

QUABOAG CURRENT

- A TURLEY PUBLICATION -
www.turley.com

Volume 18, Number 12

Friday, February 21, 2025

Board accepts resignations from TA and selectman

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Board of Selectmen accepted the resignation of Town Administrator Michael Szlosek, effective April 5 and the resignation of Selectmen Vaughn Schlegel, effective immediately.

At the Feb. 11 meeting, Vice-Chair Elizabeth “Brooke” Canada said she appreciated working with Schlegel on the board.

“He did work really hard for this town,” she said.

Vote by mail

Canada read a statement from the Town Clerk Tara Hayes requesting that the board vote to opt out of vote by mail for municipal voting this year. Absentee voting and absentee over-the-counter voting will still be available through the Town Clerk’s office.

“Absentee is for specific criteria: out of town on election day, physically unable to come to the polls on election day, or religious exemption. Complete the application and return to the Town Clerk’s office by the deadline. Absentee over-the-counter is essentially early voting,”

Hayes said in her statement.

Canada said she believes that vote by mail should be allowed, to ensure accessibility for all residents.

“I think we should allow mail-in voting like the rest of the state does, for all elections,” she said.

Chair Jason Petraitis said his issue with vote by mail is the cost to the town, but he understand the need for it.

A motion to approve the Town Clerk’s request failed to pass.

Nomination papers for the annual town election are available at the Town Clerk’s office. Seats up for election are as follows: Board of

Selectmen, one seat for three-year term; Board of Selectmen, one seat for two-year term (unexpired term to fill vacancy); Town Moderator, one seat for three-year term; Town Clerk, one seat for three-year term; School Committee, one seat for three-year term; School Committee, one seat for two-year term (unexpired term to fill vacancy); Board of Assessors, one seat for three-year term; Board of Assessors, one seat for two-year term (unexpired term to fill vacancy); Board of Health, one seat for three-year term; Cemetery Commissioner, one seat for three-year term; Library Trustees,

two seats for three-year terms; Planning Board, one seat for five-year term; and Constables, three seats for three-year terms.

Both Jamie Gilman and John Tripp have returned nomination papers for the Board of Selectmen seat after Canada announced she would not be seeking reelection. Nominations papers have also been taken out for the following positions: Town Clerk, Tara Hayes (incumbent); Board of Assessors, Sheila Buzzell (incumbent); Board of Assessors, Mary Elizabeth Ku-

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TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

One of many paintings by Lynn Wrona of Holland. This painting is “Once Upon a Shoe Factory” based off the shoe factory in Brookfield.

Library displays art by Holland artist

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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WEST BROOKFIELD – The Merriam-Gilbert Public Library has a beautiful art exhibit featuring the art of Lynn Wrona.

Wrona of Holland has been working on her art for 40 years and her journey started back in her kindergarten class. Wrona recalls painting her first green rock and from that point on her love for art would begin.

Wrona said she was inspired by the work of Jon Gnagy, who was a self-taught artist most remem-

bered for being America’s original television art instructor. Wrona said she loved watching Gnagy’s work on television and would soon find the joy of sketching the world around her.

At the age of 30, Wrona remembers her husband, Mike, who had got her registered for her first art class as a surprise. Wrona said her husband supported her 100% to pursue art.

The mediums Wrona uses the most include oil and pastel. Many currently displayed at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library are oil paintings. The approach Wrona

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Resident shares family’s 1927 cross-country road trip

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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STURBRIDGE – Sturbridge resident Robert Arnold gave a detailed photo presentation about his grandparents’ 1927 road trip across the U.S. at the Sturbridge Historical Society’s first meeting of the new year, held at the Public House.

Arnold said his grandparents made the 17,671 mile trip in their Model T Ford dubbed, “Hub-bub,” with three teenagers in tow.

“During the winter of 1927, my grandparents left on their epic road trip, and they made a notation that they got to East Brookfield, and they stopped to take the chains off, as the road conditions got better,” Arnold said. “Considering that it was day one of an eight month journey, was pretty remarkable.”

Arnold said his grandparents were wonderful people with a passion for history, music, fine arts,

crafts and the natural sciences.

His grandfather, Carey Melville, was a professor of mathematics at Clark University for over 20 years and an avid photographer and his grandmother, Maud Melville, carefully recorded the daily details of the road trip in her journals.

The family of five left for their road trip in January, traveling down the east coast to Miami, Florida, then across the Gulf coast to Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, reaching California before heading north to Washington, then back to New England through the northern tier of states.

“They actually held pretty well to their schedule,” Arnold said. “They left on Jan. 29 and returned on Sept. 17.”

Weather was a constant variable the family had to adjust to.

“That was evident on day one,” he said, when their initial departure date was delayed by one day

See **ROAD TRIP** | PAGE 6

Chess before the storm; players converge at Joy of Beans

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – Joy of Beans is headquarters for gourmet coffee in the Brookfields. The question on Feb. 15, was could Joy of Beans become the locus of the game of chess in this region?

A notice had been posted in this newspaper that anyone interested in playing the game could meet at 3:00 p.m. in the coffee shop. Even before the scheduled time, a couple of players were having a go on one of the boards that Joy Hinton, impresario of the shop, had set up.

Jim Spaulding has been working to bring chess as something happening regionally for some time now. Jim was engaged in a game with Robert, or just “Bob.”

Jim, as an enthusiast was giving it a great effort, but as would be evident in the afternoon, Bob was the “man.”

John McNeil, a stem teacher at the North Brookfield school system was next to take on Bob. The outcome was the same.



TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY

Bob and John McNeil face off for a friendly competition.

Our hostess, Joy, was next to take on Bob. Our Robert was not to be denied.

Bob was definitely the most accomplished man of the afternoon, but he was also generous in that he discussed the games and strategies, as well as giving some tips on castling as to when and how to perform that technique.

It was a good late afternoon and after the chess was done, there was a wide ranging and fun discussion

of a number of topics. One conclusion we might have come to was your correspondent may not have the most good karma locally.

It was all fun and if interested, will return on Saturday, March 1 at 3 p.m. at Joy of Beans, 12 East Main St.

A famous man, in some circles infamous, described chess as “the gymnasium of the mind.” Come over and give your brain a workout.

Market Spotlight

Microgreens and Ginger from Brimfield, Goat Milk Soap from Princeton and the band played on

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 – The deities that control the weather continue to favor those attending the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market.

The 12th of February was not unpleasant and those who wanted to come downtown found it no problem to approach the The First Congregational Church, 36 North Main St. beginning at 3 p.m. and finishing up 6 p.m., and enter the winter oasis of a bazaar of vendors and shoppers.

On this day, the first thing one noticed was the noise. It was hardly cacophony, but the enthusiasm of a string trio playing with gusto.

The three men were members of a popular local band known as the Otters.

Still. It was a task to get them to identify themselves as they were sans the other three bandsmen. After some jocularly we settled on “Half Otters.” The men, Rich,



TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY

Linda and Flourish Farm’s healthy microgreens.

Wally and Ken were all topped by scally caps that made them look like extras from the 1935 John Ford movie, *The Informer*.

The lads described their musical genre as eclectic acoustic Americana. Whatever it was, the assembled seemed to enjoy it.

At one corner of the room was market regular, except when traveling out west to see grandchildren, Linda Fuchs and her

Flourish Farm. If ever there was a valid excuse for absence, that, most would agree, is it.

Linda is a fixture at the West Brookfield Summer Market. Here at the Winter Market, she had fresh organic ginger and the microgreens she is known for.

Despite it being winter, Flourish Farm still grows its micro-

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- community -

Eagle Scout completes mountain bike trails service project



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Eagle Scout Jonah Scherer is shown standing next to the recently completed kiosk for the Tantasqua Trail system.

STURBRIDGE – Scouting America Eagle Scout Jonah Scherer recently completed his Eagle rank required service project of updating and improving the mountain bike trails behind the Tantasqua Regional Junior High School.

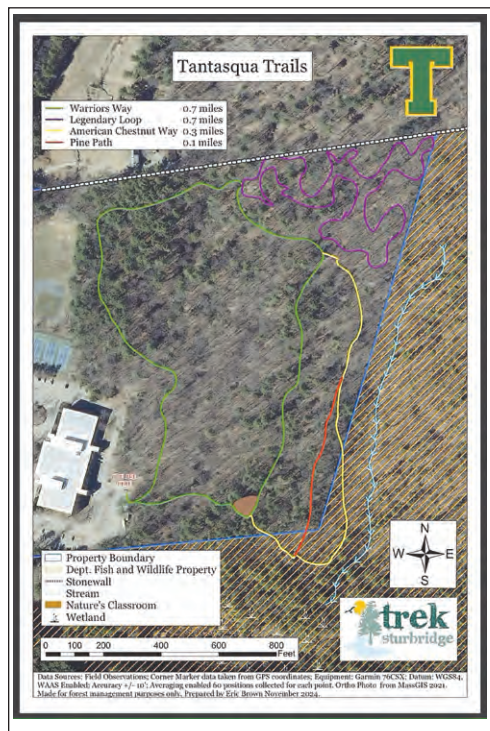
The mountain bike trails were initially installed several years ago and have been used by the Tantasqua mountain bike club as practice trails. The trails also serve as an outdoor classroom for several of the science class studies in forestry and outdoor environments.

