

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Market Spotlight

An apiary from Charlton and a bakery from Monson

Editor's note: The Quaboag Current will regularly feature a spotlight story on different farmers market vendors. Learn about the people that bring food and locally sourced items to your community.

Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – Early afternoon, Wednesday, Jan. 29 saw a vigorous snow squall descend on West Brookfield. As quickly as we started to think, “boy, are we in for it,” it was over and the sun returned, though slightly overcast. The temperature moderated and it was going to be a wonderful afternoon to mosey on down to the Winter Farmers’ Market at The First Congregational Church, 36 North Main St. from 3-6 p.m.

There was something a bit different this Wednesday. Joy Hinton, impresario of Joy of Beans Coffee, is the manager of the market and has provided vendors and shoppers with a variety of recorded music, mostly great jazz. On the 29th Heavygrass came to play. It was the string duo of Ron Garceau and Jeff Robbins entertaining the shoppers. we moved around the market, and as is typical on Wednesday, the usual suspects were present. One could procure delicious foods and vegetables from our region. Across the hall from the entrance and back again for another year at the Winter Farmers Market is Kelly Homestead Apiary. It is wonderful to have beekeepers at a market, but that is only the start of what this operation located in Charlton



Faith and Ginger are shown at the Kelly Homestead Apiary table. TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY

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Library hosts artwork by Christopher Bowen



An acrylic on cardstock portrait called “Elaine 1” which Christopher Bowen admitted took him several tries to try to match the rendering of the human face. TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Merriam-Gilbert Public Library in West Brookfield hosted an art exhibit featuring the work of Christopher Bowen. Bowen, who lives in West Brookfield, had some of his art showcased at the library throughout the month of January and displayed an interesting form of art. Bowen’s artwork comes in the form of the

See ARTWORK | PAGE 8



The Clam Box has officially opened at its new location at the former EB Flatts restaurant. TURLEY PHOTO BY ABBY MCCOY

The Clam Box grand reopening goes swimmingly

By Abby McCoy
Correspondent

EAST BROOKFIELD – After more than 70 years of serving seafood lovers, The Clam Box is back, with a new location and a vibrant new look that promises to keep the restaurant’s beloved legacy alive for many years to come. Cindy and Tim Dugas, the dynamic couple behind the family-owned restaurant, celebrated the grand reopening of The Clam Box on Jan. 28, marking an exciting new chapter for this iconic Massachusetts eatery.

The move to a new location was driven by a combination

of renovation challenges and property line issues at the old building. The Dugas family discovered discrepancies in the property boundaries that cut through their parking lot, complicating the restaurant’s future in the original space. “We chose to change the building to add another 75 years onto the business’s life,” Cindy Dugas said, emphasizing the importance of ensuring the restaurant’s longevity.

Thankfully, a solution presented itself just down the road. The owners of EB Flatts, a nearby restaurant, were looking to retire and approached the Dugas family with an offer

See CLAM BOX | PAGE 12

Superintendent presents proposed FY 26 school budget

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Superintendent Timothy McCormick presented the proposed fiscal year 2026 operating budget to the School Committee.

“This is the first draft,” McCormick said at the Jan. 27 meeting. “This is a like a draft budget that will evolve.”

To develop the proposed budget, McCormick said he followed three guiding principles, including budget accuracy and transparency, inclusive

See BUDGET | PAGE 6

Quaboag Hills chamber hosted Baystate CEO at breakfast

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN – Last Tuesday morning, the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce

hosted its Chamber Breakfast at Christopher Heights of Belchertown, with guest speaker Peter Banko, president and CEO of Baystate Health.

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Baystate Health President and CEO Peter Banko was the guest speaker at the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce’s breakfast held at Christopher Heights of Belchertown on Jan. 28. TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA OUIMETTE

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2025 North Pond Ice-Out Contest is underway

BROOKFIELD – As winter lingers, anticipation for spring grows, and with it comes the 2025 North Pond Ice-Out Contest, hosted by the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association.

It's time to have a little bit of fun at nature's expense and predict when you think the ice will melt enough to send Norpondapus, the QQLA lake monster, back into North Pond.

After a couple of false starts in previous years due to lack of ice, QQLA's legendary Norpondapus has finally taken its place on the frozen surface of North Pond near the Quaboag boat ramp. When the ice weakens enough for the lake monster to break through, its fall will trigger a timing mechanism that will officially mark the "ice-out" moment – and determine the contest's winners.

The general public is invited to predict the exact date and time when Norpondapus will make its descent. The contestant whose guess is closest – without exceeding the actual recorded time – will claim first place, winning 30% of the proceeds. Additional prizes

will be awarded to second and third place winners, earning 20% and 10% of proceeds, respectively.

Prizes will grow depending on the number of entrants.

The remaining 40% of proceeds will benefit the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association's mission of preserving and protecting the quality of the two lakes (better known as North and South Ponds) and the surrounding watershed through the promotion of responsible, effective, environmental policies.

Entries must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on Feb. 13. The official ice-out period runs from Feb. 15 to April 13, and only one ticket is available for each unique 15-minute time interval. Each guess costs \$5 per interval, and there is no limit to the number of guesses a participant can purchase.

To enter, participants can visit qqla.org/ice-out to select their chosen date and time. After choosing a "Golden Ticket" for a specific date, entrants will use a dropdown menu to pick a 15-minute interval, provide their contact information, and finalize their entry through the online shopping cart.

Will you be the one to predict when Norpondapus takes the plunge? Get your entry in before the Feb. 13 deadline and join in on the fun. For additional information and full contest rules, visit the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association website at qqla.org or email event chair, Bill Seabourne at billc-born@gmail.com.



The deadline to submit a guess in the Quaboag Quacumquasit Lake Association North Pond Ice-Out Contest is Feb. 13. SUBMITTED PHOTO



PHONE
413.967.3505
Fax: 413.967.6009
Subscriptions: 413.283.8393

EMAIL
Advertising Sales
Dan Flynn
dflynn@turley.com

Tim Mara
tmara@turley.com

Editor
Paula Ouimette
pouimette@turley.com

WEB
www.quaboagcurrent.turley.com

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QHMA invites public to Bingo Night fundraiser

PALMER – The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, the non-profit organization that promotes business and development within surrounding communities of Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester counties, has announced its Handbag & Hand Tool Bingo Night fundraiser.

The event will take place on Friday, March 21 at AMVETS Post 74 in Three Rivers. The Chamber will produce 10 exciting bingo rounds, each with a grand prize featuring one of seven designer handbags or one of three premium tools up for grabs.

"The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to provide a fun filled and inclusive night out for all, while highlighting local businesses who sponsor the grand prizes," said James Przypek, Chief Executive Officer for the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce. "The Chamber was poised to launch its first bingo event in 2020 until COVID related gathering restrictions caused the Chamber to postpone its plans, which has given us a chance to regroup and put together an even bigger and better event than originally planned."

Tickets can be purchased on QHMA.com. The registration fee is \$40 per person and includes 10 bingo cards, bingo dauber, delicious snack platters, bonus raffle ticket and a cash bar.

Proceeds from the bingo event will benefit the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce and its on-going mission to assist its more than two-hundred member businesses succeed and grow with programs and initiatives throughout the year.

About the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce

Established in 1978 and headquartered in Palmer, the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce's purpose is to advance economic growth, interests and tourism for our members through policies, programs and development in the Quaboag Hills region, including the 15 towns of Belchertown, Brimfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holland, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Palmer, Spencer, Wales, Ware, Warren and West Brookfield.

- community -

Historical Commission announces 2025 scholarship

WEST BROOKFIELD – The West Brookfield Historical Commission is pleased to announce its 2025, 14th annual scholarship in the amount of \$2,000.

Qualified students must reside in West Brookfield and may attend Quaboag Regional High School, or be school-choice students, home schooled students, and independent school students.

This award is made possible through the J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust.

Application criteria

The students must be planning to attend either a four-year college/university program or a two-year college with the intent to a transfer to a four-year college. The commission will show preference to study plans with concentration

on history and history-related areas. Major or minors may include political science, social studies, anthropology, archaeology, historical preservation, museum studies, and education in any of these related fields.

