.

The following slate of offices are available:

- Select Board, 1 Seat,**  
term 3 years
- Town Clerk, 1 Seat,**  
term 3 years

- Board of Assessors, 1 Seat,**  
term 3 years
- School Committee, 2 Seats,**  
one term 2 years  
one term 3 years
- Water/Sewer Commission,**  
1 Seat,  
term 3 years
- Cemetery Commission,**  
1 Seat,  
term 3 years

- Parks and Recreation Commission, 1 Seat,**  
term 3 years
- Housing Authority, 1 Seat,**  
term 5 years

The deadline to obtain nomination papers is Thursday, April 16.

For inquiries contact the Monson Town Clerk's office at 413-267-4115 or email: [townclerk@monson-ma.gov](mailto:townclerk@monson-ma.gov).

### C4R | from page 1

#### Water monitoring and restoration

Davies said the former watershed council, the Chicopee River Watershed Council, was inactive, and by 2014, he and others worked to revitalize it, and changed its name to Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council to encompass all of the local rivers.

In 2015, the council put a major focus on water quality sampling, with grant funding under the umbrella of the Connecticut River Conservancy. The council has also received financial support from various towns, in addition to Country Bank, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association and the Quaboag & Quacumquasit Lake Association.

"It largely relates to bacteria," Davies said of the water quality sampling. "The bacteria sampling is kind of that pulse...that annual physical. That's what the sampling is; it's really that check-up."

Water quality sampling is conducted at sites across the watershed from late spring to late summer. The bacteria levels are then analyzed at Connecticut River Conservancy's lab, and posted on its website [ctriver.org](http://ctriver.org) or at [isitclean.us](http://isitclean.us).

Water quality is listed for "primary" or "secondary" use, with primary being safe for swimming and secondary for boating or fishing.

In 2023, the Department of Environmental Protection awarded a grant that allowed the council to take samples from more sites than ever before.

"There were six sites in 2015," Davies said. "Since 2023 we've done 25 sites."

Davies said the council was recently notified that the

Connecticut River Conservancy received DEP grant funding again for this year's sampling season.

In addition to collecting water samples for testing, the council's volunteers also collect data on weather conditions and water temperatures.

"If there's rainfall before sampling, it can elevate bacteria levels," Davies said.

He said if there's an elevated bacteria level without rainfall prior to sampling, it could be an indicator that something along the river is causing the spike.

"We do look at how those values change," he said.

C4R has also facilitated invasive plant removal from waterways, such as water chestnuts.

Davies explained the importance of continuing to monitor rivers for the invasive plant, as its spikeds seeds are easily transported by waterfowl, and can lay dormant for 10 years.

"If it's not checked it will inundate the area again," he said.

#### Blue Trails expansion

C4R also works to establish and maintain the Blue Trails, which have sections along all of the rivers in the watershed.

This year, C4R is continuing its focus on a new section, the Lower Quaboag, spanning from Route 67 to Laviolette Park.

The new section will start at an old rest area on Route 67, passing through to Water Street, then to Laviolette Park. Davies said a kiosk will be built by local Scouts and placed at the access point.

"The whole trail is about 12 miles," he said.

Davies displayed a draft of the map for the new section of Blue Trail, which highlighted historic points along

the river. Points of interest include the second oldest flow gauge in the state at the Route 67 access point, the remnants of Blanchardville, a unique concrete T-beam bridge, a mysterious rock with the "1856" carved in it and much more.

The Lower Quaboag Blue Trail ends at Laviolette Park, which prior to 1960 was a backwater impoundment for the dam near the confluence. The Army Corps of Engineers built flood control measures and created the park following flooding in the 1930s and 1950s.

Davies shared a photo that showed people ice skating where the park is now.

"It's still a place of recreation, it's just not wet, it's land," he said.

Davies said trail crewmembers are also needed to act as stewards of the Blue Trails

Duties of a trail steward includes looking for downed trees, checking portage areas, picking up trash, talking to Blue Trail users, taking photos and reporting findings back to C4R.

#### Macroinvertebrate monitoring

Davies said he would like to expand the river monitoring to include macroinvertebrate sampling – taking a closer look at the insects in the water.

"Certain bugs can only live in healthy water," he said.

Davies said sampling for macroinvertebrates is especially appealing to children, and could be a great way to get them involved in the protection (and enjoyment) of the watershed.

"It's a fun way to get people involved because it's hands-on," he said.

#### Upcoming paddles

A special birding paddle

with a Mass Audubon-certified bird guide will be held on Saturday, May 16 on the Quaboag River. A dragonfly paddle is being planned for July at a location to be determined.

More information about future paddles can be found on C4R's website, [c4rivers.org](http://c4rivers.org).

#### How to get involved

"If you know someone who really loves these rivers," Davies said. "Talk to them – have them get in touch with me."

Davies said it's important to get more people involved

who can help with communication, organization, and other tasks.

"If we can't get some of this organized in the next years, I don't know if we're going to be here," Davies said of the council. "We've got to bring some movers and shakers."

#### About C4R

Memberships and donations help C4R with resources for basic operations, including preparing events, creating and maintaining Blue Trails, collecting samples, writing reports and performing com-

munity outreach.

C4R has established a nonprofit relationship with the Connecticut River Conservancy, which holds and manages C4R funds for tax-exempt purposes for all donors who want this coverage.

To become a member, visit [c4rivers.org](http://c4rivers.org) and click on "Membership/Support – C4R."

For more information or to get involved, visit [c4rivers.org](http://c4rivers.org), email [chicopeewatershed@gmail.com](mailto:chicopeewatershed@gmail.com) or find Chicopee4Rivers on Facebook.



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**OPACUM** | from page 1

"This is our annual meeting breakfast," Adams said. "Every spring, we have a meeting where we bring all of the community together to celebrate local conservation and the work that we're doing here conserving land in South Central Massachusetts."

The larger venue reflected the event's continued growth. Adams said this year's attendance far exceeded what organizers had expected, with the crowd spilling well beyond the size of previous breakfasts. Guests were greeted with a buffet breakfast, information tables, merchandise and materials about upcoming programs, creating a lively atmosphere of mingling and conversation before the formal program began.

Adams said the annual gathering is meant not only to reflect on the trust's accomplishments, but also to bring new people into its mission. She encouraged residents who care about open space, clean water and clean air to get involved.

"There's an awful lot of development moving into our region, and we need to all come together and protect those places that are important to us," Adams said. "If you enjoy being able to go outdoors, be in the woods, have clean water, clean air, then join us."

During the program, Executive Director Laney Wilder welcomed the audience and explained Opacum Land Trust's role in the region. The nonprofit works with willing landowners to permanently protect forests, wetlands and other important landscapes, while also creating opportunities for public recreation through trails and open space access.

"For those of you who are new, Opacum Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that works to protect land, water and wildlife in the South-Central Massachusetts area," Wilder said. "We work with willing landowners to protect their properties and make sure that these places stay forested, wetlands forever. We also make sure to have spaces that people can recreate and enjoy nature."

Wilder also thanked the event's sponsors and recognized the many local businesses, organizations and supporters who helped make the breakfast possible. Special thanks were extended to Chef Laura Rogers and her husband, Eric, who provided the breakfast.

A major focus of the morning was fundraising to support Opacum's educational and community programming. Wilder announced a \$2,000 matching challenge created by four Opacum volunteers, with all donations and pledges made during the breakfast up to that amount to be doubled.

She framed the campaign



**Lucas McDiarmind gives a brief intro to Anne Gobi.**

as an investment not only in land conservation, but in helping people build personal connections with the natural world.

Wilder shared a childhood memory of gathering black raspberries along the edges of woods near her family's farm, describing how those early experiences outdoors helped shape her love of the land.

"The experience of getting outside in nature ... builds a connection and a relationship to a place, to the plants there and to the wildlife there," she said. "These experiences foster a sense of responsibility for the land and water because we care and protect what we love."

She said donations raised through the challenge would help fund guided hikes, family programs and hands-on workshops designed to connect community members to the land Opacum is working to protect.

The breakfast's keynote speaker was Anne Gobi, Massachusetts' director of rural affairs, who praised the organization's growth and its role in strengthening conservation across the region. Gobi noted that she remembered the early breakfasts, which she said drew perhaps 30 or 40 people, and contrasted them with this year's turnout.

"This is incredible," Gobi said. "That is a testament to the work that this organization continues to do, and how important the land trust is to the surrounding area."