Jonah's project included cleaning up the trails, paint marking, formally naming and signing the trails along with the installation of a kiosk and trail map. In total there are four newly marked trails totaling 1.8 miles.

Jonah selected this project because, "I really enjoy the outdoors and believe that the opportunity to get outside helps me

develop a well-rounded character, makes me a strong athlete, and helps me when it's time to focus on academics. My Eagle project required me to apply everything I'd learned in Scouting to create meaningful community impact, and was inspired by Mrs. Marcucci's use and hopes for the trails system. The project involved GPS-mapping two miles of trails, building and installing signs and a kiosk, and creating a color-coded map. This experience taught me leadership, problem-solving, and perseverance. Becoming an Eagle Scout symbolizes dedication and a commitment to serving others."

Jonah worked under the supervision of Mrs. Marcucci at the school, who also commented on Jonah's project: "We applied for a grant last year that included a kiosk at the trail entrance, trail signs but unfortunately did not receive it. I was



This is a map of the Tantasqua Trail system.

pleased when Jonah stepped up to take on this project"

Because of his work, the Sturbridge Trail Committee will now include these trails on its website and in the future an updated trail guide.

The trails are located at the rear of the Tantasqua Regional Junior High school at 319 Brookfield Road and are open for public use during non-school operating hours. These trails are designed for mountain bikers, so hikers should be cautious when using the trails. School property use rules apply.

Jonah is a member of Scouts BSA Troop 161 of Sturbridge sponsored by the Champeau-Vilandre American Legion Post 109. The troop meets on Sunday nights from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Sturbridge Federated Church.

For more information on Troop 161 email Scoutmaster Kevin Scherer at kscherer27@aol.com or stop in during a troop meeting.

OSV announces February events and programs

STURBRIDGE – Old Sturbridge Village welcomes February with new events, a new exhibit, and many favorite programs returning this month.

Opening Friday, Feb. 14, Old Sturbridge Village is excited to present a new exhibit. Hands & Hearts: Courtship and Marriage in 19th-Century New England explores marriage and partnership by telling the stories of four couples from the 19th century.

The new exhibit is located in the Visitor Center and is included with standard daytime admission. Hands & Hearts was made possible thanks to the generous support of Keith and Elaine Knowlton and the Felicia Fund.

Evening of Illumination continues this month on Feb. 22; tours are based on pre-selected time slots and are available from 6-7:30 p.m. This unique experience allows guests to discover how New England families spent their evenings before the introduction of technology by touring the Village after dark, lit only by candlelight, oil lamps, lanterns, and firelight. This event is sponsored by National Grid.

A popular visitor favorite, Maple Days will return this year from Feb. 19 to March 9. Guests can learn about the history of maple sugar in 19th-century New England and watch the sugar-making process at OSV's sugar camp, from tapping the trees to "sugaring off".

Educators visit for free during school vacation week, Feb. 19-21. This is an opportunity for teachers to explore how they can plan a field trip for their students. Special programming for teachers includes drop-in, hands-on crafts, 19th-century school lessons, tours of the Village, and talks with members of the Collections and Research team on these dates.

Teachers must show a valid teacher ID card, paystub, or other proof of being a teacher, principal, or school aid at the Visitor Center to receive free admission. Offer valid for teachers only, not others in their party.

Special thanks to Cornerstone Bank for supporting OSV and the celebration of Museum Education's 50th Anniversary.

February's Homeschool Day will be on Feb. 28. Homeschool Day is an educational opportunity for students to explore the Village and participate in hands-on workshops, scavenger hunts, and self-guided exploration. February's Homeschool Day celebrates Black History Month. Students will learn about the valuable contributions that people of color had in the 19th century on art, cooking, and written word.

For event details and tickets, and additional information, visit osv.org.

Historical Society presents 'The Covered Bridges of Massachusetts'

STURBRIDGE – On Thursday, Feb. 27 at 7 p.m., the Sturbridge Historical Society will present Rich Paradise speaking about "The Covered Bridges of Massachusetts" at the Publick House.

19th century New England covered bridges, those iconic wooden structures that feature a roof and siding to protect the bridge's wooden beams from harsh weather, are considered a testament to early American engineering. Once seen everywhere, today there are only about a dozen covered bridges left in Massachusetts and some of them are on private property.

Paradise has managed to photograph them all and will provide detailed descriptions of how to find them.

He will open his talk with a brief discussion of the different methods of bridge construction, followed by a review of the existing Massachusetts bridges.

No talk on covered bridges would be complete without bringing up the Graton family's business in New Hampshire. During the flood control of the 1950s, Graton Associates was hired to remove

covered bridges from the rivers that were in the floodplain. This process started their unique career of restoring and building new covered bridges.

Milton Graton who started the business wrote the book "The Last of the Covered Bridge Builders". Paradise has a signed copy of this book which will be on display at his talk.

Paradise, as many of you may remember, was last year's "stone wall guy". He is also a huge fan of covered bridges and has studied them for years.

Since moving to Sturbridge in 2002, Paradise has been an avid hiker of our local trails. For the past 14 years he has been a member of the Town's Trails Committee. He has volunteered his chainsaw skills to the Committee, and at numerous places around town following the 2011 tornado.

He is also a recent member of the Historical Society and has worked to help develop programs and presentations for the group.

This program, which is generously hosted by the Publick House, is free and open to the public.

Art & Frame gallery celebrates 10 years this Friday

WEST BROOKFIELD – A party and art raffle on will be held on Friday, Feb. 21 from 5-7 p.m. to celebrate West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery's 10th anniversary at the gallery, 10 East Main St.

Raffle tickets are \$10 each or six for \$50; and are available at the gallery now through the day of the party, when the winning tickets will be pulled. Ticket holders do not have to be present at the drawing to win.

The raffle will feature 16 items created by gallery artists, and include pottery, jewelry, paintings, a wood-turned bowl and prints. All proceeds from the raffle will go to the Sharing Cupboard located at the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, serving residents in West Brookfield, Warren and West Warren.

The party will feature a live acoustic set by well-known musician Adelaide Fay, who released her second album last year. Adelaide will perform a mix of cover songs as well as originals from both of her albums.

Guests will be well-fed at the party, with a variety of sweet treats, wine and cheese, and a charcuterie board.

Senior Center open house to be held March 1

STURBRIDGE – The town of Sturbridge invites the public to the Senior Center Open House.

Please join them as they celebrate the opening of the newly renovated Senior Center on Saturday, March 1 from 1-3 p.m. at 480 Main Street. A ribbon cutting will begin at 12:30 p.m. with a blessing of the building to follow.

Come for a tour, light refreshments and meet the Senior Center staff and learn about its programs. This event is free and open to the community.

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- community -

Federated Church announces Irish Feast coming March 10

STURBRIDGE – The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale invites the community to its annual Irish Feast on Monday, March 10, at the historic Publick House Restaurant.

This long-standing tradition benefits both the Federated Church and the Harrington Hospital Auxiliary.

Guests will enjoy a buffet-style Irish meal, featuring corned beef and cabbage, boiled potatoes, carrots and turnips, dinner roll and Irish soda bread, choice of beverage and a cupcake for dessert. The dinner will be served in two seatings, 4:30-6 p.m. (early seating), and 6:30-8 p.m. (later seating).

Tickets may be purchased by cash, check, credit card or Venmo at the Sturbridge Federated Church, 8 Maple St., Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m.-noon. Adult tickets are \$17 each, and tickets for children aged 4-12 are \$7 each.

Tickets must be purchased by Friday, March 7. No tickets will be sold at the door.

Tickets may also be purchased electronically @Federated-Church using Venmo. Please be sure to include the number of meals and your preferred seating time. Tickets purchased using Venmo will be held for you at the door.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact the Church Office by calling 774-304-1021 or Ken Benson at 774-230-3848.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ's presence and God's grace in our lives. For additional information, please visit the Church website at sturfed.org or send an email to churchoffice@sturfed.org.

Antique appraisal event offered at historical museum

NEW BRAINTREE – A much anticipated "Antiques Roadshow"-like event has been scheduled at the New Braintree Historical Society museum, 10 Utley Road, on Saturday, March 22 from 1-3 p.m.

Renowned appraiser and auctioneer, Kenneth Van Blarcom from South Natick (<https://kwvbauctions.com/about/>), will conduct an individual appraisal and history of your item, for all to learn about.

The Society is thrilled to have Van Blarcom's expertise here in New Braintree. His impressive credentials include antique appraisal positions with Shreve, Crump and Low, Co. and a Boston Directorship at the fine art and antique company of Skinner Auctions. Van Blarcom went on to start his own auction and appraisal business conducting over 850 auctions over a 40 year period.

So, dust off your favorite treasure, and prepare for some historical entertainment. Limit of two items. Cost per appraisal \$5. No jewelry, please.