Applicants must submit a brief essay based on one of the Notable Persons or Significant Places listed on the application. All necessary information will be found on the West Brookfield Historical Commission website. <http://westbrookfield.org>.

Essays are due no later than April 11 by email to info@westbrookfield.org or mail to West Brookfield Historical Commission, P.O. Box 372, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

The application and details can be found on the Historical Commission website- <http://westbrookfield.org>.

Nomination papers for town elections available

WARREN/WEST BROOKFIELD – The Town Clerks' of Warren, Laura Stockley, and West Brookfield, Heather Gough, announce that nomination papers are available for the Annual Town Election, which will be held on Tuesday, May 6.

Office hours in the town of Warren are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. and Thursday from 1-6 p.m.; and for the town of West

Brookfield, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Quaboag Regional School Committee nomination papers will be available for pick up on Tuesday, Feb. 4 at the Quaboag Regional Middle High School front office between the hours of 8 a.m.-3 p.m. School Committee positions open are: two members from Warren for a three-year term and two members from West Brookfield for a three-year term.

Medicare 101 educational event set for March 13

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The North Brookfield Senior Center will be hosting an educational presentation on Thursday, March 13 at 11 a.m. at the senior center located at 29 Forest St., for current beneficiaries and for those who will soon be eligible for Medicare.

The information is specific to Massachusetts. The session will run approximately one hour, including time for questions.

The presentation will be conducted by Ed Spater, a licensed Insurance agent, who will explain the basics of Medicare including:

- Why it's important to evaluate your current Medicare coverage each year
- The pros and cons of each of your Medicare coverage options
- What to consider when deciding which Medicare coverage option is right for you
- Ways to save money and get better Medicare coverage in 2024

For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings call 774-271-5199 or 711 for TTY callers.

Trustees introduce new library director

It may have taken us a while, but we're delighted to have hired a capable, energetic, and well-rounded Library Director, Lia Tulip.

Lia grew up in Somerville, a city 4-5 miles northwest of Boston.

As a young girl, she was an avid reader. She was particularly drawn to children's historical fiction. As little kids often do, Lia thought about what she wanted to be when she grew up.

Her first thought was that she would like to be a paleontologist. She had a really nice dinosaur collection, headlined by "Steggy," her pet stegosaurus. Then, after a visit to a local museum with mummies, tombs, and pyramids, Lia decided to be an Egyptologist so she could study everything related with Egypt.

Next, she considered becoming a cardiologist. She loved looking at books that showed how the human body worked. This may have been encouraged by Lia's accompanying her grandmother to many medical appointments.

Once Lia began her high school years, she was drawn to theater. Her love of theater still burns brightly today.

She participated in track and field events, specializing in running sprints and throwing the javelin. Despite her busy schedule, Lia worked at the Somerville Public Library as a new book processor. She discovered that she enjoyed working with young adults, in particular.

Perhaps this job kindled a keen interest in public libraries that would grow over the next several years.

Lia began her undergraduate educa-

tion at Emmanuel College in Boston. At first, she was unsure about what she wanted to pursue. She began to study journalism, but soon decided that wasn't for her.

Lia knew that she loved theater and books, so she switched her focus to writing and literature with a concentration in theater arts. Lia flourished. She participated in acting and costume design while on campus. As a senior, she directed the college play, "The Importance of Being Earnest".

For the past 15 years, Lia and her three children have lived in North Brookfield. She homeschooled all three throughout their elementary years. They are now attending North Brookfield Junior-Senior High School.

Her oldest will graduate in June. Her middle child plays basketball. Her youngest has a lot of interests, especially dancing.

With such a busy schedule, it's hard to imagine that Lia can find time for her own interests, but she does. She loves to bake. Gluten-free is her specialty. She loves outdoor activities such as kayaking and fishing in nearby lakes. She enjoys hiking, foraging for mushrooms, and tending her vegetable garden.

Lia is very excited about becoming our new Director. She states, "I love the idea about creating a space where everyone feels welcome and supported... This feels like a great opportunity to make a difference in a place I truly care about."

We feel so too, Lia. Welcome aboard!

Peg Bodine,
Chair Haston Library Trustees



Lia Tulip is the new Library Director at the Haston Free Public Library. SUBMITTED PHOTO



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'Spring' into action with these tasks

The groundhog determined we would have six more weeks of winter. Is that really a surprise to anyone?

I mean, as I write, it is only Feb. 2. But we gardeners are an impatient lot, and we so want to get our hands back into the soft earth.

There are many tasks, albeit those that are behind the scenes, that can be done now, so that when warmer weather does arrive, we can "spring" into action.

Take inventory

Last month I talked a lot about prepping for indoor seed starting, first by taking inventory of our seeds and then gathering the necessary supplies that go along with that task. But what about our outdoor ventures?

I have been busy shopping around for new IRT mulch, greenhouse supplies and amendments. How are you set on lime, grass seed, and fertilizers?

Plan to take advantage of preseason sales by knowing what you need ahead of time. Also, assess the condition of your tools. Is your rototiller working its best? Mine needs to be serviced.

By taking it to the repairman now, I'll beat the spring rush and avoid having to turn the garden over by hand! The same goes for lawn mower blades. Have these sharpened yearly for the healthiest possible turf.

Practice good garden hygiene

Regularly inspect summer bulbs that have been stored away for the winter. Throw away any that are rotten or moldy.

If you find a lot of these, consider moving what is left to a drier location. On the other hand, dahlia tubers will shrivel when conditions get too dry, mist them with clean water to rehydrate.

It is also a good idea to take a close look at vegetables in storage. Squash with signs of rot can be cooked and the flesh frozen for later use. Sprouts that appear on potatoes should be rubbed off and used before they soften.

Experiment with onions that have sprouted by planting them outside once the ground thaws. This vegetable is a biennial and will produce seed during its second season.

If the sprouts come from an heirloom or open pollinated variety, save a few seeds come July and start them this time next year! In the seedling stage, onions thrive on ample nitrogen to develop thick tops that will feed what we hope are big bulbs.

Perform appropriate garden chores

I am usually negligent in cutting down asparagus foliage in the fall. Weather permitting I will get out there and cut it back to its base soon, then haul off the branches to prevent any bugs that overwintered there from infesting this year's spears.

It is also time to prune blueberries, apples and grapes. Pruning can vary depending on the age and health of your specimens. If you are not experienced at it, consult any number of good books on the subject before you head outdoors with your pruning shears and loppers.

Do make sure your tools are sharp, and if there is any hint of disease, be sure to disinfect in between cuts or at least in between specimens. If any of your fruit trees have old fruit, called "mummies" hanging from the branches, be sure to get rid of them for

- opinion -



Guest Column

Political differences divide family and friends

Let's answer the question, "Why would you shun friends and even family because of their political beliefs?"

If you are on the far Right, you talk about "freedom," a lot. But, you only talk about your freedom.

Whatever makes you feel uncomfortable is suddenly not okay because it upsets your sense of freedom.

You don't want gay people to marry because it upsets your freedom. You don't want to wear a mask for your or other's protection because you don't like it. You don't want people to be anything other than your adaptation of a Christian. You don't want trans people to have rights because you, what, don't believe they're real?

You don't want immigrants to come to your country because, well, fill in the blank with mostly made-up lies and half-truths that have no statistical basis in historical fact. You don't want to serve LGBTQIA folks at your business because they violate your religious beliefs. You don't want to "allow" women to have rights to their own body because they might make a decision that you don't condone. You don't want people of color because they...? You don't want Jews because...? And so it goes.

For you, freedom is only about you and your needs. However, that is and will never be true freedom, because true freedom can-

not exist in a world of selfishness.

Real freedom cannot exist unless it is open to all. That is the ideal that the best of America's founders saw. It is the written inscription on the pedestal of Lady Liberty who marked the gateway to hope for millions and still stands as a symbol for what could be.

So, here's the answer to your question. It is the thing that we on the Left struggle with the hardest because it goes against the fiber of our being. You see, empathy is at the core of what we believe. So, ending a relationship of any kind, and especially a friendship or family relationship is crushing.

However, you really force us to make a choice between your right to discriminate and their right to just be. "They" are equal in our eyes and some of them are personal friends to us as well. So, either we let you go or we live a lie when we say we care about them.