In her remarks, Gobi connected the work of local land trusts to broader statewide conversations about agriculture, land use, food security and municipal fairness.

She spoke about the recently completed 21st Century Agriculture Commission report, emphasizing that supporting farmers in Massachusetts must include making sure agricultural land remains available and protected. She pointed to land trusts as key partners in that effort, given their work with landowners and their role in keeping land in farming and forestry use.

Gobi also discussed the state's anti-hunger task force, saying the Healy-Driscoll administration has been focused on strengthening food resiliency and ensuring that Massachusetts can maintain a strong food system during uncertain times. She said the is-



**The Pathfinder cafeteria was notably packed during the annual breakfast.**

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy



**Ann Gobi, Massachusetts Director of Rural Affairs, gave a speech.**

sue is about more than policy. "It's a moral issue," Gobi said, noting that no child should go hungry in a state as wealthy as Massachusetts.

Another major initiative she highlighted was the Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy, or MILS, a developing statewide planning effort intended to bring agencies together around housing, economic development, conservation, transportation and climate resilience.

Gobi stressed that the strategy is not meant to impose mandates on municipalities, but rather to create better planning tools and invite local feedback about what kinds of development and conservation make sense in each community. She said land trusts could play an important role in those discussions because they already understand the needs and priorities of their regions.

She also pointed to the state's pilot commission reviewing payments in lieu of taxes on state-owned land, an issue with major implications for rural and Western Massachusetts communities. Gobi said the current system, based heavily on property values, disproportionately benefits communities in the eastern part of the state and does not fairly account for the value of state-owned land in other regions.

Throughout her remarks, Gobi repeatedly thanked local conservation advocates and stressed the importance of bringing younger generations into the work.

"The things that we're doing today are going to affect them, going to affect their kids," she said.

Following Gobi's speech,



**Board member and Treasurer Jennifer Morrison-Dominguez spoke, urging attendees to contribute donations and participate in a matching challenge.**

board member and Treasurer Jennifer Morrison-Dominguez urged attendees to contribute to the matching challenge and support the land trust in a meaningful way. Morrison-Dominguez, who said she has served in her role for more than 20 years, announced a personal pledge of \$500.

"We only get one Earth. We ain't making any more land," she said. "We need to do something meaningful, demonstrable, that ensures that not only for us, for our kids, for our grandchildren, that they have a place, a safe, healthy place where they can be outside, see the sun, listen to a brook."

Later in the morning, Wilder provided updates on Opacum's recent accomplishments and ongoing projects.

Among the organization's recent successes, she said, was the conservation of the Fay property in Monson, as well as the addition of two TerraCorps service members to the team. Those new members have expanded the trust's ability to host more events, organize more trail work days and increase outreach efforts.

Wilder said the organization has continued to move forward despite uncertainty at the national level, emphasizing that local conservation remains essential regardless of political changes in Washington.

"Land protected by Opacum, and everybody here, our members, helps to keep our air clean and our waterways clean," she said. "It helps to protect at the local level."

She also shared an update on Opacum's "Our Lands, Our Legacy" initia-



**Merchandise was available for purchase to support Opacum Land Trust fundraising efforts.**

tive, a multi-year project that is nearing a major milestone. Wilder said grant funding for the effort is set to end in July, but the trust hopes to conserve more than 600 acres of land by that deadline.

Another project highlighted during her update was the protection of 28 acres in Monson through a partnership with donors Candace and Richard Erickson.

"That was amazing," Wilder said, describing the collaboration as an example of what can be accomplished through community support.

She also discussed progress at the Pyrra Preserve in Southbridge, a property the trust is working to open to the public. The project has run into challenges because of beaver activity that has flooded the main access road. Wilder said Opacum is working with Beaver Solutions to install a flow device that will manage water levels without harming the beavers or disrupting their habitat.

"We love beavers, and we let them do their thing," Wilder said, adding that the goal is to make the site accessible while respecting the natural landscape.

Once that work is completed, the trust hopes to move forward with building a parking area and opening the preserve for public enjoyment.

Looking ahead, Wilder said Opacum is especially excited about "More Green, Less Screen", a family-friendly April vacation program running from April 18 through April 26. The event invites participants to form teams and search for letterboxes hidden on different Opacum properties, creating

a nature-based treasure hunt designed to get children and families outdoors.

She said the program launched last year and received strong feedback, prompting the trust to bring it back this spring.

"It'll be a great way to get the next generation out on the land and enjoying nature and experiencing nature," Wilder said.

The breakfast also featured recognition for long-time conservation leader Howard Fife, who is stepping down from Opacum's board. Wilder said he would receive the Friends of Conservation Award in honor of his role as a founding member of the organization and as one of its most important institutional voices.

"He really is our unofficial historian, storyteller and keeper of institutional knowledge," Wilder said. "His leadership and quiet dedication has shaped this organization in ways that will endure for generations."

As the morning concluded, the themes of stewardship, local action and long-term responsibility remained at the center of the event. From fundraising appeals to policy discussions and project updates, speakers repeatedly returned to the idea that protecting land is about both preserving natural resources and building a stronger future for the community.

With a record crowd, an active slate of projects and renewed calls for public involvement, this year's breakfast underscored both Opacum Land Trust's growth and the expanding interest in conservation across the region.



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## Seniors take part in All-Star Game

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

SPRINGFIELD – Under the guidance of Missy Rocker, the Palmer boys' varsity basketball team has won 38 games over of the past three seasons.

Rocker had the opportunity to coach three of her players in the 15th annual Western Massachusetts Class C and D Senior All-Star Basketball Game, which took place on the Jerry Colangelo Court of Dreams, located inside the Naismith

Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield on March 20.

The trio of Dylan Doherty, Stephen Fredette, and Gavin Smola combined to score 21 points, which helped the white team post a 112-87 victory over the green team.

"This was my first time coaching in the All-Star game," Rocker said. "It was very special, especially being able to coach three of my seniors for one last time. We also won the game, which is

ALL-STAR | page 10



Gavin Smola drives through the paint.



Monson's Austin Meacham tries to make a steal on defense.



Dylan Doherty is pressured near the hoop.



Palmer's Stephen Fredette looks for a path to the hoop.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Keira Ziobrowski goes for the three-pointer.



Turley photos by David Henry  
www.sweetdogphotos.com  
Abigail LaRoche gets the layup.



Juliana Hayden gets the easy shot.



Calli Allen heads for the hoop.



Rylee Anderson tries to get a shot off.



Charlotte Wurm shoots near the free throw line.

## Monson youth finishes season

MONSON – Earlier this month, Monson 5-6 youth girls basketball finishes up their season during the playoffs held at Chicopee High School. The Pioneer Valley Girls Suburban Basketball League had their playoffs from Feb. 28 to Mar. 8.

## Bay State Games announces leadership changes

BOSTON – Bay State Games has announced new staff appointments and board leadership changes leading into the 2026 Summer Games.

Alanis Tirabassi has been promoted to deputy executive director. Alanis has been with Bay State Games since 2017, when she began as an intern while attending Salem State University. She was hired full-time as sports coordinator in 2020 and later promoted to director of operations before her recent promotion.

She joins Kevin Cummings, who has been with the Bay State Games since 1984 and has served as executive director since 1999, as part of the organization's two-person full-time staff.

In addition to her role with Bay State Games, Tirabassi serves as a committee chairperson for the National Congress of State Games. She also works as a consultant for Dave

GAMES | page 10

# Candlepin League News

By **Ryan Drago**  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

## Bondsville League

WARE – The regular candlepin league season has completed as Roll-A-Way Lanes prepares for the play-offs.

The teams who qualified for the playoffs are Sandri, Night Hawks and Fire Mountain. The final wildcard spot will be awarded to either Team UMass, Spare Parts Bud, or Ironmen.

During the last week, Ironmen bowled against Fire Mountain. In game one, Fire Mountain defeated Ironmen by a score of 477-442. Rick Trott of Fire Mountain began with 108. Pete Swistak of Ironmen began with 116.

In game two, Fire Mountain won again by a score of 478-463. Ryan Drago of Ironmen had the highest score of 118.

In game three, Ironmen pulled off a victory with a score of 466-462. Swistak finished strong with 127 and a three-game series of 352.

The final score was 1417-1371 in favor of Fire Mountain. After losing two out of three games, Ironmen isn't eligible for the play-offs.

Team UMass bowled against Flaming Bowling Balls (FBB) during the final week. In game one, Team

UMass won by a score of 511-479. Kevin Trott led Team UMass to victory with 116 in game one.