Refreshments will be served. For more information, visit <https://newbraintreehistoricalsociety.org/> or call 508-867-3324.

Valentine's gala shares love for Stone Church

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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HARDWICK – The Friends of the Stone Church and their supporters shared their love for the iconic Gilbertville landmark on Feb. 8, with the return of the Valentine-themed gala celebration at Hardwick Crossing Country Club.

The sold out event featured a cocktail hour and buffet meal, music provided by the Mason Tyler Duo, a silent auction and a live auction with Barre's most famous auctioneer Paul Varney. Flowers arranged by Lynn Hartman of Hartman's Herb Farm adorned every table.

This event is a fundraiser to continue efforts to restore the Stone Church Cultural Center, the former Trinitarian Congregational Church. Built using Monson granite, this Tudor Gothic style church was designed by noted Worcester architect Elbridge Boyden; who also designed Mechanics Hall in Worcester, the Hubbardston Public Library and the Congregational Church in Brookfield.

The Stone Church's tower is the only one of three such towers of Boyden's still standing.

Phillip Warbasse, the project architect for the Friends, said the group is close to completing its goal to repair and stabilize the church's tower.

"We've gotten all the way up to the inside of the dormer level," Warbasse said.

The multi-phase project includes filling the joints, which have expanded over the years since the church was constructed over 150 years ago. All masonry restoration has been completed up to the top of the belfry and part of the lantern level.

"All the original joints were about half an inch wide," Warbasse said. "Some have opened up to an inch and a half."

To date, the Friends have invested over \$500,000 into the tower since 2014, through grant awards and fundraising efforts. Another \$390,000 is needed to complete repairs to the lantern level exterior and spire.

"The work now is to raise enough money to do the outside and the spire," Warbasse said.

This work is essential to protect the tower from the effects of the elements. In every rain event, water still leaks into the lantern level, and every winter the freeze-thaw cycle moves stones in unrepaired areas microscopically.

FOSC President Judy Edington welcomed those in attendance at the gala dinner and thanked them for their continued support.

"Seeing a full room is really quite energizing," Edington said. "It's galvanizing. It gives us heart for what we still have to do."

Edington said the Friends need to finish work on the tower and that there's still more to do.

"You all help us push forward," she told the attendees.



Friends of the Stone Church President Judy Edington welcomed attendees to the fundraiser.

Edington thanked the members of the gala committee, Kat McCrohon, Clare Hendra, Paula Roberts, Mary Warbasse, Michelle Webb and Cheryl Wolfe, along with event volunteers Ruth Baker, Frank Hanson, Judy Knight, Joanne Meegan, David Salvatore and Phillip Warbasse.

As attendees finished their meals and enjoyed dessert and coffee, Varney started the live auction, first offering people a chance to bid on a seemingly empty 12-liter wine bottle, which was revealed to have an unknown amount of cash stashed in it.

Hardwick resident Judy Kohn was the lucky winner of the "conversational piece" that also came with a story as relayed by Varney.

Varney said the bottle was donated to the live auction by a friend of David Salvatore and that it had been emptied of its original contents during a weeklong camping trip to Vermont.

The live auction also featured a new individual or family membership to the Baglio Center at Eagle Hill School donated by Eagle Hill School; a \$250 gift certificate to see the Boston Symphony Orchestra at one of three locations donated by Edington; a two-night weekend stay for two couples or a family of four to the Sugar Maple Trailside Inn in historic Florence donated by Kathy and Craig Della Penna; 75 gallons of heating oil from R.J. McDonald Heating Oil donated by Bruce McDonald; and a seven night stay at the Villa Camilla on Grace Bay Beach in Turks & Caicos.

Almost 100 individuals and businesses donated items to both the silent and live auctions.

Upcoming events
The Friends of the Stone Church will be hosting a number of events throughout the upcoming year, including "Old, New, Borrowed and Blue" featuring the works of Bach, Robert Schumann and Ravel, as well as Indonesian music and blues with pianist



Abbie Joy Vanilla Cupcake joined Steve Olivo at the Valentine Celebration fundraising event hosted by the Friends of the Stone Church at Hardwick Crossing Country Club on Feb. 8

Cicilia Yudha on Sunday, March 9 at 3 p.m.

A book signing by local author Lisa J. Cohen will celebrate the release of her new book, "Litany for a Broken World" on Sunday, March 16 from 4-5:30 p.m.

On Sunday, April 6 at 3 p.m. Emi Ferguson, flutes and Michael Poll, classical guitar, will perform Dowland, Bach, Telemann, Schubert, Takemitsu and Rebay.

On Saturday, May 3 at 7 p.m., organist Peter Krasinski returns to accompany the silent film, "The Last Command" from 1928, starring Emil Janning. He will provide original accompaniment on the Stone Church's Johnson & Son organ.

The Friends will also host two free Sunday concerts on the lawn with the Weir River Jazz Ensemble on June 8 at 2 p.m. and the Weir River Concert Band on June 22 at 2 p.m.

For more information about the Friends, or to help support their preservation work, visit www.friendsofthestonechurch.org or mail donations to Friends of the Stone Church, Inc., 283 Main St., P.O. Box 347, Gilbertville, MA 01031.



Tables of donated items were available during the silent auction, including this wood-turned lamp made by Harry Comerford.



This map shows the town of Hardwick as it appeared on June 30, 2006, identifying every owner of a home on every street and road on that date, as prepared by the late Emily M. Bancroft.

PEOPLE/ MILESTONE NEWS

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

For more information, or to submit people or milestone news for the Quaboag Current please email pouimette@turley.com.

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- opinion -



By Ellenor Downer



Male and female hooded merganser

My daughter saw a pair of hooded mergansers on the Ware River on two different occasions.

She said, "They were riding those rapids to the bridge and looked like they were having a blast. Then they just hung out under the bridge."

The hooded merganser is the smallest of the mergansers at 18 inches long. It has a short thin bill and crested head. The male has a black head, white fan shaped patch within the crest, which is only visible when the crest is raised. The flanks are brown and the back black. It also has black vertical lines on its white breast. The female is plain brown with a darker back and red brown crest. The immature female looks like the adult female and the immature male similar to the female, but they some white in the crest.

Hooded mergansers dive underwater and eat small fish, frogs, crustaceans, mollusks and aquatic insects. Courtship begins in mid winter. Females do head bobbing and pumping. Most male displays involve crest raising. The male makes a frog like note and the female makes a hoarse "gak."

The female lays six to eight white eggs in a nest of grasses and down placed in a tree cavity or nest box. Mergansers summer on wooded rivers and lakes and winters on similar locations as well as along the coast.

Ludlow birds

On Saturday, Jan. 25 a Ludlow resident emailed about the birds in her backyard. She said, "The usual visitors are purple finches, white-throated sparrows, juncos, titmice, nuthatches, bluejays, mourning doves, cardinals and red bellied woodpeckers. Yesterday Jan. 24, we had a cowbird at the feeder. We haven't had any visit us in the five years we've fed the birds in winter. Just wondering if others in the area have seen a cowbird this early."

Bluebirds and northern flicker

I received an email on Sunday, Jan 26 from a North Brookfield resident, She said, "I live in North Brookfield, down on Lake Lashaway. I had five blue birds and a northern flicker on my feeders this morning along with the usual birds. Early Spring?"

Brimfield birds

I received an email from a Brimfield resident on Jan. 21. He said, "Today in the yard all the usual birds were about however the junco flock has increased to about 65 birds. Other not so commonly seen birds were a Carolina wren, and a white-throated and a tree sparrows."

In another email he wrote, "Yes the blue jays sure do like the peanuts. The titmice also get their share. And once in awhile a red-bellied woodpecker with show up and take a peanut. When I walk around the yard there are a couple of places under a tree or shrub where the ground is littered with empty peanut shells."

Birds in my yard

I continue to have the usual birds at my feeders and suet feeder such as black capped chickadees, titmice, white breasted nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, mourning doves and blue jays. Now that it is February, I expect to see male red-winged blackbirds.

I received a state of the art bird feeder equipped with a camera for my birthday. I have not set it up yet. I will take it down once bears come out of hibernation because I would not want it destroyed.

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 or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.m



Leave it to fate

I never thought I would say this, but I am out of ideas for this week's column.

Every topic I come up with has been covered at one time or another. So, as the snow falls every so furiously outside, I am going to resort to the "stick your finger in the gardening encyclopedia, and see where it lands" trick.

I'll leave the topics of the week to fate.

Here goes: For the first topic, my finger landed on a funny picture of geranium plants with their rootballs wrapped in newspaper hanging from the beams in someone's basement. I have written before about my success in bringing my geranium plants inside for the winter and placing them in a south facing window.

Just yesterday I was looking at the plants more closely, knowing that soon enough, I will be snipping the tips to take some cuttings. But I digress, the picture I saw is just another way to overwinter your geranium plants, especially if you don't have a sunny window or a lot of indoor gardening space.

Many old timers used to talk of this method a lot and had great success with it. You could either try and pot the plants up ahead of time or go right from the basement to the outdoors after the threat of frost has passed and after a thorough hardening off process, of course.

