

# QUABOAG CURRENT

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Friday, March 14, 2025

## Cecile Hewitt celebrates *108<sup>th</sup> birthday*

Celebration held at Quaboag on the Common

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – A special celebration took place this past week at the Quaboag Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center.

Residents, staff and community members of West Brookfield came together to celebrate the 108<sup>th</sup> birthday of Cecile Hewitt, who is a resident at Quaboag Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center. Hewitt is from Sturbridge and was astonished when she arrived at the room, known as party central, of the care center with dozens of guests, family members, and staff clapping and wishing her a happy birthday.

Hewitt had tears of joy and was full of gratitude. “Thank you everyone for being here” was the first



Cecile Hewitt, who turned 108 on March 8, is shown along with state Rep. Donnie Berthiaume, left, and state Sen. Peter Durant.

thing she said after the surprise.

Executive Director of the Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center Jessica Macdonald said this

celebration “is just incredible.”

When asked what the secret is to living a long life, Hewitt did not give an answer. Hewitt was wearing a

birthday tiara and sash for the surprising occasion.

Macdonald made an

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TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA OUIMETTE  
Sergeant Matthew Letendre of the West Brookfield Police Department read “Green Eggs and Ham” by Dr. Seuss with the help of second grade teacher Ryan Hibbard.

### Students celebrate Dr. Seuss’ birthday with guest readers

WEST BROOKFIELD – Students and staff at West Brookfield Elementary School enjoyed the annual Community Reading Day as part of Read Across America Week, which coincides with beloved author Dr. Seuss’ birthday.

On March 3, 13 community readers visited the school

to share a story with their assigned classrooms. Readers choose from a number of Dr. Seuss’ classic books, or read books that were important to them.

Administrative Assistant Angela Routhier welcomed the community readers to the school and thanked them for their participation.

“This is a good thing of you to do,” Routhier said

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## David Bates offers Celtic celebration



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO  
Award winning singer and storyteller Davis Bates arrived at the Haston Free Public Library for a Celtic Celebration presentation. Bates is holding a wooden dog while singing the Bingo song.

Songs and stories shared at Haston Free Public Library

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Haston Free Public Library welcomed award winning performer Davis Bates who engaged the audience with songs and stories for everyone.

Bates is from Shelburne Falls and offers performances and workshops for schools, libraries, senior centers, recreation pro-

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## Covered Bridges of Massachusetts

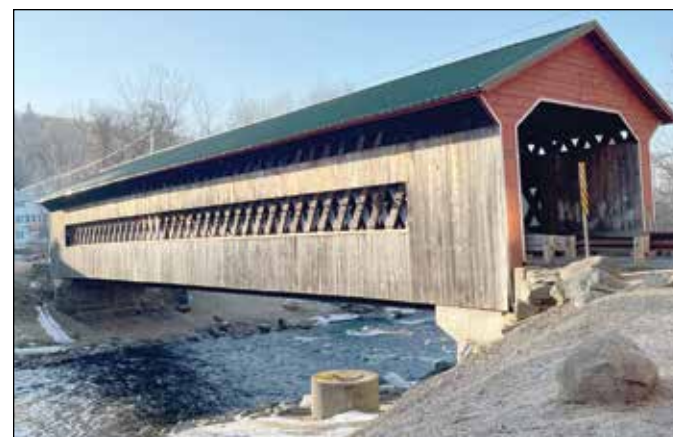
By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – The Sturbridge Historical Society welcomed Rich Paradise to present “The Covered Bridges of Massachusetts” at the Publick House.

Paradise is from Sturbridge and is a member of the Sturbridge Trail Committee and is also a part of the Sturbridge Historical Society. Paradise has traveled to quite a few areas with covered bridges. One of his favorite ones is The Middle Bridge or Union Street Bridge in Vermont.

Paradise describes this bridge as “very nicely done.”

19th century New England covered bridges are



FILE PHOTO  
The Ware-Hardwick Covered Bridge is one of 12 covered bridges in the commonwealth and spans 137 feet across the Ware River.

those iconic wooden structures that feature a roof and siding to protect the bridge’s wooden beams from harsh weather, and 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

**See COVERED BRIDGES**  
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## Select Board and Finance Committee discuss FY 26 budget

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
pouimette@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – Town Administrator Robin Grimm thanked the Select Board, Finance Director Barbara Barry and the Finance Committee for working together to create the fiscal year 2026 budget.