In game two, FBB defeated Team UMass, 489-449. Ryan McCarthy of FBB bowled 108 and Don Paulus bowled 103 after beginning with 113.

In game three, FBB won by a score of 472-456. McCarthy finished with 112 and a series of 315. The final score was 1440-1416 in favor of FBB.

Zeke's Freaks bowled against Night Hawks during the final week. In game one, Night Hawks won 460-450. The second game was won by Zeke's Freaks, 458-424. The final game was won by Zeke's Freaks, 504-443. Tony Burke of Zeke's Freaks finished with 127 as his team win with a final score of 1412-1327.

Sandri finished the regular season with a match against P&J Meats. In game one, P&J Meats won by a score of 520-516. Ron Gouin of Sandri had a triple strike while bowling 145.

In game two, P&J Meats won again by a score of 463-432. The final game was won by Sandri, 457-454. Gouin finished with 120 and a three-game series of 367. The final score was 1437-1403 in favor of P&J Meats.

Slow Burners bowled against Cannonballs in the final week. In game one, Cannonballs won by a score

of 476-441. The second game was also won by Cannonballs, 470-465. The final game went to Cannonballs, 456-440, for a three-game sweep over Slow Burners. The final score was 1402-1346 in favor of Cannonballs.

The Snappers bowled against Spare Parts Bud in the final week. Snappers took game one by a score of 492-445. Kevin "Kras" Krasnecky began with 122 during a Snappers victory. John Jebb of Spare Parts Bud began with 107.

In game two, Spare Parts Bud got the victory, 467-458. Krasnecky followed up with 115. In game three, Spare Parts Bud pulled off the victory, 496-492. Jebb finished with an over average game of 109. The final score was 1442-1408 in favor of Snappers.

After tallying the regular season standings, Team UMass was awarded the final birth into the four-team playoff round. The play-offs will begin the following week with two division winners and two wildcard teams.

The #1 seed, Sandri, will bowl against the #4 seed, Team UMass in the playoffs. The other playoff match will be Fire Mountain (2) against Night Hawks (3). The remaining eight teams will bowl against each other in a roll off during the play-offs. The finals will be held on April 1.

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## Athlete of the Week

**Matt Provost**  
Monson High School

Provost was one of the top local finishers in the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race, finishing at 34:13.

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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### GAMES | from page 9

McGillivray Sports Enterprises and Conventures Events, Communications & Marketing.

After more than 22 years as chair of the Bay State Games Board of Directors, Phil Gloudemans will step down this spring. Under his leadership, Bay State Games has grown into one of the largest multi-sport nonprofit organizations in New England. He joined the Board of Directors in 1987 and he will continue to serve on the board and its executive committee.

Gloudemans is the associate director of media relations at Boston College. Prior to his BC position, he held senior media relations roles at Brown University and Boston University, as well as with three international public relations firms in Boston.

The Board of Directors has elected Dan Adams of Polsinelli PC Law Firm in Boston as its new board chair. Adams has served on the Bay

State Games board for nearly 20 years and is head of sports and entertainment at Polsinelli PC. He holds a bachelor's degree from Boston College, a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and an MBA from Harvard University.

In addition to his volunteer work with Bay State Games, Adams serves on the Board of Directors of the East Greenbush Miracle League. His experience with state games spans decades, including as a three-time participant in the Empire State Summer Games of New York.

Registration for the 2026 Bay State Summer Games will begin in early March. The 2026 Summer Games will feature events from May 9 through July 25 across 30 different sports throughout eastern and central Massachusetts.

Players from Western and Central Massachusetts schools have consistently participated in the Bay State Games during the summer, especially in sports like soccer, field hockey, and volleyball.

### ALL-STAR | from page 9

awesome."

Palmer High School Principal Sue North and Athletic Director Matt Marciniac attended the All-Star game.

Both teams, much like in the NBA All-Star game, put little emphasis on defense.

There were ten players on each team and Rucker kept inserting five different players into the game every four minutes.

"I just put five players on the court who I thought would be successful playing with each other," Rucker said. "I had my three players start the game together. It was even across the board."

Another member of the white team was Ware senior Jack Gaudreau, who finished with 10 points.

"I only know Jack Gaudreau from playing against him the past couple of years, but he's a very

good basketball player," Rucker said. "It was a pleasure to coach him at this level."

The last member of the Palmer boys' basketball to be invited to participate in the Senior All-Star game was Andrew Menard two years ago.

"Andrew Menard played in this All-Star game in my first season coaching at Palmer," Rucker said. "We didn't have any seniors on the varsity team last year."

Fredette scored ten of his points during the first half, which was a full 16 minutes instead of two eight minutes quarters.

"This was a great opportunity for me, especially getting to play with a couple of my teammates for the final time," Fredette said. "All of the players in this game are very talented."

Gjamory'a McTier, who's Fredette's older sister, also played in the senior All-Star game several years ago. McTier is currently

a junior on the University of Saint Joseph's (Conn) women's basketball team.

Smola scored five points after halftime.

"This is the first time I've visited the Hall of Fame, and I really enjoyed playing in this All-Star game," Smola said. "It was a fun atmosphere tonight. This was the best way to finish my basketball career."

Doherty scored four points during the opening half.

"I've been playing basketball with Stephen and Gavin since we were in the third grade," Doherty said. "It was a lot fun playing basketball with them for the final time."

Doherty was recently selected to the All Western Mass. Top 42 football Team by the National Football Foundation.

The other three seniors listed on the Panthers varsity basketball roster are Adonis Dupre, Chris Stapleton, and Matt Santos.

"All six of our seniors are very special," Rucker said. "I'm glad that my three seniors were able to play on the same team in tonight's game. It was also a lot of fun playing a game on this court."

Palmer finished the 2026 regular season with an 11-9 record.

The Panthers started the Western Mass. Class C. tournament by dispatching Lee High School, 67-57, in a home quarterfinal victory. They then lost at Drury High School in the semifinals.

The Panthers also won another home game against Bay State Academy, 63-54, in a preliminary round game of the Division 5 state tournament. Their season came to an end two days later following a 52-48 road loss to the 10th seeded Pioneer Charter School of Science.

The five juniors listed on the Panthers varsity roster are hoping to be selected for the senior All-Star game next March.

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# Perfect day for a road race: Holyoke runs 49th holiday 10K

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE — A warm and hot day is not ideal for running long distances, but give a harrier a 40-50-degree day, and it's the perfect environment make great time.

Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, experienced that as he completed a sub-30-minute 10K in the 49th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race last Saturday afternoon. Serafini completed the hilly course throughout downtown Holyoke in 29:45. He had a great pace going, averaging 4:47 a mile with thousands of people cheering him on as he completed the course 50 seconds ahead of the runner-up.

Yankarlos Diaz was the second-place finisher. He comes from Manchester, CT. He completed the 6.3-mile course in just 30:35.

This year's top female finisher was Rachel Schilkowsky. She comes from Providence, RI and placed 12th overall. She completed the course at 34:03, winning the race for the very first time.

Among local finisher, Monson's Matt Provost came in at 34:15. He had a pace of about 5:30 per mile.

According to the results provided by Presidential Timing, which took over the timing of the race last year, nearly 4,900 runners, male, female,

and many children and teenagers, completed the 10K race.

In addition to the ideal temperature for running, the day was sun-splashed and beautiful, making for a great setting for the running of the race, which had more than 6,200 runners signed up.

The race included multiple waves of competitors, and also included a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem by a member of the Holyoke Grand Colleen Court, Bridie Bowler.

Crews in the city did an excellent job preparing for the race, getting the course prepared despite a lot of snow-fall during the past couple of months.

While there were plenty of local runners, race results

showed individual participants from all over New England, New York, and New Jersey.

There were even some international runners.

Last Saturday's even included a fun run for children and a walk as well that have been traditions in recent years.

Prior to the race, there were musical performances and other entertainment downtown.