And now? Now, you expect us to simply watch as those people we care about are beginning to live in a world where they not only no longer have freedom but their very lives are in danger because of the reality you have brought on them? Yeah, as painful as it is, that is the reason we are no longer...close.

Eric von Bleicken
West Brookfield

A starlit hike in the White Mountains

By Julie Midura
Correspondent

This was our final hike of 2024. It was 5:15 a.m., and we were lying on our backs staring up at the stars, cocooned in our bright green two-person down sleeping bag atop several feet of snow on the wide open summit of Mount Jackson in New Hampshire.

The sun was still two hours from cresting the distant horizon. It was dead calm, but bitterly cold.

In spite of donning every layer in my winter arsenal, I shivered and snuggled closer to Tom as I gathered the excess fabric of the bag as close to my body as I could.

We had arrived at the trailhead parking lot almost three hours before. It was 0 degrees when we stepped out of our SUV and opened the back hatch to retrieve our backpacks.

In a split second of hesitation, I questioned our sanity. "Who in their right mind



A visit from the infamous Grey Jays, with Mount Washington in the distance.

OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length, and guest columns between 500 and 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 authenticate 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.

Send opinions to:

Letters to the Editor, 80 Main Street, Ware, MA 01082 OR e-mail to pouimette@turley.com. Deadline for submission is Monday at noon for the following week's edition.

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PATRICK H. TURLEY
CEO

KEITH TURLEY
President

EDITOR
Paula Ouimette
pouimette@turley.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Dan Flynn
Tim Mara

SPORTS EDITOR
Greg Scibelli
sports@turley.com

SOCIAL MEDIA



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**Quaboag Current
Newspaper**

- community -

HIKING | FROM PAGE 4

climbs a mountain in the pitch black of night in these ungodly temperatures just to see the sun rise?" Then I immediately thought, "Too late now. We dropped the motel key in the drop box a half hour ago in the dead of night, so we'll be climbing this mountain whether I want to or not."

As we moved upward along the snaking path, the beams of light from our headlamps danced between the snow covered trees, creating an aura of mystery as the long shadows stretched deep into the blackened forest. Our headlamps ignited the untouched snow on the sides of the trail, giving the illusion of walking on a smooth white carpet of infinite shimmering diamonds.

When we finally broke tree line, the crescent moon and twinkling stars welcomed us to a dark and windless summit. I stood, unmoving, serenaded by the whisper of starlight in the heavens above me.

Eight years of hiking in every sea-

son. Numerous hiking lists. Thousands of miles. Climbing the second tallest mountain in the continental United States. Section hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Every hike. Every backpacking trip. Every footprint left on every mountain.

Each one propelling us forward to the next...eventually leading us to this singular unforgettable moment.

A moment of being suspended in time, somewhere between our very first hike and what will someday be our very last. Suspended between the valley below and the heavens above while basking under the brilliance of a million twinkling stars against the backdrop of a black velvet sky, while waiting for the sun to awaken the earth in a blaze of fiery brilliance.

And although we hope that we'll have the opportunity to experience a moment like this again, we've learned the hard way that there are no guarantees in this life.



Snuggled in our sleeping bags on our snowy perch.



Watching the sunrise from the summit of Mount Jackson, New Hampshire.

So we settle in for however long it takes. We inhale the clean mountain air. We feel the cold kiss our cheeks and the silence fill our ears. We wait for the sun to silence the stars and breathe life onto the earth.

We remain snuggled in our lofty bright green sleeping bag on a snowy perch atop a 4,000-foot mountain for over four hours, unwilling to leave lest we miss one single minute of the magic

that is unfolding in front of us.

And as we watch the black of night turn into the blazing red of dawn, we know that for the rest of our lives, for as long as there is breath in our lungs and blood running through our veins...we will never forget this moment.

See you in the wild places, my friends!

To read more about our hiking adventures, follow us on Instagram @ morethanthemountain.


GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

fear of overwintering pests.

Hang tight

Winter will be gone soon enough. Come out of hibernation and accomplish pre-season gardening tasks now, before the spring rush but also remember that this is a season of rest and taking care of yourself is a good thing too.


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



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BUDGET | FROM PAGE 1

planning and resource management.

"This is a starting point...we have several months to go," he said, prior to the budget being approved at town meeting.

McCormick outlined the school district's strategic objectives to build the budget: curriculum and instruction enhancement, meeting the needs of all students and fostering a sense of belonging.

McCormick said he is recommending an \$8,227,837.31 FY 26 budget, which is a 17% increase over the prior year's approved budget. The three major drivers of the budget continue to be special education increases, salary increases and additional costs for all transportation.

Salaries are projected to account for 69.4% of the total FY 26 budget and 29.9% of the total increase.

"You can see that salaries are the bulk of our entire budget here," he said.

Special education costs, which account for \$1,747,887.69 of the FY 26 budget, are expected to decrease by just over \$50,000 over last year's figures. Transportation is expected to increase by 11% over last year.

"This process is just the beginning," McCormick said. "The work we've outlined today serves as the foundation for a collaborative, ongoing effort. Together we'll refine, adapt, and build upon these ideas to meet the evolving needs of our students, staff and

community."

The School Committee members encouraged any residents interested or concerned with the school district's budget to attend upcoming meetings or to email them.

Administrators' reports

High School Principal John Diorio said following the holiday break, students have participated in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports lessons, which are tied to the high school's "portrait of a graduate" which was developed by staff last year.

"We're focusing on positive behaviors in classrooms, hallways and lunchroom," Diorio said. "Each week, the grades will compete to be the PBIS champions for the week as voted on by our staff."

He said on Feb. 6, juniors and seniors will tour Flaxon in Spencer as part of the school district's Innovative Pathways program. He said this is the second year of the program, which provides students with the opportunity to complete a paid internship with the manufacturer and set them up for full-time employment after graduation.

On March 11, the high school will have over 25 different companies speak with students during a career day. On March 25 at 6 p.m., the school will host its first ever STEAM night.

Director of Student Services Amy Emory said preschool teachers participated in an early literacy training session, which is designed for young children.

"It's a great opportunity for our youngest students to be exposed to literacy and build those foundational skills," she said.

Student Council update

Student Representative Dante Giangrande said Unity Week will take place the week prior to February break.

"This event will be used to enhance our sense of community as a school, and show support for all different types of people from members of the LGBTQ+ community to the people with special needs," he said.

Giangrande said the Student Council is preparing for the annual spring conference in Hyannis March 4-7.

Recognitions

McCormick recognized Sue Lewandowski and Hearts for Heat, along with school staff, for their efforts to hold a successful fundraiser dinner at the elementary school over the weekend.

"Very nice night, good fundraiser for those who need support with fuel assistance for the winter," he said.

1937 yearbook

McCormick said he received a yearbook in the mail for North Brookfield High School's Class of 1937. He asked the School Committee members where they would like to display the yearbook.

"It's a nice piece of North Brookfield history," he said.

BREAKFAST | FROM PAGE 1

Chamber CEO James Przypek opened the event by acknowledging and thanking the event's presenting sponsor, Superior Plus Propane, and underwriters Country Bank, J. Stolar Insurance Agency, Monson Savings Bank, Behavioral Health Network, Christopher Heights of Belchertown and Westfield Bank.

Przypek also welcomed state Rep. Todd Smola to speak at the breakfast, sharing an update about the climate of state and local government, and the importance of having access to healthcare and how the closure of Mary Lane Hospital in Ware has affected the region.

"We're very much impacted by the closure of that facility," Smola said.

Smola also spoke about the importance of the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce and its support of local businesses.

"The chamber is strong," Smola said, crediting Przypek for the chamber's continued growth.

Przypek then welcomed Banko, who recently pledged to identify a space in Ware to house a Convenient Care facility, staffed with up to three physicians.

"We think about healthcare a lot," Przypek said, referencing staff shortages, the COVID-19 pandemic, rising prescription costs and hospital closures. "It's a statewide and national condition."

Banko, who is the fourth CEO for Baystate Health and the first to be hired from the outside, spoke about Baystate Health's role as an academic medical center and its affiliation with the UMass Chen Medical School. He said Baystate Health also invests about \$50 million in research.