Second topic: My finger landed on the herb Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*). I have started lovage from seed nearly every year for the last 30 years.

This celery substitute is always on the list of transplants needed for the herb garden at Old Sturbridge Village. Lovage seed is not viable for long, so new seed is needed each year, or germination will be sparse.

The plant is considered a perennial, meaning it will return year after year, but in my experience, the best foliage production will be in the first year. The flowers are "umbells" like dill and fennel but flowers only take away from foliage production, so they are best snipped off.

The hollow stems are used in place of celery in soups and stews. My mom always enjoyed drying the leaves for use during the winter months.

Topic three: Hostas! I was never a big fan of Hostas until I had a yard that had substantial amounts of shade. These versatile plants are a perfect companion for many shade loving perennials, especially if they are planted in fertile soil with ample moisture.

Like other perennials, Hostas need a period of dormancy to succeed, so they will do well in our climate, and down to Zone 8 or so. Most varieties are grown for their foliage only; I find it funny that some gardeners snip off the flowers as they begin to form, saying that it actually takes away from the look of the plant.

There are so many types to choose from and in colors ranging from grass-green to yellow and even blue-gray! Some are variegated or splashed with color.

Leaf sizes range from minuscule to huge! One pest that loves Hosta leaves is the slug. To lessen their interest in the plant, be sure to remove decomposing foliage.

Use any number of traps, homemade or otherwise to keep your plants damage free.

And the last fate-filled topic is: Chile peppers! There are all kinds of hot peppers out there for the gardener to experiment with. You might think that growing instructions may differ for fire-hot peppers, but they are grown in the same manner as regular bell peppers.

Start the seeds inside, or purchase transplants. Warm the soil ahead of installing the plants, and don't overdue it fertility-wise. Provide supplemental water if the summer gets droughty.

Harvest when the peppers turn color, and do so wearing gloves being ever mindful not to touch your eyes. I had always heard that a milk bath should help ease the sting of an accidental burn; others say ingesting starchy food does the trick.

Well, I hope this unconventional column was an enjoyable read. It's never too late to pull out a reference book or two for some interesting factoids.

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.



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com



When to claim Social Security and taxation of benefits

Dear Rusty:

I am 65 and currently working full-time. Can I apply for and start receiving my Social Security benefit? I'd expect to have to pay income tax on it if/when I do.

Signed: Curious Worker

Dear Curious Worker:

If you are working full time, you should likely delay claiming Social Security at this time. At age 65, you haven't yet reached your SS Full Retirement Age, so you will be subject to Social Security's "annual earnings test" which limits how much you can earn from work while collecting early benefits. The earnings limit for 2025 is \$23,400 and if

you earn more than the annual limit, SS will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit.

If you earn significantly over the limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible to collect SS benefits. FYI, the annual earnings limit goes away when you reach your full retirement age, which for you is 66 years and 10 months, or March 2026.

As you obviously already know, a portion of your Social Security may be subject to income tax after you start collecting. The threshold for taxation of SS benefits depends on your IRS filing status – if you file your taxes as a single and your combined income from all sources (including half of the SS benefit you received during the tax year) exceeds \$25,000 then 50% of your received SS benefits are taxable.

But if you file taxes as "married/jointly" and your combined income is over \$32,000, then up to 85% of your received SS benefits are taxable. Thus, whenever you claim SS, you may wish to consider having income tax withheld from your SS benefit. This is optional, and you can do this by submitting IRS Form W-4V to your local Social Security office.

See SOCIAL SECURITY | PAGE 11

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THE QUABOAG CURRENT (USPS# 10860) is published weekly (every Friday) by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069. Telephone at 413-283-8393 or fax at 413-289-1977. Periodical Postage Prices are Paid at Palmer, MA. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to: Quaboag Current, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.



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As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue's relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for the Quaboag Current, please email pouimette@turley.com.

- community -

LIBRARY | FROM PAGE 1

had with many of those paintings was painting the scene from the viewpoint from her car.

One of Wrona's biggest inspirations for her art are areas in the New England countryside.

"I love the New England countryside," Wrona said.

This was the first exhibit at the library for Wrona and she had a total of 18 paintings that will be exhibited until the end of March. Wrona has had her artwork exhibited many times. A lot of her work has been a part of the Connecticut River Valley Artists, the North Shore Art Association, Rockport Art Association, Lyme Art Association and she is a signature member of the Connecticut Pastel Society.

Her painting of the Brookfield Shoe Factory was one of the first paintings she did from the view from her car. Her painting of the snowbound truck in Brimfield was probably the biggest challenge for her because it was during the winter, and it was cold while painting that scene. This painting was an award-winning painting that Wrona won during the annual Piedmont Art Show in Somers, Connecticut.

Wrona was the recipient of Linda Percoski Memorial Award,



URLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

"Winter Sunset" is a painting based off a site Lynn Wrona spotted in Sutton.

which she described as a huge honor to win. Wrona knew Linda and got to know her as an artist and as a friend.

Pastels were one of her favorite art mediums, her next love would be landscapes. Wrona was outside of her car when painting Elm Hill, which can be seen at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library.

"I love painting outdoors," she said.

Whether it's from the inside of her car or standing outside with her paints and easels at the ready, she loves painting outdoors. The locations featured in Wrona's art are based in local towns including

Holland, West Brookfield, Brookfield, Sturbridge, Brimfield and Palmer. Wrona also has paintings based on areas in Rockport and the Cape Ann area in Massachusetts.

Wrona was working on some of her art while staying at a cottage in Maine with some friends and winded up selling one of her paintings while staying up there. An art lover happens to come across Wrona while she was painting and wanted to buy the art piece. On the same day, a deal was made. It was a good feeling for Wrona.

Wrona is currently working on art based off Connecticut barns



The name of this painting is called "Waiting" featuring a snowbound truck in Brimfield.



Lynn Wrona enjoys painting areas she spots in the New England countryside.

SELECTMEN | FROM PAGE 1

larski; Cemetery Commissioner, Melissa Magario; Constables, Dennis Trela (incumbent), Tim Nason (incumbent) and Vaughn Schlegel.

Moderator James Caldwell, School Committee member Tonya Matthews, Board of Health member Jillian Phillips, Library Trustee Margaret Bodine and Planning Board member John Turner, will not be seeking reelection.

Recycling policy

Petraitis read the Board of Health's recycling policy, which states the board will: "make more efficient use of our natural resources, create markets for the materials collected and recycling programs, reduce solid waste volume and disposal costs, and serve as a model for private and public institutions. The town of North Brookfield is committed to purchasing products which are environmentally preferable and/or made of recycled materials whenever such products meet quality requirements and are available at reasonable prices and terms."

The board voted to accept the policy, which is an annual requirement in order to apply for grant funding from the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program.

U.S. 250th anniversary committee

Kathy Crevier requested the town form a committee to plan a celebration for the country's 250th anniversary. She said she was involved with the organization of the town's bicentennial committee 50

years ago and would be interested in helping with this celebration.

"I've talked to several people... there's interest, they would like to be part of it, they have good ideas," she said.

The board voted to form a 250th

U.S. anniversary committee and asked that interested residents contact them to join.

Contract amendment

The board signed an amended contract for a change order with engineers Haley Ward for the Mount Pleasant Street Project in

the amount of \$31,381.

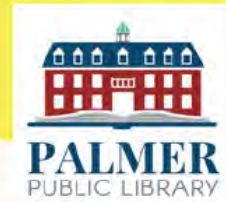
"They've incurred some additional costs because of the construction going longer than it was supposed to," Petraitis said.

The costs will cover construction administration and engineering through June 30.

Review of letter

The board reviewed a letter to be sent to Ricoh, nullifying a contract signed by a past Senior Center director. The letter states that the contract is unauthorized, as the Board of Selectmen serves as the town's authorized agent.

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Turley Publications

- community -

ROAD TRIP | FROM PAGE 1

due to a snowstorm.

When the family reached Washington, D.C., they enjoyed sightseeing including the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. Arnold said his grandmother wrote several entries in her journal about how “reckless” the drivers were in the nation’s capital.

On Feb. 9, the family reached the home of Maud’s brother in North Carolina where they set up a trailer to tow their belongings for the remainder of their long journey. As the journey continued into South Carolina, Hubhub needed to have stiffer springs installed, after the poor condition of the roads took their toll.

Once reaching Georgia, the family enjoyed a stay at the Palmetto Tourist Camp, which featured a number of state-of-the-art campers. Lodgings weren’t always so refined, with the family tenting a total of 84 times during the road trip.

When they arrived in the oldest city in the U.S., St. Augustine, Florida, the family visited the oldest house and Fort San Marcos, as well as an alligator farm. One of the children, Bob, noted in his journal that there were ostriches and a pelican there as well.

Arnold shared photos of the family’s trip that were taken by his grandfather. He said his grandfather developed the negatives in the backseat of the Model T at night when the family stopped traveling for the day.

“He had very little control over the temperature of the processing chemicals, which resulted in damage to some of them,” he said.