The runners are off in the 49th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



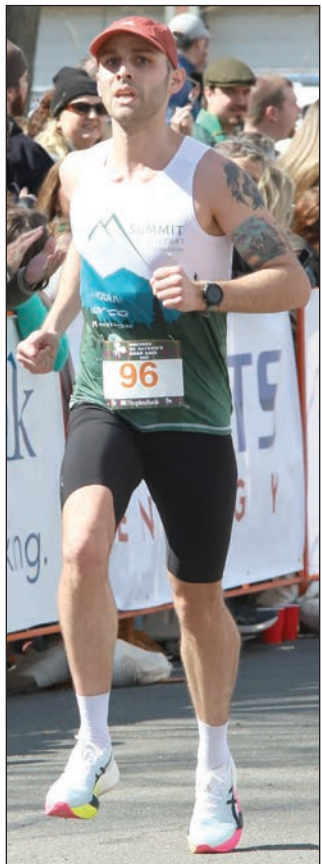
Brimfield's Jack Leland gets to the finish.



Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, won the 10K race at 29:45.



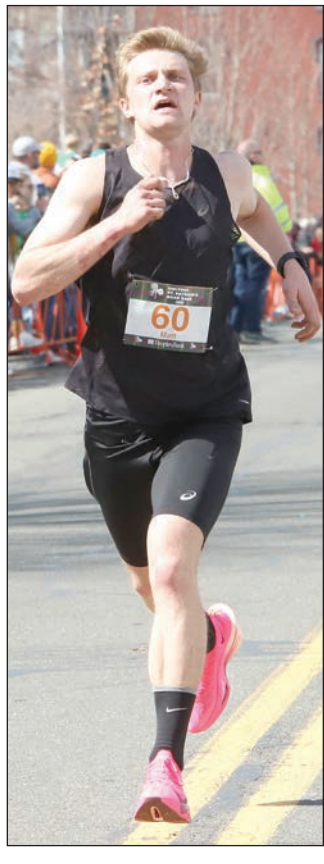
Rachel Schilkowsky, of Providence, RI, was the top female finisher at 34:15.



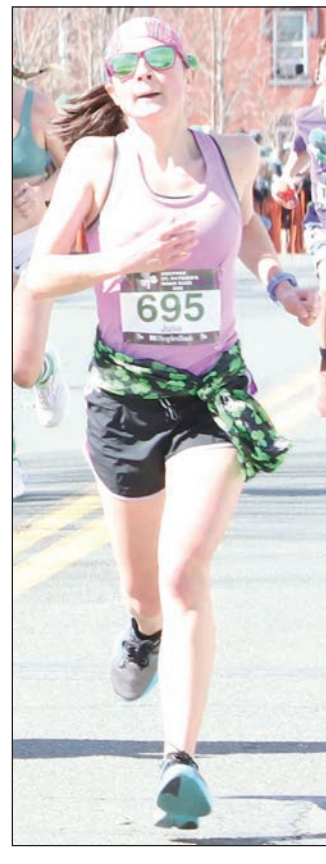
Sean O'Donnell, of Thorndike, gets to the final stretch.



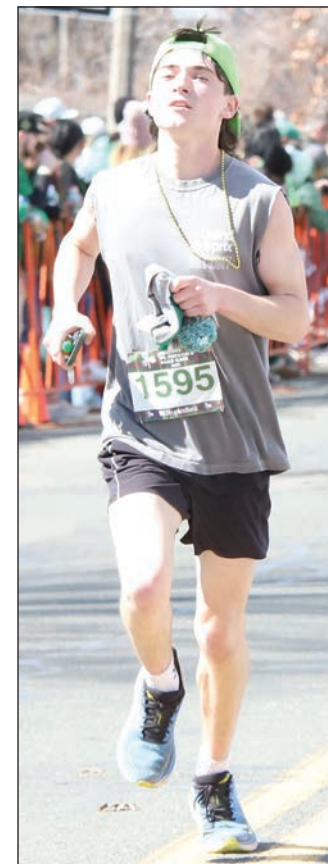
Daniel Fiester of Monson heads for the finish line.



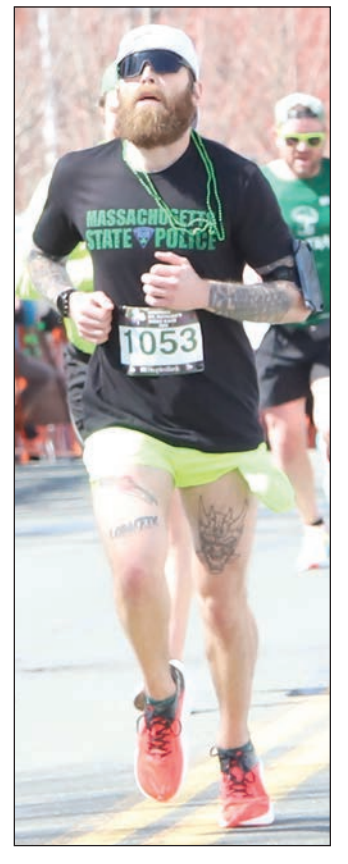
Monson's Matt Provost was one of the top local finishers in this year's race.



Julia Greene, of Thorndike, gets to the finish line with a crowd of harriers around her.



Isaac Somers puts his last effort to get to the finish.



Sean Gendron, of Palmer, comes up the hill to the finish line.

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**FINALISTS** | from page 1

candidate screening, including a review of both internal and external applicants through oral interviews, written exercises and related evaluations. The third phase was a formal in-person assessment center, where finalists were tested through five lieutenant-level scenarios reviewed by independent subject matter experts under professional assessment guidelines and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission standards. The fourth and final phase brought the two remaining candidates before the Select Board for public interviews, using questions also informed by the consultant.

**Szymanski highlights leadership training, investigative experience and community relationships**

Szymanski introduced himself as a longtime Monson officer with more than 20 years in law enforcement. He said he began his policing career in Monson in 2005 as a part-time officer, later spent time in Sturbridge, and eventually returned to Monson, where he served as a detective before being promoted to sergeant. He currently supervises the 4 p.m. to midnight shift and also serves as detective sergeant.

"My name is Adam Szymanski. I've been a police officer for a little over 20 years," he said. "I started my law enforcement career in Monson as a part time officer in 2005... I ultimately promoted to sergeant and I currently supervise the 4 to 12 evening shift as the sergeant. And I also serve as the Detective Sergeant to the Detective Bureau."

Throughout his interview,

Szymanski emphasized the importance of understanding the lieutenant's role not only as a command position, but as one grounded in communication, trust and consistency.

"I think ensuring effective operations would start with a, a solid understanding of the position and the expectations that the chief of police has," he said.

Asked about the challenge of moving from supervising peers to becoming second in command, Szymanski said the transition is made easier when a leader has already built credibility and respect within the department.

"I found that if you have the respect of your subordinates, if you really, if they respect you and you've developed them and you're there for them, then you kind of don't have that issue of, of a difficult transition because they respect you and they trust you," he said.

He also described his existing relationship with Chief Gasparini as a strong foundation for success in the role, characterizing the chief as someone who has previously mentored him and someone whose leadership he would fully support.

"The chief and I already have a good working relationship," Szymanski said. "So that being said, as second in command, my support for him has to be 100%, no matter what, all the time."

In discussing department priorities, Szymanski said the lieutenant must focus first on people, public safety and community engagement, while keeping communication flowing both up and down the chain

of command.

"I think we always prioritize our people, we prioritize public safety and we prioritize community engagement," he said.

Szymanski pointed to a wide range of leadership experience accumulated over the course of his career, including early involvement as a police explorer captain, major case work as a detective, training responsibilities and specialized professional development. He said that after being promoted to sergeant, he deliberately sought out higher-level leadership training and graduate education to prepare for advancement.

**Bailey emphasizes accountability, adaptability and long-term service**

Sgt. Jane Bailey, the department's current day shift sergeant, told the board she has longstanding personal and professional roots in Monson. She moved to town in 1992, raised her children there and became involved in local schools and sports before launching her law enforcement career in Monson as an auxiliary officer in 1995. After working full-time in Southwick, she returned to Monson in 2005 and was promoted to sergeant that same year.

"My name is Jane Bailey. I'm currently the day shift sergeant for the Monson Police Department," she said. "My policing career started back in 1995 when I became an auxiliary police officer for the town of Monson... In 2005, I came back to Monson and I was promoted to sergeant that same year. So I've been a Sergeant for over 20 years now in Monson."

Bailey holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's degree in criminal justice administration. During her interview, she described the lieutenant position as a critical bridge between the chief, supervisory staff and patrol officers.

"You certainly need to lead by example, communicate clearly what your expectations are and hold officers accountable," she said.

She said moving from sergeant to lieutenant would not require changing who she is as a leader, but rather expanding the scope of her work. Because she has already built professional, supportive relationships with officers, she believes the transition would be a smooth one.