"We've got a lot of great physicians," Banko said, adding that Baystate Health provides a "community safety net" through behavioral health services and more.

"If you can't get it at Baystate, you're likely going to Boston," he said.

Banko spoke about some of the changes that have occurred at Baystate Health since he took over its leadership in June of 2024, including the decision to keep its not-for-profit health insurer Health New England, after its \$165 million sale to Point32Health was announced in February of 2024.

Bank said Baystate Health is planning to invest in Health New England.

"The intent is to grow it," Banko said of Health New England.

Banko noted the "intense pride and loyalty" found within Baystate Health, but how it has faced many challenges including financial strains and meeting the needs of an aging and declining population.

"Massachusetts is a tough state to operate in," he said. "We've had our financial challenges here over the last three years."

Banko said the 65+ community is growing, and more so the 75+ and 85+, all of which presents unique challenges to healthcare.

"The older you get, the more likely you are to have a chronic condition," he said.

Banko touched on some of the areas where Baystate Health needs to improve, including increasing outpatient services and keeping current with the digital age of healthcare.

Baystate Health has also embarked on a financial journey, which Banko said is "causing us to make a lot of tough decisions."

He said this includes selling assets, such as Baystate Health's laboratory to Labcorp in 2024, and the now reversed decision to sell Health New England.

Banko said Baystate Health is looking at fixing its financial situation to the tune of \$225-250 million over the next few years, adding that two-thirds of its expenses are its staffing. He said part of the plan is to look at corporate overhead.

The closure of Mary Lane Hospital in Ware was "an unfortunate situation," Banko said, with about

30% of small hospitals at risk of closing nationwide.

"We've been working since August or September to try and get healthcare back [in Ware], Banko said.

Banko said while Baystate Health is looking at possible sites in Ware, there may also be some opportunity to do something with the Wetherby building on the Mary Lane Hospital campus.

"The primary focus is we're looking for a site that doesn't take a lot of work to get in," he said.

Opposition to Baystate Health's presence in town from the Friends of Mary Lane Hospital has resulted in a cease and desist being served to that organization's leadership, Banko said.

"We should be working together," he said.

Banko said Baystate Health has work to do within its hospitals and clinics, with strategic planning ongoing since this past October.

"Access is our biggest opportunity," Banko said. "Access and coordinating care. We've got access issues...there aren't enough providers."

Banko talked about the wait time to see a provider, including an average of eight months for a primary care physician, nine months for a dermatologist and one year for a procedure such as a colonoscopy.

Because of these waits, Baystate Health is losing a lot of commercial insurance patients to medical facilities in Boston.

"We need to make sure you don't have to leave the community to get care," he said.

Banko also addressed Baystate Medical Center's "D" rating from The Leapfrog Group.

"We want to be a great place for our physicians and staff to work," he said.

Banko said Baystate Health is also focusing on growing its specialty care, including oncology, cardiovascular care, neurosciences, orthopedics and rehabilitation. This includes moving many of these specialties from Baystate Medical Center back to the community hospitals.

"The intent is, we've got capacity at Wing [hospital] that we need to be utilizing," he said.

Banko also talked about improving ties with local school districts to train students for gateway positions in the healthcare field.

"We're going to have to grow our own workforce, and we've got that opportunity," he said.

About QHMA

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce was established in 1978 to assist businesses in the Quaboag Hills Region, serving the towns of Belchertown, Brimfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holland, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Palmer, Spencer, Wales, Ware, Warren, and West Brookfield.

Its mission is to advance economic growth and tourism in the region, to be an advocate for policies that achieve the development goals of the communities, and to advance the interests of its members.

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce offers more than just networking opportunities. It helps the business community from the smallest entrepreneurs to the largest corporations; through trainings, seminars, and more.

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce is located at 4 Springfield St., Suite 525, Three Rivers. For more information, visit qhma.com, call 413-283-2418 or email info@qhma.com.



Saturday, February 8 ~ 8pm-12am

0-7 Band

Wednesday Nights ~ 7pm-10pm

Mix Tape Music Bingo/Prizes!

Friday Nights ~ 8pm-11pm

Karaoke

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February 9



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- community -

Local author presents writing/publishing workshop on March 9

WEST BROOKFIELD – “Everyone has a story to tell,” said award-winning author Ed Londergan.

His ninth annual creative writing and publishing workshop will be held on Sunday, March 9, from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Salem Cross Inn.

“The writing workshop aims to help those who want to write but don’t know where to start or who have had an idea for a story that’s been bubbling in their head for years and finally want to put it on paper. I also help people who have written something and need to know how to move ahead,” said Londergan, who provides a full day of information.

“The workshop will cover the entire process of writing and publishing, including idea development and sources of inspiration, drawing from storytelling traditions, developing the story, structure, and flow, conceiving and bringing characters to life, dialogue, editing, short fiction, writer’s block, and the publishing process,” Londergan said. “The publishing process can be confusing and frustrating. I’ll take the group through the various publishing options available. There will also be some fun writing exercises.”

Past workshops have been attended by people of all ages and occupations, from 12-year-old students to 75-year-old retirees.

“Five attendees have written books and had them published while others have had stories and articles placed in various publications,” said Londergan.

“One of the things past attendees have enjoyed and learned from is the writing exercises,” Londergan said. “The writing exercises this year are different than what I’ve done in the past. I enjoy seeing the creative ideas that come out of them.”

“Back-and-forth discussion is always a popular part of the day. Attendees learn from each other. Individual issues or problems anyone has with their writing are discussed, and the group helps them with suggestions and observations. At times, a lot of ‘here’s what happened to me, and here’s what I did,’” he said.

The workshop is limited to 14 participants. The cost is \$110, and lunch is included.

Registration is required, and the deadline is Febr. 28. To register, email ed.londergan@gmail.com or call 508-864-8685.

Names sought of craftswomen who made 1991 town quilt

WARREN – The Warren Town Quilt has come out of its resting place and is now hanging in a brand new case on a wall at the Shepard Municipal Building.

A celebration of its being hung in this beautifully crafted case will be scheduled in a few weeks.

A plaque is planned to list all the craftswomen who worked on the quilt to celebrate the Town’s 250th Anniversary in 1991. If you, or someone you know (or knew), worked on the Warren Town Quilt in 1991, please contact Historical Commission Chair, Sylvia G. Buck sgibuck37@verizon.net and include a telephone number at which you can be reached. Use “Warren Town Quilt” in the subject line to verify your intent.

Quaboag hosts annual craft and small business fair Feb. 8

WARREN – Quaboag Regional Middle High School, 284 Old West Brookfield Road, is bringing back its annual Craft & Small Business Fair on Saturday, Feb. 8 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

With Valentine’s Day fast approaching, this fair is a perfect opportunity to shop local and get some gifts for your loved ones. This annual fair is hosted by Quaboag’s Student Council.

The fair has free admission and features over 80 local crafters and small business vendors that will be set up all across the halls of Quaboag. There will also be concessions available.

The fair will also feature raffle tables with numerous prizes available. Proceeds from the raffle will go towards the Student Council’s MASC Leadership conference in Hyannis.

EQLT to host ‘Kids’ Wonder Workshop’ on Feb. 20

HARDWICK – The East Quabbin Land Trust will host a Kids’ Wonder Workshop during school vacation week, on Feb. 20 from 1-3 p.m., at EQLT’s office, 120 Ridge Road.

Open to children of all ages, activities will be held indoors and outside and include:

Sap to Syrup – a demonstration of a small-scale “backwoods approach” to selecting and tapping a tree, drawing sap and creating syrup.

Exploring the Forest Play Trail – the Forest Play Trail, created for elementary-aged children, is a discovery trail near the EQLT office that kids can visit anytime, year-round.

Rock Painting – after discovering and gaining inspiration from the Kindness Rocks along the Forest Play Trail, children will have the opportunity to paint their own Kindness Rocks to take home.

Who Goes There? Animal Tracks & Wildlife Sign – see and learn about various animal tracks and specimens indoors, then head outside to look for animal tracks and other wildlife sign.