Submitted photo
This photo of the Melville family’s 1927 Model T Ford “Hubhub” was taken by Carey Melville, the grandfather of Sturbridge resident and photographer Robert Arnold.

Challenging road conditions were a continuing theme throughout the journals kept by the family, including a seven-mile stretch to Cape Sable that took over an hour and a half to travel. Roads along the west coast of Florida were in much better condition, and Arnold said his grandmother even took turns driving, even though he didn’t think she ever had a driver’s license.

By March 22, the Melvilles arrived in Tarpon Springs, Florida, where the family enjoy seeing the sponge boats at the waterfront.

When the family reached Madison, Florida, they recalled that the residents were “on edge” after the intoxicated sheriff shot a man, claiming it was an accident.

Maud wrote of the incident, “Everyone carries a gun...surely a fierce country.”

After navigating cypress swamps, Arnold said the rest of the journey through Florida was “relatively easy with good roads and good weather.”

The journey continued through

tered the aftermath of a tornado in Rocksprings, Texas.

“When the Melvilles left Rocksprings, Gaga [Maud Melville] noted that driving back to the Terlingua area, with no road signs, meant a lot of wrong turns in 110 degrees,” Arnold said. “The only traffic they would see, was the occasional mule team which had to travel 83 miles to bring supplies to the town.”

Travel through Texas was difficult, Arnold said, with extreme heat and roads that were “terrible to nonexistent” outside of population centers. It was here that Hubhub developed a radiator leak.

In New Mexico, the family caught up on laundry and sent Hubhub in for repairs, while exploring the landscape.

“The next few days were a sightseeing dream,” Arnold said.

On June 21, the Melvilles began a weeklong stay with the Hopi Nation in Arizona.

“There developed a special connection between the Melvilles and these gentle, kind people, which resulted in many decade’s long relationships...the Hopi opened their doors to our travelers and shared much of their culture with them,” he said.

Arnold said his grandmother bought many pieces of Hopi pottery, which is now part of a collection of Native American arts and

crafts at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut.

“The other real benefit of staying a week at Hopi, was freeing the kids from the backseat of the car so they could swim in the arroyo, go horseback riding, make new friends, and just be kids,” Arnold said.

After spending time with the Hopi Nation and forming lasting friendships, Maud wrote to her family back home and said, “we are the most fortunate people on earth.”

As the Melvilles approached the Grand Canyon, they were warned that the Ford might not make it through, and his grandmother noted they had to get out and push for a quarter of a mile at one point. He said they enjoyed exploring the overlooks along the south rim, and on July 6, they decided to hike down into the canyon, despite warnings from people at the campground.

“The temperature was 114 in the canyon and the descent was very hard...it took all day until 6:30,” he said.

The family left the bottom of the canyon early the next morning, but one of the children, Maud Jr., became ill from drinking too much water from the creek. About half-way back up, a ranger offered the family the aid of a mule.

“Everyone made it out by 4:15, but they were obviously very tired,” he said.

The family left the Grand Canyon and continued west, seeking out-of-the-way places, and encountering their first giant cactus in Phoenix, Arizona. Once in California, the family rented a fully accommodated cabin for \$1.25.

By Aug. 7, the Melvilles made it to Crater Lake in Oregon, and the children enjoyed playing in the snow.

“The Melvilles enjoyed the small towns and wide open views of the farmlands on the drive through the fertile valleys of apple and wheat country along the Co-

lumbia River on the way to Cooley, Washington,” Arnold said. “But it’s here in the middle of August, the Melvilles are still thousands of miles away from home and the pressure to keep moving is rising.”

The family moved on and arrived in Yellowstone National Park, where they saw hot springs and had one of many encounters with bears along their journey.

In Wyoming, the Melvilles saw President Calvin Coolidge, near the site of the future Mount Rushmore. The Melvilles had a Worcester license plate on their car, noting that Coolidge (a former Governor of Massachusetts) may have noticed it, which could have caused him to wave to them.

By Sept. 1, the family had reached Iowa, and caught up with family and friends they knew there.

On Sept. 6, after traveling 16,425 miles, another car collided with Hubhub, causing damage to the car and minor injuries to the Melvilles, which delayed them for several days. As they continued on, one of the wheels fell off the trailer, which cost them another day.

“It would seem that both the passengers and the equipment are wearing out after eight months on the road,” Arnold said.

After reaching Niagara Falls, the final push homeward was on.

Once they returned to Massachusetts and approached their home, Maud noted, “Carey and I got quite a thrill once we came down the Paxton Road and saw Worcester lights...home at 10.”

Following their return home, Arnold said his grandfather calculated the data from the road trip, which showed that Hubhub averaged 20.7 miles per gallon of gas. The total cost of gas and oil for the eight month trip was \$248.10; with gas averaging 24.5 cents per gallon.

The compilation of this data was “a fitting end to an epic road trip,” Arnold said.

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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.

SPOTLIGHT | FROM PAGE 1

greens with the sun and not artificial light. Thus, they are highly nutritious.

Later on, in coming markets, she will have salad bowls and growing lettuce in containers available.

At the summer market on the West Brookfield Common, there will be the microgreens as well as starter plants in June. She will have more cold tolerant starter plants at the Brimfield Market in April if one can’t wait, but summer can’t come soon enough for most of us

On the other side of the room was Elzire’s Acre, known for the popular goat milk soaps they bring to market.

Elzire’s Acre goat farm is located up in Princeton and is the operation of Chad and Terri Steiner. Staffing the table is Chloe, as she does most weeks. This week, she had something new.

So, you have these lovely, fragrant soaps, shouldn’t you have something classy to hold them? Terri has come up with soap dishes made out of resin. Chloe had two examples to show off. They actually look like they were sculpted out of marble, and are a lovely complement to the soaps they can hold.

Elzire’s Acre will be here for the rest of the markets and back for the summer market.

Most of the other usual suspects were on hand. Maple syrup and honey were available for those with a sweet tooth. Gourmet coffee was available for, dare we say it, the gourmets. Pork products, eggs and chicken were there as well, and baked goods. Don’t forget the tulips.

So, enjoy the venue as the last winter market of March 12 will be here before you know it.



TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY
Chloe is shown with a soap dish and what it holds. Market spotlight 2

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SPORTS

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Cougars grab victory over Pirates

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WARREN—Quaboag junior forward Isaac Cover was forced to come out of last Thursday night's home game against SWCL rival Oxford late in the first quarter after he chipped a tooth.

Cover, who had scored seven points, returned to action at the start of the second quarter. He scored 25 more points over the final three quarters, as the Cougars wrapped up the regular season with a 63-48 senior night victory over the Pirates.

"I've never had a player score more than 30 points in a game after losing a piece of his tooth. Isaac is a very tough kid," said Quaboag head coach Chris Reilly. "It was a hard fought battle tonight, and we just found a way to come out on top."

Cowher wound up making a total of seven 3-pointers giving him a season-high 32 points. His previous season-high was 22 points in a non-

See COUGARS | PAGE 8

Panthers fall in Class B tournament

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

AUBURN—The Quabbin girls' basketball team captured the Central Mass. Class B championship title last February with a 12-point victory over Notre Dame Academy at Worcester State University.

The members of this year's Lady Panthers squad were hoping to make another visit to the WSU gymnasium.

Third-seeded Quabbin, who graduated four starters, was trailing second-seeded Auburn, 36-33, entering the final eight minutes of this year's Central Mass. Class B semifinal game.

It didn't remain a close game for very long, as the Rockets built a 15-point lead three minutes into the fourth quarter leading to 52-38 home victory, last Friday night.

"We really wanted to get back to the championship game again and I'm very proud of these kids," said Quabbin head coach Evan Barringer. "Give Auburn a lot of credit because they shot the ball very well during the second half. It's very hard to win a playoff game on the road."

The Lady Panthers (5-14) were scheduled to wrap up the 2024-25 campaign with a non-playoff home game against the loser of the other



Lianna Leger fires a pass up the court.

Class B semifinal game on Tuesday night.

"We're hoping to end our season with a victory at home on Tuesday night," Barringer said. "It's going to be a fun night of basketball because the boys' basketball team will be playing in the second game of the doubleheader."

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

The seniors listed on the Quabbin girls' basketball roster are Bella Smith (3 points), Brooke Austin (8 points), Christiana Dunn (6 points), Lianna Leger, and Makaylah Kingsbury.

"The five seniors are very spe-

See PANTHERS | PAGE 8



Christiana Dunn makes an inbound pass.



Brooke Austin reaches out for a loose ball.

Tantasqua girls fall to Holyoke

FISKDALE – Last Wednesday night, the Tantasqua Regional High School girls basketball team was defeated by Holyoke 41-36. The Warriors season finished at 5-13. The Warriors will not make the state tournament this season.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI
Violet Spooner fakes, then makes a pass



Maggie Johnson holds the ball up before making a pass.



Bella Smith crosses midcourt.



Tessa Sheldon rushes toward the hoop.



Abbie Wotton looks to drive to the hoop.



Laney Powell chases down a loose ball.



Addison Doktor passes out of the paint.