"I think it's all about how you've already handled yourself and developed relationships with them," Bailey said. "I'm very professional and I'm very supportive of them."

Like Szymanski, Bailey said she already has a strong working relationship with Chief Gasparini and would view part of her role as helping translate and reinforce his goals throughout the department.

"I believe we already have a good working relationship, and I would certainly promote his views to the subordinates," she said. "I would be meeting with him regularly to see what it is that I could do to assist and to try to continue our good working relationship."

When asked how she would identify and prioritize department needs, Bailey said she would begin with an inventory of existing needs, many of which may involve finances,

staffing or equipment, and then seek solutions through grants, free training opportunities and community support.

"Firstly, I would take inventory of what the needs are," she said. "I would do my part, perhaps securing some grants for things, seeing what avenues, free training, things of that nature."

Bailey said her existing duties already overlap with some lieutenant responsibilities, including scheduling, training coordination and cruiser maintenance, giving her direct exposure to the administrative side of departmental leadership.

"I've been fortunate enough to take on some of the responsibility of the lieutenant position already, so I do handle some things, all the scheduling and right now I'm doing the training cruiser maintenance, things of that nature," she said.

She also highlighted her experience teaching at the police academy and participating in community programs, framing those roles as extensions of her leadership style.

In describing what sets her apart, Bailey said she sees herself as a flexible, situational leader who can adapt to changing circumstances, solve problems effectively and delegate when needed while still maintaining professional standards.

"I can say that I'm what's called a situational leader," she said. "I'm very adaptable. I'm a very good problem solver."

She ended on a note of commitment to both the department and the town she has called home for decades.

"I'm committed to this community. I'm committed to this department," Bailey said.

"When I ultimately retire, I want to feel satisfied that I've worked at my potential, that I've, you know, had a positive impact on this department and that I've made a difference in the lives of some of the residents of this community."

**Board delays final vote after praising both finalists**

Following the interviews, Select Board members said the process had produced two exceptionally strong finalists and credited both the department and the outside consultant for the quality of the candidate pool.

Ultimately, the board decided not to make the appointment that night. One member said additional time was needed to review personal notes and the consultant's report before making such an important decision.

"Personally, I would like to take some time and not make a decision tonight only because I want to read the notes that I wrote. I want to read the report again and then meet again to make a decision," the member said.

That sentiment became the basis for a formal motion.

"I'll make a motion to review the content further that we gathered tonight, along with the information we were previously given and reconvene at a later date to be determined," the member said.

The motion was seconded and approved, with one dissenting vote from a member who said they were prepared to make a selection that evening. The eventual appointment, once made, will be contingent on successful contract negotiations.

**CONCOMM** | from page 1

vice, with Blais also recognizing his prior work assisting the conservation and planning offices with digitizing documents. The resignation leaves a vacancy on the commission, and members said the process to fill the seat will begin soon. According to Blais, information on how to apply will be posted online, likely through town channels, with interested residents expected to submit a letter of interest.

Another early matter involved a request for a Certificate of Compliance for DEP file #256-1691 at Pioneer Drive within the Breton Estates subdivision. The commission discussed the complicated history of the subdivision, which dates back to an Order of Conditions issued around 2009 and has been affected by violations and other unresolved issues across the broader development.

Rather than closing out the entire subdivision order, the commission agreed it made more sense to issue a partial Certificate of Compliance for the individual lot currently being sold, while keeping ongoing conditions in place for the remaining lots. Under that

approach, each lot will need to go through its own Certificate of Compliance process in the future. The commission approved the partial certificate unanimously, 6-0.

**Palmer Healthcare Center Development News**

A significant portion of the meeting focused on a continued public hearing regarding Palmer Healthcare Center at 250 Shear St. Representatives from Land Design Collaborative, appearing on behalf of Wellman Reality LLC and Palmer Healthcare Center, presented a Notice of Intent for a proposed two-story building addition along with expanded parking, landscaping, lighting, utilities and stormwater improvements.

According to the presentation, work is proposed within both the 100-foot buffer zone and the 50-foot no-disturb-zone to bordering vegetated wetlands. Blais summarized the filing at the outset of the hearing, while project engineer Mike Scott said the proposal is largely similar to a version approved in 2005 but never built.

Scott said the renewed project is being driven by current Department of Public Health requirements aimed at

"de-densifying" patient rooms. Under those requirements, rooms that previously held three or four beds must now be reduced to no more than two, creating the need to redistribute beds and expand the building. The project would increase the licensed bed count from 61 to 76.

Plans call for a new addition extending from the existing L-shaped facility, along with two new entrances from Shear Street intended to separate visitor traffic from employee traffic and improve circulation on the site. The proposal also includes exterior green space required by DPH, including a secured patio area and lawn space for residents. A representative for the facility said the expansion of outdoor space is also tied to the goal of becoming dementia certified.

To accommodate the project, some tree clearing would occur in the buffer zone. The applicant said stormwater from the expanded roof area would be collected, treated and directed through an enlarged recharge system. Plans also call for installation of a new exterior sewer pump station, replacing an interior station described as undesirable, and

improvements to the existing unpaved employee parking area.

Commission members also heard about feedback the applicant has received from the Planning Board process. Scott said the project had drawn comments from engineering consultant VHB as well as an abutter, with concerns including traffic on Shear Street and suggestions related to parking layout in the front yard. He said the applicant would revise both the plans and the drainage report before returning to the Planning Board on March 30.

During the discussion, another issue surfaced regarding an earlier order connected to the site that was issued but never completed. Scott said the applicant should formally request a Certificate of Compliance for that prior order as part of the current review process.

The commission ultimately voted 6-0 to continue the public hearing to its April 7 meeting, giving the applicant time to return with revised materials.

**Earth Day Plans**

The meeting also included extensive discussion of upcoming community events tied to Earth Day and environmen-

tal outreach.

Commissioners said this year's cleanup event is planned for Friday, April 25, from 9 a.m. to noon, with the possibility of extending to 1 p.m. Hymniewicz Park was suggested as a central gathering location based on last year's success, although participants may be encouraged to clean other areas as well. Commissioners discussed producing a flyer highlighting suggested cleanup sites for volunteers who may want direction on where help is most needed.

The group also discussed outreach strategies, including coordination with chambers of commerce, the Town Council, local radio stations and schools such as Palmer High School and Pathfinder. Members floated the idea of offering small prizes or incentives for participants who return collected trash bags. Dumpster access for the event has already been budgeted.

Looking ahead beyond Earth Day, the commission is also planning a May 3 opening event for Barker Street, scheduled for 1 p.m. The event is expected to include a guided walk in partnership with Opacum Land Trust and Troop

64, although commissioners said they still need to determine a rain-date plan.

**David Cotter: Commissioner of the Year award**

The meeting closed on a celebratory note with the reading of a letter from Congressman Richard E. Neal recognizing Cotter for receiving a "Commissioner of the Year" award. Blais read the letter aloud, praising Cotter's "steady, wholehearted service" and noting that his work often takes place quietly but leaves a visible impact in the form of cleared trails, restored conservation areas and maintained public spaces.

The letter said Cotter's contributions are "seen, valued, and deeply appreciated," and commission members echoed that sentiment with personal stories about his continued volunteer efforts and behind-the-scenes work throughout the community. One commissioner noted that recognition for Cotter also reflects positively on Palmer, bringing statewide attention to the town's conservation work.

The next meeting of the Palmer Conservation Commission is scheduled for April 7.

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# Obituaries

## James Paul Machnik

James Paul Machnik, 85, of Suffield, Connecticut, passed away March 3, 2026, at Vernon Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in Vernon, Connecticut, after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease.



Jim-known as "Jimmy," or affectionately as "Jimmy Who?" by his siblings because he was the youngest-was born June 19, 1940, in Ware, Massachusetts, to Stanislaw and Stephanie (Mazurek) Machnik. He was the youngest of eight children.

He graduated from Ware High School, Class of 1958, and later attended Western New England College (now Western New England University) in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Before and during his college years, Jim worked in the mills at Boston Duck Company in Bondsville, Massachusetts, and later at Hamilton Standard in Connecticut. Jim and his wife Pat also owned and operated a laundromat in the 16 Acres neighborhood of Springfield, serving the local community for a number of years. He later went on to a long career in education, teaching computer-aided drafting and later auto shop at Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield. For a number of years, Jim worked at the former The Children's Study Home in Springfield, now known as Helix Human

Services. The time he spent with the children touched his heart. Jim made his home for many years in Wales, Massachusetts, where he lived on Lake George. He was active in his community and served as a Selectman and as a member of the Town of Wales Finance Committee. Life on the lake brought him great joy, whether enjoying the quiet beauty of the water, welcoming friends and family, or simply appreciating the close-knit community he helped serve.