S’mores Making – creating these timeless treats over an open, outdoor fire. Other healthy snacks will also be available.

The outdoor activities will be held on the hillside

next to the EQLT office in both wooded and open grassy areas. Children should have sturdy, warm footwear, be dressed for the weather...and bring their curiosity!

Please RSVP to atrevvett@eqlt.org if you would like to attend. In the event of inclement weather, the Kids’ Wonder Workshop will be moved to the following day, Feb. 21, from 1-3 p.m.

About the East Quabbin Land Trust

The East Quabbin Land Trust fosters a meaningful relationship with the natural world by conserving, connecting with and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts.

Celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2024, EQLT was formed in 1994 out of concern for the loss of farmland and wildlife habitat to unplanned sprawl in and around Hardwick. Since 1998, EQLT has expanded its protection efforts to Barre, Petersham, New Braintree, North Brookfield, and other nearby towns.

By working cooperatively with property owners, government agencies, conservation groups and other land trust organizations, EQLT has been able to protect over 6,200 acres in the region.

The Joy of Chess at the Joy of Beans Feb. 15

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Saturday, Feb. 15 chess will be in session in West Brookfield at the Joy of Beans at 12 East Main St.

At 3 p.m. experts, rank amateurs and anyone in between is welcome to seek a game. Joy of Beans is mostly known for that morning cup of gourmet coffee, but it will be available if one needs caffeine to up their game.

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

We invite you to join us Friday afternoons from 1-2:30 pm to explore these topics and more.

This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

Please contact **Pat James 413-726-8661.**

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TOWN OF BARRE Cemetery Clerk

The Town of Barre is seeking qualified applicants for the part-time position of Cemetery Clerk. This position is approximately 10 hours per week and the minimum hourly rate is \$15.00/hour and the maximum hourly rate is \$18.02/hour. A full job description is available upon request. Applicants must have HS Diploma or GED, with a minimum of two to three years' experience in office setting, or equivalent combination of education and experience.

Interested applicants should submit a letter of interest to: Tammy Martin, Town Administrator, 40 West Street, Suite 697, Barre MA 01005 or townadmin@townofbarre.com. For further information, please contact the Board of Selectmen's Office at (978) 355-2504 x135. A.A. / E.O.E.

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ARTWORK | FROM PAGE 1



Theo 1 who found these glasses would forever be remembered in the form of a painting.



Evan 1 with a different facial expression that was captured on a piece of cardboard that Christopher Bowen reused to form an interesting medium. Evan is one of Bowen's nephews.

interior of cardboard boxes and cereal boxes with paint on the inside. A lot of Bowen's work featured acrylic on cardstock.

Bowen began painting back in 2019 and has always considered this art form his hobby. The art behind this cardstock began as photographs of residents of Brookhaven Assisted Care and then turned them into cardstock portraits.

There were a total of 29 pieces of art designed by Bowen.

Most of the pieces were portraits of Brookhaven residents and some featured family members of Bowen and a couple notables and celebrities. Bowen did a portrait of Charlie Chaplin in his chosen art medium.

This was the first time Bowen had an art exhibit highlighting his work. When seeing it for the first time in public, Bowen's reaction was "this feels so real."

Having this experience gives Bowen the desire to do more. One of his goals is to reach out to other senior facilities similar to Brookhaven and do more portraits of senior citizens.

For Bowen, the best part about creating this artwork is meeting new people and hearing their stories. Through this experience at Brookhaven, Bowen thought it would be nice to do portraits of them and reuse the cardboard from cereal boxes and other cardboard boxes.

Bowen recalls one portrait that

took several tries. His portrait titled "Elaine 1" is a portrait of a friend of Bowen's mother and he wanted to do a better job to make the portrait more realistic and mirrors the photo he took of Elaine.

"Rendering of the human face" is how Bowen describes it. Some of the portraits also included a photograph of the resident and a written biography about the resident in the portrait.

Bowen said painting is a very relaxing hobby and plans to continue painting and use cardstock as part of his art medium.

Bowen has worked in the media production industry since the late 1990s. He has been a cinematographer, Avid Technology corporate trainer, video editor, and tenured university professor.

Bowen has his own visual media content creator service, Blamm Media Enterprises, which he established in 2023 with his wife Emily Klamm. For more information, visit <https://blammmedia.com>. Blamm Media can be contacted by calling 617-596-9613 or emailing contact@blammmedia.com.

The next art exhibit at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library will be featuring the work of Lynn Wrona and her oil and pastel paintings of West Brookfield and surrounding towns. Visit the library at 3 West Main St. or visit www.westbrookfieldlibrary.org for more information.



The photos and art also featured biographies of some of the residents. Here is a photo of Tom and his story.



Sal 1 is an acrylic on cardstock first made in December of 2023.



Oil pastels on paper created by Christopher Bowen, who had his art displayed at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library in West Brookfield. The far right is an acrylic and graphite portrait of Charlie Chaplin on a cardstock background. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



Old Man 1 designed by Christopher Bowen of West Brookfield.



Christopher Bowen also featured photographs of residents from Brookhaven Assisted Care and would then paint a portrait of that photo on cardstock or pieces of cardboard.



These art pieces are based off real people that Christopher Bowen had the pleasure of meeting and hearing their stories.



The exhibit at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library featured 29 art pieces by Christopher Bowen.



An acrylic on cardstock of George 4 next to a photo of George with his brief biography.

sports@turley.com

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SPORTS

One win to make tournament for the Panthers



Jaxon Warburton shoves a pass toward the center of the court.

BARRE – Last Friday night, the Quabbin Regional High School boys basketball team scored its eighth win of the season 64-49. The Panthers are now 8-4 and need just one win in order to automatically qualify for the Division 4 state tournament. The Panthers were at Lunenburg last Friday night and next face Hudson High School on the road Friday, Feb. 7 at 7 p.m.



Quinn Geary looks to drive the lane.



Brady Patchen gets through the defense and heads into the lane.



Kyle Clark takes a free throw.



Anthony Quarterone rears back to make a pass. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Gardner bests Agawam in independent matchup

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

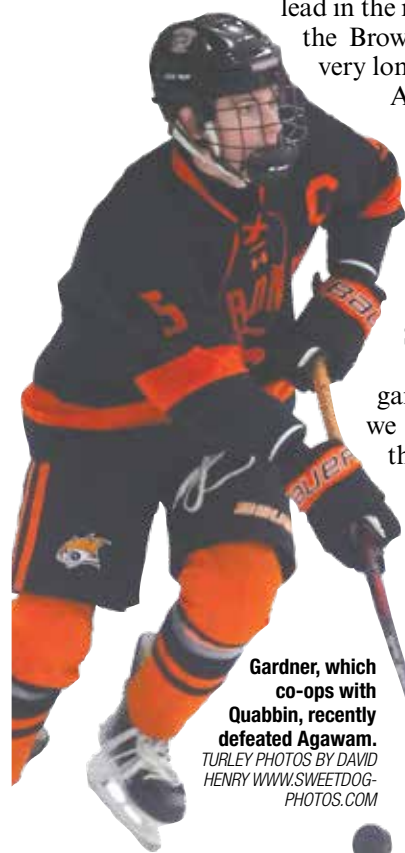
WEST SPRINGFIELD—The non-conference high school hockey game between Gardner and Agawam had as many twists and turns in it as one of the roller coasters at the Six Flags Amusement Park.

Agawam, who trailed by two goals twice, managed to take the lead in the middle of the third period, but the Brownies didn't keep the lead for very long.

After tying the score for the third time, the visitors from Northern Worcester County netted the go-ahead goal on a power-play with 47 seconds left in regulation, giving them a 6-5 victory at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield, Saturday, Jan. 25.

"We didn't play our best game of the season tonight, but we still had a chance to win it in the third period," said Agawam head coach Todd Rowley. "We took the lead before losing our top three scorers."