Pioneers finish with one of best records in team history

PALMER – Last week, despite a setback against Sci-Tech, the Pathfinder girls basketball team rebounded to defeat Hampden Charter 52-36 and finish with an overall record of 15-3. Its one of the best marks the girls basketball team has ever had. Earlier

this week, the Pioneers were set to participate in the Western Mass. Class C Tournament, taking on Lee High School on the road in the quarterfinals. The Pioneers will also get to take part in the state tournament, which begins next week.



Taylor Allen fights to keep the ball.



Greenly Lagimoniere passes as she clears midcourt.



Desiree Croteau eyes the hoop with a low dribble.



Megan Clark looks to shoot.

HoopHall announces award winners

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the recipients of the 2025 Curt Gowdy Media Award and John Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award at NBA All-Star Weekend.

Legendary Detroit Pistons play-by-play announcer George Blaha, renowned CBS analyst Clark Kellogg, veteran women's basketball writer Michelle Smith, and influential NBA journalist Adrian Wojnarowski are the

2025 Curt Gowdy Media Award recipients. Boston Celtics long-time Vice President of Media and Alumni Relations Jeff Twiss is the recipient of the 2025 John W. Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Curt Gowdy Media Award is named in honor of the late Curt Gowdy, a legendary sports broadcaster and former Hall of Fame Board member and President. This prestigious award is presented to members of the print, electronic, and transformative media

whose efforts have made a significant contribution to the game of basketball.

The Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award was instituted by the Basketball Hall of Fame's Board of Trustees in 1973 and is the most prestigious award presented by the Hall of Fame outside of Enshrinement. Named in honor of Hall of Famer John W. Bunn (Class of 1964), the first chairman of the Basketball Hall of Fame

See HOOPHALL | PAGE 8

- Sports -

T-Birds suffer one-goal loss to Rockford

ROCKFORD, Ill. — The Springfield Thunderbirds (23-19-2-3) suffered a second straight gut-wrenching loss in the closing moments, falling 4-3 to the Rockford IceHogs (19-22-5-1) on Saturday night inside the BMO Center.

Things got off to a rocky start for the T-Birds, who fell behind 1-0 just 64 seconds into the game after a misplayed puck wound up on the tape of Joey Anderson inside the right-wing circle. Anderson made no mistake in snapping it through Colten Ellis on the stick side, giving Rockford the 1-0 advantage.

Ellis solidified things over the next 15 minutes, turning away the next nine Ice-

Hogs attempts while the T-Birds struggled to find offense. Finally, a pair of Rockford penalties afforded Springfield a 4-on-3 power play, and Matt Luff unleashed a perfect wrist shot that squeaked past Ben Gaudreau's blocker to tie the game, 1-1, at 18:17.

Springfield's momentum would not last long, though, and just 32 seconds later, Brett Seney picked off a loose puck in the high slot and quickly wristed a try under the crossbar to restore the IceHogs lead, 2-1, heading into the intermission.

Anderson's hot hand carried over into the early stages of the second, as he found a gap through the five-hole of Ellis to make

it a 3-1 score at 5:19 of the middle stanza.

Through the opening 30 minutes of play, the T-Birds had managed just six shots on goal. However, the visitors clawed their way back, beginning with Illinois native Hugh McGing tucking home a rebound outside the blue paint at 12:55 to cut the Rockford lead to 3-2.

Dylan Peterson thought he had brought the T-Birds back even when he shuffled a loose puck across the goal line just over a minute later, but the call was changed to no-goal after the referees congregated. Nevertheless, Springfield pressed on, and on the next shift, Matthew Peca punched home a rebound off an Alek Kaskimaki shot, and

the game was deadlocked at the 14:56 mark of the second.

Ellis and Gaudreau did their part to lock things down from that point, as the two netminders kept the score locked in the 3-3 stalemate into the game's final minutes. Unfortunately for Springfield, they succumbed to a late game-winner for a second straight game when Andreas Athanasiou broke up the ice in a 2-on-1 with Anderson and tucked a backhand around Ellis to win it for Rockford with just 1:59 left in the third. Ellis suffered only his second loss in his last 11 starts, and the Springfield goalie also saw his five-game win streak get snapped in the process.

Railers take care of Americans

ALLEN, TX — The Worcester Railers HC (23-20-2-4 52pts) beat the Allen Americans (13-27-7-2, 35pts), on Sunday afternoon by a final score of 3-1 in front of a crowd of 3,144 at the Credit Union of Texas Event Center. The Railers are back on the ice next at the North Charleston Coliseum taking on the South Carolina Stingrays on Wednesday, February 16th at 10:30 a.m. EST.

Worcester got the scoring started as they tacked on the first three goals of the game in the first period. The first came from Jordan Kaplan (1-0-1), followed by Tyler Kobryn (1-0-1) and it was Lincoln Hatten (1-0-1) who finished off the first period trifecta. Brayden Watts (1-0-1) scored the first goal for Allen on the power play 11:35 into the second period making it 3-1. Neither team would net one in the third period leading us to the 3-1 Worcester win.

For the second time in the weekend series the Railers jumped out to a 3-0 first period lead. Jordan Kaplan (16th) started the scoring party 11:21 into the first peri-

od. Tyler Kobryn (4th) followed up Kaplan 15:06 into the first, and it was Lincoln Hatten (5th) who scored the third Worcester goal in the period giving them a commanding 3-0 lead heading into the second. Shots favored Worcester 16-4 in the first period.

Allen had three power play opportunities in the second period, it was not until the third power play that they grabbed their first goal of the night. It was Brayden Watts (17th) who cut the Railers lead to two. Watts had the only goal of the period, giving Worcester a 3-1 lead heading into the third period. Shots favored Allen 17-10 in the second period.

Despite a 5-on-3 power play chance for Worcester as well as an Allen power play chance neither team was able to cash in on their respective opportunities. The scoreless period led to a 3-1 final, with Worcester walking away with the series sweep over the Allen Americans. Allen outshot Worcester 16-8 in the third, and 37-34 in the game.

COUGARS | FROM PAGE 7

league 56-49 home win against Blackstone Valley Tech on January 10.

Even though Quaboag finished the regular season with a 5-13 overall record, they still qualified for the Central Mass. Class C tournament. The third-seeded Cougars were scheduled to play at second-seeded Oxford (4-14) in a semifinal game on Monday night.

The semifinal winner was scheduled to face either top-seeded St. Paul or fourth-seeded Douglas in the Central Mass. finals at Shrewsbury High School on Wednesday afternoon. The losers of semifinal games also faced each other.

Reilly Comptois and Hart Waz, who are the only seniors listed on the Cougars varsity roster, were honored in a ceremony held prior to the start of last Thursday's contest.

Comptois didn't get to play on senior night because he suffered a left foot injury in Quaboag's previous game against Tantasqua Regional.

"It's sad that Reilly Comptois wasn't able to start on senior night," Reilly said. "We've dealt with a lot of injuries this season."

Waz, who's a guard, made a 3-pointer early in the second quarter, which was his only points on senior night.

While Hart hasn't had coach Reilly as a teacher, his parents (Brian + Tracy) did when they were students at Quaboag Regional.

"I've been a math teacher here for the past 42 years and I taught both of Hart's parents," Reilly said. "I've really enjoyed coaching both of our seniors this year."

Things didn't start out very well for the Cougars on senior night, as the Pirates raced out to an early 8-0 lead. The junior

duo of Jeff Guzman and Nolan Remington led the visiting team with 18 points apiece.

With junior point guard Jacoby Labilouis (9 points) leading the way, Quaboag outscored Oxford, 12-4 during the final five minutes of the opening quarter. The Cougars entered the second stanza trailing by just one point (15-14) following a lay-up by junior center Jack Steven (4 points).

"We started the game a little bit timid," Reilly said. "We did play a lot better once Jacoby figured out how to break their press. It was a very good learning experience for him."

The Cougars outscored the Pirates, 19-5, during the second quarter.

"We always pride ourselves on playing well defensively," Reilly said. "We held them without a field goal in the second quarter, which is very good."

The home team took the lead for the first time at 16-15 following an inside hoop by sophomore forward Liam McGrath (6 points) ten seconds into the second quarter.

A couple of minutes later, the Waz 3-pointer gave the Cougars a 21-18 lead.

Cowher made three 3-pointers during the final four minutes of the first half and the home team held a 33-20 halftime advantage.

After Guzman made a 3-pointer and a put-back hoop at the start of the third quarter, Cowher made three more shots from beyond the three point line, as the Cougars scored 17 unanswered points.

With 2:40 left in the third quarter, junior guard Kadin Dufault made a lay-up which increased the Cougars lead to 50-25.

Quaboag's largest lead was 60-39 in the middle of the fourth quarter, and they were able to celebrate a senior night victory.



Abby Rogowski goes after a rebound.

PANTHERS | FROM PAGE 7

cial," Barringer said. "They were a part of a championship team last year and they've faced a lot of adversity this season."

Leading the way offensively for the Lady Panthers was sophomore Abby Rogowski, who scored eight of her 14 points during the first half. Junior Mia Ducos, who was the Lady Panthers only returning starter this winter, added seven points.