Jim and his wife Pat were passionate supporters of greyhound rescue and were actively involved in greyhound adoption efforts. They also enjoyed participating in Wales Community Theatre. Jim and Pat loved traveling with his niece, Marcia-who he often referred to as a sister-and her late husband Morgan.

Later in life, Jim met Liz "Zan" (Wagner) O'Goley and moved to Suffield, Connecticut, where they made their home together and shared many happy years. Together they traveled widely, including trips to China, Poland, Alaska, and many destinations closer to home in their RV.

In retirement, Jim enjoyed the simple routines that brought him together with friends. Tuesday morning coffee became a regular tradition,

where he spent time catching up and sharing stories with longtime friends, especially his good friend George Ferrero. Never one to sit idle, Jim also teamed up with George installing satellite television dishes for homes that did not yet have cable service, a project that combined Jim's practical skills with his enjoyment of helping neighbors.

Jim was predeceased by his parents and all of his siblings and their spouses: Dominick (Julia Rodowicz), Veronica (Walter Goodreau), Josie, John (Julie Lemanski and Stella Pisarski), Fredericka (Al Roszko), Irene (Lenny Audette and James Baronas), and Edward (Bette Zinker).

He was also predeceased by his wife of 29 years, Patricia (Lombard) Cole Machnik in 2009, and by his partner of the last 15 years, Liz "Zan" (Wagner) O'Goley in 2025.

Jim is survived by his son, Stephen Machnik (son of Jim and his second wife Irene), and by his grandchildren Sophie, Benjamin, and Victoria, as well as bonus grandsons Zack and Nick. He is also survived by Liz's daughter, Donna Markham, and her children Michelle and Shawn, along with many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and friends.

For the last 15 years of his life, Jim created lasting memories with Liz's family. He cherished the simple pleasures of life, spending time together, going out to dinner and indulging in his favorite Polish cui-

sine, traveling and celebrating holidays at Michelle's house-a tradition that brought joy and warmth to many. His role as a father figure to Donna and his invaluable time with Shawn, where he imparted wisdom and knowledge, further exemplified the love and guidance he offered to those around him. Jim also looked forward to his special visits with Pia, Michelle's daughter. They enjoyed their cookies quiet TV time together.

In recent years Jim especially enjoyed working with his niece, Susan, brother John and his MA and NJ Mazurek cousins researching their family history. Together they spent many hours building their family tree and searching for the Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry he believed to have been passed down through his father, Stanislaw Machnik-a mystery that fascinated them all.

In keeping with Jim's wishes, no services were held. Arrangements were entrusted to Beers & Story Funeral Home, who assisted the family.

Memorial donations may be made in Jim's memory to the Parkinson's Foundation at <https://www.parkinson.org>.

Jim will be remembered for his quick humor, his love of travel and adventure, and his deep care for family and community. Though he is gone, the stories he shared, the journeys he took, and the family history he helped uncover will continue to live on through those who loved him.

## James E. Meurisse, Jr.

1935-2026

MONSON/BENNINGTON, NH - James E. Meurisse, Jr., 91, known affectionately as Jim, was born on February 2, 1935, in Hartford, Connecticut. He lived a full and meaningful life until his passing on March 20, 2026, in Merrimack, New Hampshire.



Jim attended Monson Schools during his early years. He served honorably in the United States Army and remained connected to his military roots by enjoying reunions with his Army Unit for many years. His dedication and service were sources of pride throughout his life.

For over two decades, Jim worked as a truck driver for Sullivan Trucking. Upon retiring from this career, he pursued another passion by running his own landscaping business for more than 25 years. He was well respected in his community for both his work ethic and the friendly way he treated others. He enjoyed vegetable gardening and took pride in providing fresh vegetables for his family and friends.

Jim is survived by his daughter Lynn Mazzola and her husband Michael with whom he lived; his sons Wayne Meurisse and Harold

Meurisse. He was also a proud Papa to his grandchildren, Sarah, Katherine, James, and Stephen. They, along with other friends and family, carry on his memory with love.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Leora F. (Leveille) Meurisse; his parents James E. and Alice E. (Freeman) Meurisse; his sister Joan Smola; and his brothers Robert, Michael, Walter, and David Meurisse.

Jim's life was a testament to hard work, devotion to family, and a generous spirit. He will be remembered for his kindness, dedication, and the simple pleasures that brought him joy.

Lombard Funeral Home of Monson has been entrusted with the arrangements. Visiting hours will be held Tuesday March 31, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. A Funeral Service will begin in the funeral home at 11:30 a.m. followed by a funeral procession to Hillside Cemetery for committal prayers and Military Honors.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to: Michael J. Fox Foundation PO Box 5014 Hagerstown, MD 21741-5014. For online condolences please visit [www.lombardfuneralhome.com](http://www.lombardfuneralhome.com)

## Robert (Bob) Zajac

Robert (Bob) Zajac, 76, departed this life on March 19, 2026. Born on Sept. 27, 1949, in Palmer, MA, he was the son of late Stanley F. Zajac and Aniela C. (Kowalczyk) Zajac. Besides his parents, Robert is predeceased by his siblings Mary Jane Pifer, Carol Ann Mason, Stanley E. Zajac and Chester M. Zajac. He leaves behind three children he deeply loved, son Nathan E. Zajac and daughter-in-law Daphne Brine, his daughter Sara (Zajac) Dubuque, and son Robert M. Zajac. He also leaves his five grandchildren who would light up at the sight of Grampy: Aniela, Theo, Evelyn, Gabe, and Frankie. Robert dedicat-

ed most of his life to a fulfilling career in injection molding, starting at the age of 16 with former Springfield Molders in Monson, MA before retiring from Innovative Plastic Systems in 2023. He also spent a few years doing ground maintenance at Camp Ramah in Palmer. Bob was known for his love of playing cards, gambling, relishing in a cold beer and a packet of Marlboros while holding his beloved dog, Baby. The family will



hold a visitation on Friday, April 3, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Beers & Story Palmer Funeral Home. At a later date, a private burial will take place at St. Thomas Cemetery, where Robert will be laid to rest with his parents. Donations may be made in his memory to The Village Brotherhood Project, ATTN: Travis Thomas, 2686 Irwinton Rd, Milledgeville, GA 31061. Travis was a friend who gave Bob love and care in his final days.

## 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](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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

## DEATH NOTICES

**James Paul Machnik**  
Died March 3, 2026  
No services  
Beers & Story Funeral Home

**James E. Meurisse, Jr.**  
Died March 20, 2026  
Services March 31, 2026  
Lombard Funeral Home

**Robert (Bob) Zajac**  
Died March 19, 2026  
Services April 3, 2026  
Beers & Story Funeral Home

## 7th Annual Pioneer Valley wine festival to be held June 6 and 7

BRIMFIELD – Brimfield Auction Acres, Birthplace of the world-famous Brimfield Antique Shows will host the 6th annual Pioneer Valley wine festival on Saturday, June 6 and Sunday, June 7 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

2026 Marks the 7th year of the Pioneer Valley Wine and Food festival. This exciting event brings together New England Wineries, Cideries, Distilleries, and Meaderies from

across the Pioneer Valley and Farmers of many sorts selling their wares.

The event started in 2018 by the collaboration with farm wineries throughout New England and local farmers to create a festival to highlight the magnificent products Massachusetts provides all in unison and support of Massachusetts Agricultural Department.

The festival will feature local vintners and craft brew-

ers ready to spill their secrets, Live Art demonstrations, sizzling chef panel starring culinary celebs - to be announced soon. Last year celebrity guests include Brynn Gibson, the youngest Black Jacket finalist from Fox's Hell's Kitchen with Gordon Ramsay. We also have Jared Forman, the culinary mastermind behind Deadhorse Hill, who brought the heat on Food Network's Beat Bobby Flay.

## Wilbraham United Players announce play

WILBRAHAM – Wilbraham United Players presents "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised] [again]" by Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield, with new revisions by Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield, March 27-29 on the stage at Fellowship Hall. Deb Trimble will direct. The show is an irreverent, hilarious, high-speed

romp where three talented performers weave their way through all 37 of Shakespeare's comedies, histories, and tragedies in one wild ride that will leave audiences breathless and helpless with laughter. The performers are Craig Duda, Kevin Bechard and Joe Lessard.