The Brownies played the final 1:46 of the third period without seniors Landon Ashford, Cole Buffum, and Aiden Pisano. The trio were sent to the



Gardner, which co-ops with Quabbin, recently defeated Agawam. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

See HOCKEY!
PAGE 10

Outstanding regular season continues for Pathfinder girls basketball

PALMER – The Pathfinder Regional girls basketball picked up two more wins, defeating Smith Academy and Gateway Regional on Jan. 23 and 27, respectively. The road

trip continues for the Pioneers, but their road will eventually lead to the state tournament as Pathfinder has reached 11 wins on the season against just two losses. Pathfinder's win over

Gateway was a great defensive effort. The Pioneers held Gateway Regional to just 10 points. Coming up, the Pioneers will face Hampden Charter School on Feb. 6 at 6:30 p.m.



Taylor Allen gets ready to attempt a three-pointer.



Desiree Croteau starts a play for the Pioneers. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Megan Clark enters the paint.

- sports -

T-Birds get huge weekend sweep

DES MOINES, IA — The Springfield Thunderbirds (21-17-2-2) got points from 14 of their 18 skaters in a 7-2 drubbing of the Iowa Wild (14-26-2-1) on Saturday night inside Wells Fargo Arena.

The T-Birds wasted little time jumping in front for a second straight night, as Simon Robertsson and Hugh McGing capped a 2-on-0 with McGing cashing in on a one-timer past Jesper Wallstedt just 1:22 into action. Otto Stenberg also picked up an assist as all three players on the line broke point droughts of three or four games.

Sam Bitten, playing in the building his brother Will called home for three seasons, joined the fun at 5:47 with a perfect bar-down wrist from the right circle to push the lead to 2-0 off setups from Samuel Johannesson and Leo Loof. Johannesson has now registered a point in five of his last six games.

Vadim Zherenko drew the starting assignment in net and held his own with 16 stops in the opening period. Johannesson provided a helping hand after Zherenko made a mini-breakaway

save on Hunter Haight, and the young blueliner successfully kept Mikey Milne from cashing in on a rebound to keep the score deadlocked.

Iowa finally would break through on its 16th shot of the period as Travis Boyd crashed the far post to tap home a 2-on-1 pass from Matthew Sop to get the Wild deficit down to 2-1 heading into the first intermission.

There were more parallels from Friday's game early in the second period, as McGing unleashed a perfect shot under the crossbar at 2:23, beating Wallstedt for his second of the evening and restoring the two-goal lead, 3-1.

Iowa put together their best push of the night over the next five minutes, culminating in a tally by Luke Toporowski to cut the margin back to a single goal, 3-2, at 7:26.

Just as it appeared the Wild would change the tide of the game, the T-Birds had other plans as Nikita Alexandrov drove the net front from the right circle and beat Wallstedt to the near post to make it 4-2 just 17 seconds after the Toporowski goal.

The Springfield attack poured it on from there. Michael Buchinger announced his presence at 8:49, jumping into a play as a trailer before snapping a wrist past Wallstedt to make it 5-2 off a cross-ice setup from Matthew Peca.

Another potential momentum shift came at 13:39 of the second when Dylan Peterson barreled in on net, taking a shot on Wallstedt before colliding with the Iowa netminder. Peterson was given a five-minute charging major, setting the stage for the Wild power play to try to climb back into the game. Wallstedt was forced to leave the game as Samuel Hlavaj came on in relief.

Instead of the moment sparking the home team, the T-Birds only further added to their lead when Peca intercepted a pass in the neutral zone, skated into the zone on the right wing, and snapped another perfect shot upstairs past Hlavaj for his team-leading 16th goal, making it a 6-2 game heading into the third.

The Wild had no answers for Zherenko in the third, despite Iowa throwing 16 pucks on the T-Birds net and 50 total by the night's conclusion. The third-year

goalie finished with a season-high 48 stops to earn the win, and Alek Kaskimaki capped off the offensive onslaught with his second goal in two nights at 17:12 of the third to round out the scoring.

Dalibor Dvorsky will be in action on Sunday and Monday at the AHL All-Star Classic presented by Spotlight 29 Casino in Palm Springs, California. The rookie star will first participate in the AHL All-Star Skills Competition presented by Silvercrest on Sunday, Feb. 2 (9:00 p.m. ET). Then, on Monday, Feb. 3, Dvorsky and the Atlantic Division will look to take home the 3-on-3 crown in the 2025 AHL All-Star Challenge presented by Spotlight 29 Casino at 9:00 p.m. ET. Both events can be seen on NHL Network and AHLTV powered by FloHockey.

Springfield next takes to the ice on Friday, Feb. 7 to begin a home-and-home set against the Providence Bruins at Amica Mutual Pavilion.

HOCKEY | FROM PAGE 9

locker room after receiving game misconduct penalties from the referees. They were involved in a fight that took place in front of the Gardner goalie.

"The three players, who received the game misconduct penalties, would've been on the ice during the Gardner power-play late in the third period," Rowley said. "I thought we held the momentum before the fight."

The Brownies, who are a Division 2 team, have a 8-5 overall record. They're currently sitting in second place behind Amherst in the Fay-Wright Conference standings with a 7-2 record. After having a week off, the Brownies are scheduled to host McCann Tech in a conference game at 6:30 on Saturday night.

"We need to win two more games to guarantee a spot in the state tournament," Rowley said. "This was a non-league game, so it doesn't affect our standings in the Western Mass. tournament."

The top four teams in the Fay-Wright Conference standings will play in the Western Mass. Class B tournament.

It was the second-ever meeting between the two hockey teams.

Two years ago, Gardner posted a 3-0 victory over Agawam in the champi-

onship game of the Chicopee Holiday Tournament.

In last Saturday's match, the Brownies were trailing, 4-2, with eight minutes left in the third period when Buffum and Pisano scored a pair of goals in a span of ten seconds tying the score at 4-4.

A little more than a minute later, Agawam took a 5-4 lead following a goal by senior A.J. Robbins, which was assisted by Ashford.

With 4:54 left in regulation, Gardner senior Gavin Richard scored a power-play goal tying the score at 5-5.

Following the fight, Richard's scored another power-play goal, which was unassisted, with 47 seconds left on the scoreboard giving his team a 6-5 lead.

The Brownies had a chance to tie the score, but they couldn't put the puck into the net past Gardner senior goalie Cohen Veilleux (15 saves) before the final buzzer sounded.

Gardner took a 2-0 lead in the middle of the opening period following goals by senior's Josh Crotty and Michael Lucas.

The Brownies cut the deficit in half when Ashford fired a shot into the net with 6:16 left in the opening period. Junior Anthony Barbarini was credited with the assist.

Seven minutes into the second period, a shot attempt by Agawam sophomore Camden Saltmarsh fell out of the Wildcats goalie's glove and the puck bounced into the net which tied the score for the first time.

Gardner retook the lead at 3-2 with 2:40 remaining in the second period following a goal by sophomore Matt Whaley.

Less than four minutes into the third period, a goal by junior Aiden LaPointe gave the visiting team a two goal lead for the second time.

LaPointe is also one of the three Gardner players who attend Quabbin Regional High School in Barre.

The other two Quabbin players listed on the Gardner hockey roster are senior Cullen White, who's a captain, and senior Kevin Thompson, who's the back-up goalie.

Agawam starting goalie Frankie



Cullen White heads up the ice for Gardner. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



LaPointe is a Quabbin student who is part of the co-op hockey program.



Aiden Lapointe looks to clear the puck away.

DiSanti, who's a senior, made a total of 26 saves.

The Brownies battled back during the third period, and they took the lead, but it quickly slipped away from them.

"This loss hurts right now, but we'll

be fine," Rowley said. "At the end of the day, it's only one game out of 20."

The Brownies will be looking to get back into the win column against McCann Tech on Saturday night.

- community -

Worcester area partners launch Exploring Aviation Careers

WORCESTER – The Heart of New England Council, Scouting America (www.hnescouting.org) announces a groundbreaking partnership with the Massachusetts Port Authority/Worcester Regional Airport (Massport), Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Worcester Public Schools (WPS), marking a significant milestone for the City and a new chapter for Scouting in the region.

The collaborative initiative represents one of the first middle school-focused curriculum of its kind in the country.

The Exploring Aviation Careers program will take place at Worcester Regional Airport, which is owned and operated by Massport, during the first half of 2025 and will educate middle school students from Worcester Public Schools about a variety of aviation careers and career pathways. The students will be introduced to all aspects of the aviation industry through professionals from Massport, Atlantic Aviation, and the airlines that service the Worcester Regional Airport, including JetBlue Airways, Delta Air Lines, and American Airlines.