"Mia is one of the best girls' basketball players in the history of the school," Barringer said. "Abby is a three-sport all-star player. We'll be building around them next year, but we still have one game to play this season."

It has been more than 15 years since Quabbin and Auburn faced each other on the hardwood.

The Lady Panthers won the last meeting, 46-40, which was played during the 2008-09 regular season.

"I think we should play Auburn again next year," Barringer said. "It's only a 40 minute trip here, which for us is nothing."

The Lady Rockets (12-7), who has qualified for the Division 3 state tournament, were led offensively in the semifinal victory by the trio of sophomore Taylor Goodrich (22 points), junior Samantha Jess (12 points), and senior Maeve Whittemore (11 points).



Mia Ducos looks to drive around an opponent.



Bella Smith crosses midcourt.

Last Friday's contest was a homecoming game for Barringer, who graduated from Auburn High School in 1997. As a senior, Barringer was a member of the Rockets boys' basketball team, which captured the Clark Tournament large school championship title. Barringer was also a member of the Rockets boys' soccer and golf teams. His father, John, was an English teacher at Auburn High School for 35 years.

The duo of Ducos and Rogowski combined to score ten points during the opening quarter. Smith also buried a 3-pointer from the left corner, as the visiting team entered the second stanza holding a 13-11 advantage.

With 3:50 remaining in the opening half, Austin hit a jumper in the lane giving Quabbin a 15-14 lead.

Dunn followed with a 3-pointer and the Lady Panthers closed out the first half with a 12-5 run.

Auburn, who entered the second half trailing, 25-19, took a 33-27 lead following a Jess inside hoop with 3:55 left in the third quarter.

The Lady Panthers came storming back with a 6-1 run over the final two minutes of the quarter. Ducos began the spurt with a coast-to-coast lay-up. Rogowski, who also plays field hockey and softball, added the other four points with a put-back hoop and a lay-up, which sliced the deficit to 36-33, entering the fourth quarter.

The Lady Panthers supporters, which included several members of the boys' varsity basketball team, saw the Lady Rockets score twelve unanswered points which gave the home team a 48-33 lead in the middle of the final quarter.

Quabbin's only points of the fourth quarter was an Austin inside hoop and a Dunn 3-pointer.

HOOP HALL | FROM PAGE 7

Committee who served from 1949-64, the award honors coaches, players, and contributors whose outstanding accomplishments have impacted the high school, college, professional, and/or the international game.

Blaha, Kellogg, Smith, Wojnarowski, and Twiss will be recognized for their contributions to basketball during the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Enshrinement Weekend on September 5-6. For further details, including ticket information, visit hoophall.com/events/enshrinement-2025.

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Cost: \$30 Covers both tryouts (players get t-shirt)
AAU card \$25 (purchase on our website, we'll pull them)

Tryout # 1: February 22, 2025
Location: Tantasqua Jr High School (320 Brookfield Road, Fiskdale, MA)

- Boys Grades 4th-6th 8:30 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.
- Boys Grades 7th & 8th 9:45 a.m. - 10:55 a.m.
- Boys Grades 9th-12th 11 a.m. - 12:10 p.m.
- Girls Grades 4th-6th 12:15 p.m. - 1:25 p.m.
- Girls Grades 7th-8th 1:30 p.m. - 2:40 p.m.
- Girls Grades 9th-12th 2:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Tryout # 2: March 1, 2025
Location: Oxford High School (100 Caruncle Drive, Oxford, MA)

- Boys Grades & Girls Grades 4th-6th (9 a.m. - 10:25 a.m.)
- Boys & Girls Grades 7th & 8th (10:30 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.)
- Boys and Girls Grades 9th-12th (12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.)

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- community -

Quaboag Historical Society seeks scholarship applicants

The Quaboag Historical Society is proud to announce its annual scholarship program, designed to support high school seniors with a passion for history and a commitment to preserving the past.

This \$1,000 scholarship aims to assist students planning to pursue higher education in any historical related field.

The scholarship is only offered to a student who resides in one of the Quaboag Plantation towns of Brookfield, East Brookfield, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Warren, or West Brookfield.

It is offered to a current high school senior planning to enroll in a college or university for the upcoming academic year who will pursue a degree in one of the following fields: education, history, museum studies, anthropology, women's studies, American studies, or archaeology. Students wishing to study closely related fields are encouraged to apply.

The application deadline is May 2. For applications or more information, please contact Jeff Robbins by emailing jeffrobbins@charter.net or calling 508-579-4786.

Quabbin students selected for Project 351 Ambassadors



Project 351 Ambassadors are from left, Robert Tobin, Aiden Pagan, Jacob Rosario, Chloe Richardson, Zoey Salvadore and Isabelle Wentworth.

BARRE – Each year, eighth grade students from communities across the commonwealth are selected to participate in Project 351.

Project 351 shares, “We are a youth-led, school-based movement for positive change. We believe inside every young person is a brave, bold leader

with dreams of a better world and the skill, passion, and creativity to achieve their vision. The program is designed to meet the demand for high quality, enriching service opportunities that respect and reflect the unique gifts and world changing aspirations of young people.”

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.

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.

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>.

QRHS lists National Honor Society members



On Jan. 15, the newest members of Quabbin Regional High School National Honor Society, Excelsior Chapter were inducted. This special event recognizes students for their outstanding Scholarship, Service, Leadership, and Character. Pictured from left are front row, Andrew Warfield, Abigail Ure, Emma Kahlau, Luke Salvadore, Vanecia Tarquinio, Ruby Gatulis, Sophia Gagne, Elizabeth Matheson, Grace Manna, Hunter McQueston and Hannah Zereski and back row from left are Jin Xi Jou, Garrett Erickson, Collin Lindley, Richard Tucker, Rylee-Ann Harty, Adelaide Harmon, Micah Cerezo, Mia Ducos, Kalina Dyer, Owen Brewer and Brianca Wilder.



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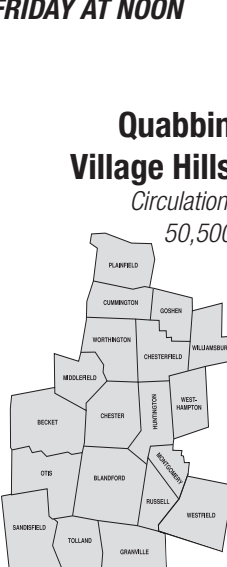
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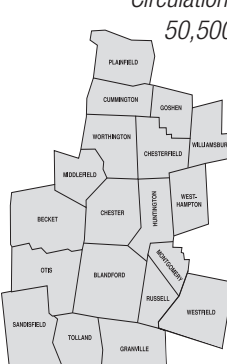
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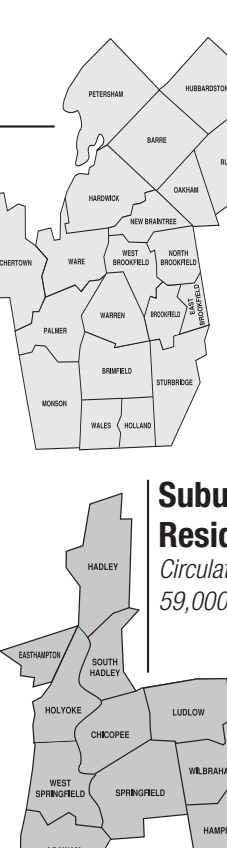
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- community -

Cultural Council lists FY 25 grant awards

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The North Brookfield Cultural Council is pleased to announce the approved grants for fiscal year 2025: Davis Bates- Celtic Celebration; Friends of the Town House-Cool Kids Choir and art show display racks; Friends of the Stone Church-Spring 2025 Concerts; Haston Public Library: Gravestone Girls, One Up Games, Castle Nitro; Nick Kachulis - Life with

Bill: A New Model for Aging; Sue Lewandowski - NBCARES2HELP- Community Resource; Music Dance- Ron-dae Drafts- Hip Hop Chair Dance for Seniors; North Brookfield High School Student Council- Christmas in North Brookfield; Deborah Roberts Kirk- Intro to Watercolor; Athol Historical Society- Uniquely Quabbin Magazine; and Dennis Wise- The Theft of Dignity.

Blood drive to take place at QRHS on Feb. 27

BARRE – A blood drive will take place on Thursday, Feb. 27 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Quabbin Regional Middle High School, 800 South St., in the high school gymnasium.

Ellie Frost, a senior at Quabbin Regional High School, is putting on a blood drive at the high school in partnership with the Rhode Island Blood Center.

Walk-ins are welcome if space per-

mits, but they ask people to sign up at ribc.org/drives and use sponsor code M102.

Sixteen year old donors need parent/guardian permission. Permission slips are available at ribc.org/permission.

Donors should eat, drink and bring ID with their name and photo. Blood donation takes about an hour. People may also call 800-283-8385.

The Jazz Bones will perform free concert at Trinity Episcopal

WARE – The Jazz Bones will present a music concert on Sunday, Feb. 23 at 4 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church, 17 Park St.