With its inclusion of pop culture and audience participation, the production is a

clever and painless way to introduce Shakespeare's plays to new audiences while being Shakespeare-smart enough to delight long-time fans.

Tickets can be purchased online at [www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org/buy-tickets](http://www.wilbrahamunitedplayers.org/buy-tickets). The performances will take place on the Stage in Fellowship Hall at Wilbraham United Church, 500 Main Street, Wilbraham, MA 01095.

## 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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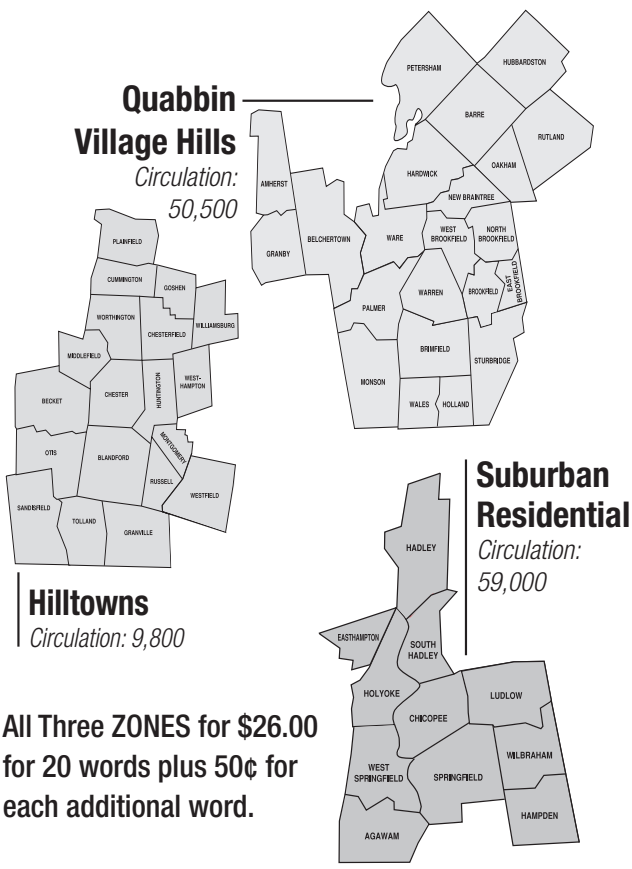
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**BUDGET** | from page 1

Student enrollment is down by 24 students as of the official Oct. 1, 2025 count used for state aid calculations, a decline that affects Chapter 70 funding even though the district's current net loss is just four students. At the same time, the district is seeing a roughly 3% increase in special education needs, as well as increasing student mental health, social-emotional and behavioral needs.

Superintendent Francis said the district is also facing volatility in special education transportation costs, contractual salary increases, rising cleaning expenses and a 6% increase in Palmer's assessment to Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School. Out-of-district tuition costs have also risen sharply in recent years, with increases of 14% two years ago and 7% last year, while the district is still awaiting final figures for the coming year.

Health insurance costs represent one of the most dramatic jumps in the budget, increasing by 35%. The district is also anticipating a 15% reduction in its federal Title I entitlement grant, which Francis said is tied to a reported decline in Massachusetts poverty data.

The governor's preliminary budget includes a \$90,000 increase in Chapter 70 funding for Palmer, but Francis noted that the school district does not directly receive all of that increase as unrestricted spending power within its own operating budget.

He said the district remains committed to Student Opportunity Act evidence-based practices, including preschool for four-year-olds, collaborative co-teaching models and diverse enrichment opportunities such as after-school programs, arts and athletics. But continued support for those

priorities is increasingly difficult.

"In FY27, our level service request was a 3.6% increase," Francis said. "The town manager's recommendation to the town council is 0.87% less than 1% which puts us at a deficit, all told, over the course of the past four fiscal years is a little over \$1 million."

That FY27 gap, later clarified in discussion as a projected \$525,000 deficit for the coming year alone, follows a pattern of structural shortfalls in the district budget dating back several years. Francis said the district has already reduced staffing through attrition, eliminating 16 positions since FY24, but warned that further reductions may not be possible without layoffs.

"However, with a \$525,000 deficit in FY27, I don't think that we can do that just through attrition this year," he said.

Committee members reacted strongly to the contrast between the town manager's recommended 0.87% increase for Palmer Public Schools and the 6% increase in the town's Pathfinder assessment.

"So Pathfinder is getting a 6% increase and we're getting 0.87," Noonan said. "Do towns speak out against those kinds of increases at the regional level?"

Another member proposed direct action.

"Could we, as a committee, send a letter to the Palmer Town Council and ask them to officially oppose that 6%?" one member asked.

Ultimately, the committee approved a motion directing the drafting of a letter to the Palmer Town Council expressing opposition to the disparity in school-related budget allocations and urging councilors to tour district schools to better understand existing limitations.

**Youth Sports Program Concerns**

Committee members also addressed concerns sub-

mitted by email regarding limited access to the Old Mill Pond School gymnasium for youth sports programs, including Palmer Youth Basketball Association teams and Old Mill Pond basketball teams. Officials acknowledged the difficulty of balancing school and community use of the facility and the challenge of adding space at the school.

"The other comment was an email regarding the gymnasium use and Homer not having enough resources to support the youth athletes and requesting a feasibility study to look into whether or not that would be something that could happen," one committee member said.

The discussion around gym space foreshadowed broader concerns voiced later in the evening about overcrowding and resource limitations at Old Mill Pond.

**Student representatives speak on school news**

The committee then turned to student representatives from both district schools, whose reports highlighted a busy spring of academics, extracurricular events and student recognition.

Fifth grade student council member Grace Level presented the Old Mill Pond report, offering a snapshot of school life from the elementary level.

"Good evening school committee members. My name is Grace Level. I am a 5th grade student member of the Old Mill Pond Student Council. I'm going to share with you the news from Old Mill Pond," she said.

Level outlined a range of recent and upcoming activities, including the school's Spring Open House, outdoor winter programming through the "Cold Weather Warm Hearts" initiative, and an MCAS Glow Party pep rally designed to encourage students in grades 3 through 6 ahead of testing. She also

highlighted the school's "March Mathness" competition, which features ST Math puzzles, and the "Thunderbirds Stick to Reading" reading log program, culminating in a special April 3 "Game Day" event and a band performance.

Old Mill Pond students have also taken part in educational trips and are preparing for more this spring. Sixth graders recently visited the Museum of Fine Arts to study the Ancient Egypt exhibit, while fifth graders are set to attend an Ecology School field trip in April. The school is also seeking volunteers for an upcoming Career Day.

Level noted that students in grades 4 through 6 in the band will perform at a Springfield Thunderbirds game on April 3, while the school's Parent Teacher Organization is preparing for its "Someone Special and Me Dance" on April 10 in the Palmer High School gym. That event is expected to be a major draw, with 800 tickets available. She also reported that a recent "Snowball Fight" fundraiser raised \$900.

The report also included recognition of students, faculty and staff, as well as thanks to the Palmer Cultural Council for helping fund field trips and student projects.

At the high school level, senior Kelsey Coyle presented a similarly wide-ranging report that touched on travel, athletics, leadership development, testing and end-of-year milestones.

"Good afternoon. My name is Kelsey Coyle. I'm a senior here at Palmer High School and I'll be providing an update on the past month's events and what to expect in the next month," Coyle said.

Among the highlights was a student trip to the Dominican Republic during February break, which provided students with cultural immersion experiences despite travel delays. Coyle also reported that members of the student

council attended the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils' 49th annual state conference in Hyannis.

She said winter sports recognition night was well received, spring sports officially began March 16, and several students earned notable honors. Dylan Doherty, Gavin Smola and Steven Fredette were selected for the Western Massachusetts Senior Basketball All-Star Game, while Doherty was also recognized as one of the top 45 football players in Western Massachusetts. Evelyn Ledoux was named an "unsung hero" by girls basketball coaches.

Coyle also previewed a packed spring calendar, including National Honor Society trivia night, the school's "Night of Belonging" on March 19, 8th Grade Signing Day on March 27 for students committing to Palmer High School, and a clothing drive running from March 29 through April 10. She noted that sophomores would take English Language Arts MCAS exams on March 24 and 25, juniors are selling prom tickets, and upperclassmen have opportunities ahead such as a Trade and Career Fair on April 3 and a campus cleanup effort on April 11.