This collaboration aims to inform and inspire the next generation of aviation enthusiasts, providing unique opportunities for students to explore careers in aviation and related fields.

“We are incredibly proud to partner with Worcester Regional Airport, Worcester Public Schools, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, and our aviation stakeholders,” said Patrick Hanrahan, Director of Development at the Heart of New England Council, Scouting America. “This initiative aligns perfectly with our mission to prepare young people for life by providing them with valuable skills and experiences. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this program will have on our community.”

The program is expected to launch Jan. 29. On Jan. 14 and 16, students will take a field trip to Worcester Regional Airport to familiarize themselves with the airport and learn more about the program overall.

Two virtual follow-up sessions will then take place to answer any questions from parents/guardians about the Exploring Aviation Careers program.

The dates of the virtual sessions will be shared following the in person visit to the airport.

“Massport is thrilled to partner with the Heart of New England Council, Scouting America, Worcester Chamber of Commerce and Worcester Public Schools on the Exploring Aviation Careers program at Worcester Regional Airport,” said Worcester Regional Airport Director Andy Davis. “This program is an excellent opportunity to showcase aviation careers and inspire the next generation of Massachusetts’ workforce to pursue professions in this growing industry.”

“The Chamber is excited to partner with the Worcester Public Schools, Heart of New England Council, Scouting America, and MassPort on the Exploring Aviation Careers program at Worcester Regional Airport,” said Timothy P. Murray, President & CEO, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. “This program is creating a career avenue, right here in our city, for our students to explore as they prepare to enter the workforce.”

“This is a fantastic opportunity for

our middle school scholars to explore their passions and discover potential career paths,” said Dr. Rachel H. Monárrez, Superintendent of Worcester Public Schools. “Thanks to this partnership with Worcester Regional Airport and other valued partners, our scholars will have real-world experiences that inspire them to reach new heights. It allows them to become problem solvers, curious learners, and empowered individuals - all traits of our district’s Vision of a Learner framework.”

Exploring is a unique career exploration program for young people ages 10-20, connecting them with the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of career fields and meet other youth with similar interests and aspirations. Explorers gain real, hands-on experience to determine whether a particular career field is right for them, and are provided opportunities to network with professionals working in those fields.

The vast majority of Exploring participants do not have a Scouting background. Exploring programs equip young people with the skills and experiences needed to thrive in the workforce.

Families needed to host foreign exchange students

World Heritage International Student Exchange Program, a nonprofit, public benefit organization, is seeking local families to host foreign exchange students this coming school year.

World Heritage students come from a variety of countries worldwide: Italy, Denmark, Spain, France, Germany, Ukraine, Japan, Australia, to name just a few.

Students are between the ages of 15 and 18 years, and they are enthusiastic and excited to experience American culture, family life, school, sports, etc. They also love to share their own culture and language with their host families, who welcome the students into their home, not as a guest, but as a family member, giving everyone involved a rich cultural experience.

Host families may be single parents, couples and single persons.

The exchange students have pocket money for personal expenses and full health, accident and liability insurance.

World Heritage students are carefully selected based upon academics and personality, and host families choose their student from different backgrounds, countries and personal interests.

World Heritage also offers qualified American students the opportunity to learn another language and culture by spending a school year, semester or a summer with a host family in another country.

If interested in hosting an exchange student or becoming an exchange student abroad, please call Debra at 1-800-888-9040, visit www.world-heritage.org or send an email to info@world-heritage.org to request more information or start the application process.

Students are eager to learn about their American host family, so begin the process of welcoming your new son or daughter today. The memories and the relationship you create with your exchange student will stay with you forever.

Quaboag hosts annual craft and small business fair Feb. 8

WARREN – Quaboag Regional Middle High School, 284 Old West Brookfield Road, is bringing back its annual Craft & Small Business Fair on Saturday, Feb. 8 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

With Valentine’s Day fast approaching, this fair is a perfect opportunity to shop local and get some gifts for your loved ones. This annual fair is hosted by Quaboag’s Student Council.

The fair has free admission and features over 80 local crafters and small business vendors that will be set up all across the halls of Quaboag. There will also be concessions available.

The fair will also feature raffle tables with numerous prizes available. Proceeds from the raffle will go towards the Student Council’s MASC Leadership conference in Hyannis.

DCR offers February vacation program on tracks and scat

BELCHERTOWN – The Department of Conservation and Recreation will host a February Vacation Program “Tracks and Scat” on Monday, Feb. 17 from 10-11 a.m.

Although we may not see them often, our native wildlife is all around us. Come learn to recognize some signs of wildlife through a fun and informative

indoor activity.

Meet at the Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center in Belchertown. Great for all ages, children must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, call 413-323-7221. To register visit <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/250b6dcbeefc-4f30a4da5b0f86abc4f3>.

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MARKET | FROM PAGE 1

ton does.

Staffing the table, as usual, was Ginger Kelly. This day she was ably assisted by her daughter, Faith. Of course, honey was on offer, but there was more. The Kelly Homestead operation also has 100 hens producing organic eggs, and they also raise chicken for sale, as well as turkeys seasonally.

The Kellys have 80 hives which may not be agribusiness, but it is a serious operation. Ginger could be described as a renaissance woman.



The Heavygrass lads, Jeff and Ron.

While farming, and raising children she went back to school and ended up with a law degree.

The homestead in Charlton is about 2.7 acres. Some of the hives are on the land of others, giving the honey a variety of flavors.

The Kelly family estimates they produce 30% of their food. The Homestead does a lot of raising, canning, and preserving, and aims to have about a year's supply on hand for the family.

But the family does have plans.

As noted last year, they had purchased raw land in Franklin County with the idea of making pollinator meadows. The property is 47 acres in the lovely town of Warwick on the New Hampshire border.

There will be an orchard, and apiary as well. They plan to pursue the art of raising queens.

Other than that Ginger, husband Ken, and family spend their days in idleness.

Kelly Homestead Apiary is online at: <https://www.kellyhomesteadapiary.com>

Traveling around the room, we came up to the table of Girlie's Cakes. Girlie's Cakes is the enterprise of Alysse out of Monson.

Girlie's is somewhat unique in that it is both vegan and gluten free. Vegan bakeries abound and gluten free businesses can easily be found, but a bakery that combines both? That is rare.

What is on the top of the table looks delectable. When asked her favorite creation Alysse said that it is Apple Pie Crumble Bars. Why? "It gives the feeling of eating home-made apple pie." It certainly looked inviting.

Alysse started baking with her great-grandmother, and pursued it as a hobby before going into business.

In a previous market she let us know she will be opening a shop in Palmer. That should keep her out of trouble.

Girlie's is on Facebook, and Instagram. TikTok is coming.



Alysse is shown at the Girlie's Cakes Table. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY

As the season is heading toward the halfway point, the Winter Market continues Wednesdays through March 12. We'll have updates each week.

CLAM BOX | FROM PAGE 1

to purchase the building. After some negotiations, the deal was made, and the Dugas family moved quickly to renovate the space into their new home for The Clam Box.

Over the course of six to seven months, the Dugas team transformed the building into a one-of-a-kind, maritime-themed space filled with nautical charm. The restaurant's new interior is an immersive experience, with a ship's mast serving as a support beam, and winding sails hanging from the ceiling.

The decor is a celebration of all things coastal, featuring boat and fishing-themed accents alongside colorful crustacean motifs.

Tim and Cindy were even able to acquire additional fishing and ocean decor from CJ's Restaurant, which closed its doors on Route 20. These pieces, along with random donations from local patrons, give the space an ever-changing vibe that keeps things fresh for regular customers.

Located at 245 West Main St., the new Clam Box remains dedicated to the traditions that made it a local favorite. For the Dugas family, it's not just about

the food; it's about creating an experience.

"We want the restaurant to be full of life so there's always something to catch your eye," Cindy explained.

While The Clam Box's recent move marks a new chapter, it is only one of the many exciting ventures the Dugas family is involved in. Having owned The Clam Box for seven years, they've continued to expand their reach in the local community.