This concert is open and free to the public. This concert will benefit S.O.N.G. (Supporting Orphans, Nationally & Globally).

The trombone ensemble has a powerful five-part harmony whether they are playing a hard swing, fast jazz or a sweet ballad and backed by a first class rhythm section to drive the beat.

Music you may hear: “Eleanor Rigby”, “All of Me”, “On A Clear Day”, “Don’t Get Around Anymore”, “Bad Bad Leroy Brown”, “Here’s That Rainy Day”, “Bye

Bye Blackbird”, “Polka”, “Fly Me to the Moon”, “Battle of Jericho”, “Old Devil Moon”, “Bill Bailey”, “Satin Doll”, “California Dreaming”, “Indiana”, “Tie A Yellow Ribbon” and “America The Beautiful”.

Please visit the Jazz Bones web site to listen to the group: www.Premierentertains.com. For more information about the Jazz Bones contact David Neill by calling 413-686-5027 or emailing tb8@aol.com. The program is supported in part by the Ware Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Oliveira leads call for urgent review of energy rate increases

BOSTON – In response to unprecedented spikes in energy bills across Massachusetts, state Sen. Jake Oliveira (Hampden, Hampshire & Worcester District) is leading a coalition of state legislators to jointly call on the Department of Public Utilities to immediately reassess recent rate hikes approved for investor-owned utility companies, including Eversource and National Grid.

In a letter addressed to DPU Chair James Van Nostrand, Oliveira was joined by more than 80 legislators who expressed grave concern over the financial strain these increases place on households and small businesses.

“Residents across our districts have reported alarming increases in their utility bills, with some seeing their costs double,” said Oliveira in the joint letter. “A senior constituent of mine’s Eversource bill jumped to \$449.91 in January, nearly \$300 of which was due to supply costs alone. These excessive rate hikes are unsustainable for working families, seniors, and small business owners who are already struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living.”

The letter highlighted the burden on vulnerable residents, including seniors on fixed incomes who are experiencing an astonishing 27% increase in their heating costs. De-

spite claims from Eversource that the spikes are due to colder temperatures and increased usage, many ratepayers who have maintained consistent energy consumption are still seeing drastic hikes.

“Families are having to make the impossible decision between putting food on the table and heating their homes. This is unacceptable,” he said.

Oliveira and the legislators are demanding that the DPU conduct a comprehensive and transparent review of Eversource’s pricing structure to determine whether these rate increases are justified.

“Time and again, we see profits prioritized over the well-being of Massachusetts families,” said Oliveira. “We cannot allow utility companies to impose unpredictable and excessive financial burdens on ratepayers without proper oversight. The DPU must act now to protect consumers and ensure fairness in energy pricing.”

As winter continues, Oliveira and the legislators are calling on the DPU to take immediate action to hold Eversource accountable and implement measures that prioritize affordability for all Massachusetts residents.

Second Chance urges community to consider adopting or fostering pets

EAST BROOKFIELD – Second Chance Animal Services is calling on the community to help pets in need by adopting now.

With adoptions slowing and pet surrenders rising, the Second Chance Adoption Center is full, leaving some pets waiting behind the scenes for a space to begin their search for a forever home. The nonprofit is also welcoming new fosters to help care for shelter pets.

“Our adoption center is filled with wonderful pets ready for loving homes, but until they find families, we can’t bring in more pets who need us,” said Sheryl Blancato, CEO and founder of Second Chance. “Right now, we have pets waiting in areas not open to the public, simply because there isn’t enough space. Every adoption not only changes the life of one pet, but it also makes room for another pet to start their journey to a better life. Recently we had to turn down a transport of pets from overcrowded southern shelters because space hasn’t opened quickly enough.”

Second Chance is a no-kill shelter with an over 99% save rate, meaning they never give up on pets. Whether it takes days, weeks, or even months, every pet receives the care, time, and attention they need to find a loving home.

To encourage more adoptions, Second Chance is reminding the public that its adoption center is open weekdays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturdays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Thursday evenings from 5-7 p.m. The Thursday evening hours, which have been quieter, offer a great opportunity for adopters to meet pets in a more relaxed setting.

The number of pets waiting for a home reflects a growing nationwide trend. Shelters across the country, including Second Chance, are seeing a surge in pet surrenders due to financial hardships, housing challenges, and other factors, while adoption rates have slowed. This means pets are waiting longer to find homes, creating a bottleneck that prevents shelters from helping more animals in need.

Even as a leader in surrender prevention with access-to-care hospitals and programs that keep pets and people together, Second Chance is feeling the impact of the current trend.

Fostering can also ease the strain on shelters and give pets a better chance at finding a home. Even a short-term foster placement-just a few weeks-can make a world of difference for a pet struggling with the stress of a shelter environment. By opening their home to a foster pet, individuals can help free up space for incoming animals while giving a pet the comfort and care they need to thrive. Second



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Coda, a one-year-old Anatolian Shepherd mixed breed dog, is just one of the many pets waiting for a home at the Second Chance Adoption Center.

Chance provides all necessary supplies, making it easy for fosters to step in and make an immediate impact.

Second Chance has dogs, cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs of all ages, sizes, and personalities waiting for their second chance. Those considering adoption can view available pets on the Second Chance website or visit the adoption center in person.

“If you’ve been thinking about adding a pet to your family, now is the time,” Blancato emphasized. “Every adoption makes a difference-not just for the pet you bring home, but for the next pet waiting for their chance.”

To see available pets looking for homes, visit www.secondchanceanimals.org/adopt. If you’re interested in making a difference by fostering, you can learn more at www.secondchanceanimals.org/foster-care/.

About Second Chance Animal Services
Second Chance Animal Services is a non-profit animal welfare organization founded in 1999. Second Chance began as an animal shelter and grew to help more pets in need.

Today Second Chance operates Community Veterinary Hospitals in North Brookfield, Southbridge, Springfield and Worcester providing access to the highest-quality veterinary care for all. Subsidized rates are provided to underserved communities to ensure access to care for all pets in need.

Last year Second Chance helped over 56,000 pets live better lives through full-service veterinary care, spay/neuter services, adoption services, community and educational outreach programs, training, and a pet food pantry.

For more information, visit Second Chance’s website at www.secondchanceanimals.org. Follow Second Chance on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/secondchanceanimals> or on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/secondchanceas>.

- public notices -

LEGAL NOTICE: TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30A, 18-25, as amended by Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2009, The Wetlands Protection Act, the West Brookfield Conservation Commission

will hold a public hearing on **WEDNESDAY, March 5, 2025 at 6:00 pm** in the first floor meeting room, West Brookfield Town Hall, 2 East Main Street.

6:00 – Public Hearing:
RDA – 78 Lake View Ave –
Brisbois – Stair and Deck Repair
NOI – 78 Lake View Ave –
Brisbois – Enclosing area under deck

NOI – 90 Lake View Ave –
Butland - Addition to existing dwelling and retaining wall
NOI – Leland Road - Water Department – Construction of new water treatment facility
NOI – Rte 9/West Main Reconstruction – Continuation – Phase 2
02/21/2025

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SOCIAL SECURITY | FROM PAGE 4

urity office, or you could choose to increase your income tax withholding at work or, alternatively, pay estimated income taxes quarterly.

So, whether you can claim Social Security now depends entirely on how much you will earn from working full time prior to your FRA. If you exceed the annual earnings limit before your FRA, SS will take away some of your benefits or, if you greatly exceed the earnings limit, you may even be temporarily ineligible to get benefits until you either reach your FRA or earn less. But note, if you decide to claim early and any SS benefits are withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit, you will get credit for that in the form of a slightly increased benefit after you reach your full retirement age.

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



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- community -

National Baseball Poetry Festival announces third season

WEST BROOKFIELD – The National Baseball Poetry Festival kicks off its third season in February with two national poetry contests.

The first opens to youth grades four-12, and the second open to adults 18 years and older. The adult contest deadline is March 28 and the youth contest deadline is April 16.

The festival culminates May 2-4 in Worcester, with a welcome reception, a

youth poetry event, an open mic night, two Triple A baseball games, a fireworks display, and other activities. Prizes will be awarded to 80 poets, 20 in each of the following categories: elementary school, middle school, high school, and adult.

In 2024, Pamela Gemme, a local poet and artist from West Brookfield, was among four dozen poets from around the nation to attend the Festival, and will be featured at its public readings.

According to Festival founder Steven Biondolillo, the National Baseball Poetry Festival is the first-ever Festival to unite sports and the fine arts.

Teachers interested in involving their students can visit www.BaseballPoetryFest.org, where a complete lesson plan and contest form can be found. The festival website also features a schedule of activities, videos, and a list of poets expected to attend and perform at the Festival's open mic night.

Those who are interested can reach out to Pamela Gemme at pamelagemmepoetry@gmail.com or 508-826-1277.

The National Baseball Poetry Festival is a project of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and Biondolillo Associates, LLC. Worcester-the birthplace of Ernest Thayer, author of "Casey at the Bat" is the festival's permanent home and early May, which follows National Poetry Month, its strategic place in the calendar.

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