Additional events include a tennis fundraiser on April 15, the annual Mock Accident on April 16, and key senior milestones in May, including prom, the Great East Music Festival, Class Day and graduation on May 31.

**Director of Finance Report**

Director of Finance and Operations Sara Menard reported that as of Feb. 28, the district had spent or encumbered 81.4% of its approximately \$5.3 million budget, with transportation and tuition lines showing especially high usage due to contract encumbrances. Both school-based budgets were tracking at around 50%, though substitute costs were running higher than expected.

"Our substitute spend combined is at 70.0% of the total budgeted, but we are only 63.2% through the year for them because they run on a different pay schedule," Menard said. "So as you can tell that is higher than I would have expected."

Menard said end-of-year transfers from salary lines to substitute lines are likely. She also reported that the district's before- and after-school revolving account remains healthy, with a balance of \$173,000.

The committee approved several action items during the meeting, including acceptance of two donations: \$600 from Beverly and David Grennan to the Old Mill Pond music band department, and \$3,035 from the Palmer Rotary Club for Palmer High School scholarships.

"The Old Mill Pond elementary School received a generous donation of the \$600 from Beverly and David Grennan to their music band department," committee member Bonnie Rathbone said.

"The Palmer High School received a generous donation of \$3,035 from the Palmer Rotary Club," Rathbone added.

Members also approved revisions to Section E of the Palmer School Committee policy manual, including updates to policies covering safety, test management, first aid, emergency plans and closings, vandalism, transportation, school bus safety, drug and alcohol testing, conduct on buses and universal free school meals.

"Under the direction of MASC, the policy subcommittee has met to review section E of the Palmer School Committee policy manual," Rathbone said.

The committee also approved budget transfers with no net financial impact to address known line-item gaps and anticipated spending needs.

# Public notices

**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. HD24P2595EA**

**Estate of:  
Dorothy H Langevin**

**Date of Death: 06/04/2024  
CITATION ON GENERAL PROBATE PETITION**

To all interested persons:

A Petition has been filed by: **Beverly Hoekstra of Hampden, MA** requesting Application of Cy Pres Or Deviation.

**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 04/13/2026.**

**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 date, action may be taken without further**

**notice to you.**

WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.  
Date: March 16, 2026

**Rosemary A Saccomani**, Register of Probate  
03/26/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Division**

**Docket No. HD26P0327EA**

**Estate of:  
Patricia Anne Loncto**

**Date of Death:  
November 29, 2025**

**INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE**

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Joyce M. Genholt of Monson, MA.**

**Joyce M. Genholt of Monson, MA**

**Daniel R. Genholt of Coventry CT**

have been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required

to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.  
03/26/2026

**NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE**

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By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Paul L Bucklin and Donna J Bucklin to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans, and now held by **The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, an officer of the United States**, said mortgage dated July 8, 2015 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book

20780, Page 146, as affected by a Loan Modification dated June 16, 2016 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 21396, Page 338; said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC DBA Veterans United Home Loans to PennyMac Loan Services, LLC by assignment dated March 14, 2016 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 21114, Page 388; said mortgage was assigned from PennyMac Loan Services, LLC to The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, an officer of the United States by assignment dated June 25, 2025 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 26174, Page 585; for breach of the conditions in said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at **Public Auction** on April 29, 2026 at 01:00 PM Local Time upon the premises, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

*Certain land situated in Monson, Hampden County, Massachusetts, off the Westerly side of Main Street, 1927 State Highway Layout, bounded and described as follows:*

*Beginning at an iron pin in the Northerly line of a proposed street which runs Westerly from Main Street, said iron pin be-*

*ing the Southwesterly corner of premises conveyed by Edward L. Dickenson, et ux, to Harold C. Wood, et ux; thence South 89° 19' West along the Northerly line of said proposed street, 150 feet an iron pin; thence North 0° 41' West along land now or formerly of Ernest W. Bridges, 92.5 feet to an iron pin; thence North 89° 19' East still along land now or formerly of said Bridges, 150 feet to an iron pin at land of said Woods; thence South 0° 41' East along land of said Woods 92.5 feet to the place of beginning.*

*Together with the right to pass and reposs on foot or with vehicles over the aforesaid proposed street, which proposed street is now known as Maple Lawn Drive.*

*The premises are shown as Lot Number 6 on a "Plan of Lots in Monson, Mass., surveyed for Ernest V. Bridges, Scale 1" = 40', November 22, 1954, Kenneth C. Sherman, Engineer-Surveyor, Palmer, Mass."*

*Subject to a taking for a sewer easement by the Town of Monson dated August 20, 1979 and recorded with Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 4818, Page 254.*

*Being the same premises as conveyed to the mortgagors herein by a deed recorded immediately prior hereto.*

The description of the prop-

erty contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication.

For Mortgagor's Title see deed dated June 2, 2015 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 20780, Page 144.

**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  
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Plainville, MA 02762

Attorney for The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, an officer of the United States

Present Holder of the Mortgage  
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03/26, 04/02, 04/09/2026

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**DINNER** | from page 1

Fiddler, who Kelley said has become an important part of the event in recent years.

According to Kelley, this was at least the fourth year Sarah the Fiddler has performed for the St. Patrick's Day dinner, after another musician performed at the inaugural event. Kelley said the entertainer has become a strong draw because of both her musicianship and her community spirit.

"She's so good, and she's just so compassionate and involved in the community," Kelley said. "We're paying her a good fee to be here. She's not volunteering, but she's a good draw."

Kelley added that the performance helps create the right holiday atmosphere, with Irish music and a fellow performer accompanying Sarah the Fiddler, including a rendition of "Danny Boy" on piano.

The evening also featured raffles that helped raise additional funds for the church. One prize was a handmade quilt created and donated by church member Roseanne Vincigurra. The other was a four-pack of tickets to a Worcester Red Sox game scheduled for Apr. 25.

Speaking during the event, Kelley encouraged attendees to purchase raffle tickets before the drawing, noting that both raffles had been underway for about a month. Tickets were sold for

three for \$5 or 10 for \$10.

Vincigurra, who has been quilting since 2020, said the quilt donated for the fundraiser took about six months to complete. She explained that the center portion was hand-quilted, while the remainder was quilted by machine.

The pastel-colored quilt, which tied in visually with the Lent and spring season, was prominently displayed during the evening and drew interest from attendees. Vincigurra has been a member of First Church of Monson since 2019.

The St. Patrick's Day dinner is one of several recurring fundraisers held by the church throughout the year. Kelley said the church

hosts fundraisers monthly as it works to support its operating budget and maintain programs and activities.

One of those ongoing efforts is a monthly fundraiser held on the fourth Thursday of every month at Main Street Tavern. Kelley said the restaurant donates 10 percent of its proceeds that evening to the church, including bar sales, takeout and dine-in meals.

"We have a wonderful turnout for that," Kelley said.

Beyond raising money, the St. Patrick's Day dinner offered a chance for fellowship and community connection, something that has become central to the event's appeal over its five-year run. Volunteers greeted guests, assigned seating and man-

aged the buffet service, while church leaders made sure the evening ran smoothly.

During welcoming remarks before dinner, Kelley thanked the many people who helped make the event possible, including members of the Board of Trustees, kitchen workers, servers and administrative staff. She also recognized Sarah the Fiddler for providing the evening's entertainment.

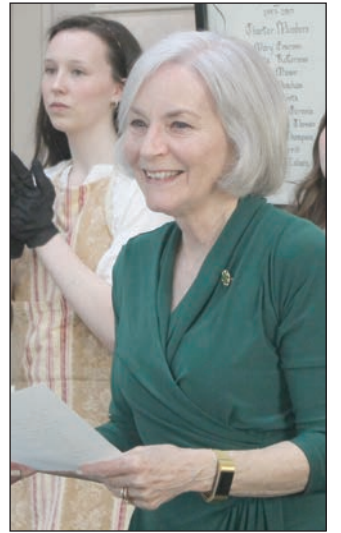
The event reflected the church's mix of hospitality, volunteerism and community engagement; combining a home-cooked meal, local music and handcrafted raffle items into a fundraiser that also served as a social gathering for Monson-area residents.



A quilt made by Roseanne Vincigurra for a raffle was showcased.



Attendees settled at tables, with bread being served before the meal.



Suzanne Kelley delivered an introductory speech.

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy



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