Just three years ago, they took over Howard's Drive-In in West Brookfield, a beloved 77-year-old institution, and they are committed to keeping that legacy alive, serving up classic American fare to both new and returning customers.

Their latest acquisition, Janine's Frostee in Ware, was finalized on Jan. 31, and the Dugas family is excited to keep this 75-year-old treasure in business for many more years to come.

"The goal is to keep the culture of each place the same as it was under the original owners," Cindy said, noting that they want to preserve what made each restaurant special, while also bringing their own personal touch.

They plan to host live bands and car shows at Janine's Frostee in the summer to continue its tradition of being a community gathering spot.

It's clear that Cindy and Tim Dugas are not just in the restaurant business – they're in the business of strengthening communities. Whether it's through their dedication to keeping local landmarks alive or by offering their services at charitable events like the recent Veterans Dinner in Palmer, they are committed to giving back.

"We were just happy to give something back to our community," Tim said of their participation in the dinner, where they served 160 veterans a delicious steak tip meal.

The Dugas family's work ethic and commitment to their businesses are inspiring. Their children are already getting involved, with their 23-year-old son learning the ropes of kitchen management at Howard's, while their 15-year-old daughter worked last season at the drive-in. The youngest, a 14-year-old, just received her work permit and is excited to start at The Clam Box.

As the Dugas family celebrates a new era for The Clam Box, they continue to honor the restaurant's roots. They've taken over a piece of local history, breathed new life into it, and are ensuring that the legacy of the Hibbard family, who ran the Clam Box for over 50 years, will continue for generations to come. Their dedication to keeping community staples alive without losing sight of what made them special is a testament to their love for both their busi-



The Clam Box is decorated with a fun, nautical theme.

nesses and the people they serve.

For fans of The Clam Box, Howard's Drive-In, and Janine's Frostee, it's clear that the future is looking bright, and the Dugas family is just getting started.



A photo of The Clam Box staff is shown on the wall. TURLEY PHOTOS BY ABBY MCCOY



This train and sign pay homage to the location's former restaurant, EB Flatts.

Second Chance to hold 26th Annual Auction Gala

EAST BROOKFIELD – Second Chance Animal Services is excited to host its 26th Annual Auction Gala on Saturday, March 29 at the AC Marriott, 125 Front St., Worcester.

This highly anticipated event is Second Chance's most important fundraiser of the year, raising critical funds to help provide lifesaving services to over 56,000 pets in need. The evening will feature hundreds of silent auction items, exciting raffles, and a small but exclusive live auction offering one-of-a-kind experiences.

With a relaxed cocktail and dressy casual dress code, the event is designed to be an enjoyable evening for all, combining great company with opportunities to make a meaningful impact.

All proceeds will support Second Chance's mission to transform the lives of pets by providing affordable veterinary care, keeping pets with their families, and finding loving homes for animals in need.

Tickets are on sale now, and seat-

ing is limited, so early reservations are encouraged. Businesses and individuals can also support the event by sponsoring, which includes recognition in event materials and highlights their commitment to supporting pets in need.

Donations to the auction are another great way to get involved, with unique goods, services and once-in-a-lifetime experiences being especially popular.

"This event is all about bringing people together to help pets in need," said Lindsay Doray, Chief Development Officer of Second Chance. "With hundreds of auction items, raffles, and a live auction, there's something for everyone. Every ticket, sponsorship, and donation makes a direct impact on the lives of pets in our community."

People may visit <http://www.secondchanceanimals.org/dinner-auction> or email development@secondchanceanimals.org to purchase tickets, become a sponsor or donate auction items.

- public safety - New Braintree Police Log

During the week of Jan. 27-Feb. 3, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 10 building/property checks, 19 directed/area patrols, four radar assignments, three traffic controls, four emergency 911 calls, one assist other agency, two citizen assists, one motor vehicle accident, one safety hazard, and 10 motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Monday, Jan. 27

8:29 a.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, West Road, Vehicle Towed
3:49 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Gilbertville Road, Written Warning
8:32 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning
8:41 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning

Wednesday, Jan. 29

12:24 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Memorial Drive, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

Thursday, Jan. 30

1:54 p.m. Assist Citizen, Selectmen's Officer, Services Rendered

Friday, Jan. 31

12:10 a.m. Medical Emergency, Hardwick Road, Transported to Hospital
10:33 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Old Common Road, Transported to Hospital
4:21 p.m. Safety Hazard, Dennis Whitney Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

Saturday, Feb. 1

5:36 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Worcester Road, Transported to Hospital
7:30 a.m. Assist Citizen, Old Common Road, Spoken To
11:42 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Written Warning
4:33 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning

Anna Maria College announced Dean's list

PAXTON – Anna Maria College recently announced academic honors for students named to the Dean's list for fall 2024 semester.

Anna Maria College awards Dean's list recognition to students enrolled in a full-time undergraduate day program in good standing who have attained in the previous semester a GPA of 3.5 with no grade lower than "B" for a minimum of four courses.

The following students achieved Dean's list: Julianna Stanger of New Braintree, Angelina Botelho Fritze of North Brookfield, Brooke Macey, Heather Monroe, Naomi Moura and Thomas Vanasse, all of Sturbridge; and Tyler Withers of West Brookfield.



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Charlie Lask is the owner of Nat Falk, which has been in business on Main Street for more than 87 years.

workingman's prices." Nat Falk carries name brands such as Carhartt, Levi's, Haggag, Florsheim, Izod, Van Heusen, Arrow and Carolina, just to name a few. They carry big and tall sizes and are a proud Boy Scout supplier. Nat Falk is the place to go for formal wear with a full selection of sales and rentals for that all-important day. Come in today and enjoy the best in service at unbeatable prices. It is what Nat Falk has been about since 1936.

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Person injured in early morning house fire

HARDWICK – On Tuesday, Feb. 4 at 12:20 a.m. New Braintree Regional Dispatch center received a 911 call from 8-10 Lower Road in Gilbertville reporting a fully involved house fire with a person trapped on the second floor.

New Braintree Dispatch dispatched Hardwick Fire, Hardwick-New Braintree Police along with mutual aid New Braintree Fire and West Brookfield Ambulance. With the known information dispatch automatically started a second alarm fire response bringing mutual aid to the scene.

Hardwick-New Braintree Police Officer Andrew Ronnau arrived in under two minutes of dispatch confirming the working structure fire and that the house was fully engulfed. Ronnau forced entry in a back door but was unable to make entry because of the heavy smoke and fire.

Finding an adult female trapped on the second floor of the house by a window Ronnau was able to get the female to jump out of the window to him. Ronnau then dragged the victim away from the back of the house, up an embankment to the roadway where he began rendering first aid.

Officer Kendall Perrault of the West Brookfield Police arrived and began assisting in medical aid.

Hardwick Fire Deputy Chief Nicholas Gaumond arrived and requested a third alarm assignment with Hardwick Fire Chief Josh Pease arriving shortly after him. Aggressive defensive fire attack was started by Hardwick and New Braintree Fire units waiting on their mutual aid partners.

West Brookfield Ambulance arrived taking patient care from the police officers. The victim was transported to a local landing zone where LifeStar Helicopter transported her to Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston for treatment.

Her current condition is currently unknown.

Hardwick Fire and mutual aid companies remained on scene until 11 a.m. The building collapsed during the start of the fire; Hardwick Highway responded with heavy equipment to assist the fire departments on scene.

This fire is under investigation by Troopers assigned to the State Fire Marshals Office, Hardwick Fire and Hardwick-New Braintree Police. No cause has been determined.

Hardwick-New Braintree Police were also assisted by Massachusetts State Police as Route 32 was closed until 5 a.m.

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Applications and a more detailed job description are available on the Town website:
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Please contact: Jim Daley at (508) 867-1417 or email jdaley@wbrookfield.com

The Town of West Brookfield is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity at all levels of the workforce. EOE

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QUABOAG CURRENT

BROOKFIELD Ice-out contest underway p2	NORTH BROOKFIELD New library director p3	WARREN Craft fair is Feb. 8 p7	Editorial/Opinion Sports Police Logs Classifieds	4 9 13 14
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Friday, February 7, 2025

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