She credited Barry with

playing a crucial role in the town as both Finance Director and Treasurer/Collector, and maintaining good fiscal management.

At the March 3 joint meeting of Select Board and Finance Committee, Grimm also thanked the town’s departmental directors for understanding “the importance of maintaining the services that we provide

and doing so with some very unexpected, uncontrollable increases in the budget,” while avoiding the need for an override.

Grimm said in building the FY 26 budget, they considered supply issues and delivery delays with capital purchases. She said they also analyzed potential revenue numbers.

“You can’t do truly the

performance-based budget in a municipality because there are some things that just don’t work that way, but we can do it as best as possible to have that mindset,” she said.

Grimm said interest income, local receipts, meals taxes were all “pretty flat” which means the town had to be careful with how they budgeted. She said the Gov-

ernor’s budget is only showing a .6% increase in local aid.

“That was one of the things we were very concerned about going into this and right now, that’s kind of where that number sits,” she said.

Grimm said the budget drivers include a 16.7% increase (or \$139,000) for the Worcester County Retirement System contribution.

She said this normally only increases by 8-9%.

“That’s a lot of money on a budget our size,” she said.

Grimm said health insurance rates through the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association have also seen a big increase, go-

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**Quaboag Hills**  
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## - community -

# Library presents the history of Great Blasket Island

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – The Joshua Hyde Public Library had a packed meeting room as the inspiring story of Great Blasket Island was told.

On March 5, over 30 guests witnessed the presentation of Great Blasket Island and its people and it was told by presenter Ellen K. Duzak, who has visited the island in the past. Nobody has lived on the island since the 1950s, but through the stories shared by Duzak, the island brought a huge sense of community.

Duzak is a retired professor of psychology at Becker College. She has a great passion for the history and stories of Great Blasket Island and its people since her own visit there.

The population of the island dropped to about 50 people in the 1940s. Duzak said by 1953, the island had only 22 people living on it.

In 1947, the remaining residents of Great Blasket were gifted food and whiskey that was sent to the island. Apple cake and tea was a very common meal combination on the island. Farming was very common on the island and many natives would salvage items from shipwrecks.

Many descendants of islanders from Great Blasket would move to New England cities such as Boston, Springfield and Hartford.



Ellen Duzak gave a presentation on the Celtic Island, Great Blasket, this past week at the Joshua Hyde Public Library.



There are several books and writers who share their personal stories about living on Great Blasket Island. Several copies were on display in the library's meeting room.

Many of the houses that were once inhabited by residents of Great Blasket are still standing and can be seen by tourists who can visit the island for the day.

This isolated island is off the Kerry Coast of Ireland with a remarkable legacy of writers who have lived on the island before.

"A little rock sticking in the middle of nowhere," Duzak said to describe the island.

Many houses and roads remain on the island and the mayor in the community was referred to as "a king," but always believed in working together as a community.

Many of the houses were on the hillside of the island, which according to Duzak's studies was the most com-



A large photograph of a view from Great Blasket Island, which is about three miles off the mainland of Ireland.

fortable area to settle.

"The Playboy of the Western World" is a story heavily inspired by the people and culture of Blasket Island. What really makes Blasket Island as memorable as it is now in Celtic history is the natives who lived on the is-

land and later told their stories in their respected books.

One of the known writers from Great Blasket Island is Michael Carney, who was born in 1920. Along with his son-in-law Gerald Hayes, Carney was able to tell many of his stories in the book,

"From the Great Blasket to America: The Last Memoir by an Islander."

Carney left in 1937 to seek a better future in Dublin and eventually in America. He would soon settle in Springfield, with several other islanders from Great Blasket.

Tomas O'Crohan was a native of the island who lived there his entire life. Carney remembered him and he was well known in the community. O'Crohan lived a long life and is remembered in many stories including his own book "The Islandman".

He has also written two Irish-language books. A copy of his book was on display in the meeting room, along with other books about Great Blasket Island.

Another notable writ-

er from the island was Peig Sayers, who was known as "the Queen, of Gaelic storytellers." Her book "An Old Woman's Reflections" talks about her daily events.

To this day, many tourists visit Great Blasket Island during the summer months. Duzak suggests that the month of June is the best time to go. Duzak highly recommends many great stories for guests to read and learn more about the island.

After the presentation, guests would check out photographs and copies of the books by Carney, O'Crohan, Sayers and many more. These were provided by Duzak as guests enjoyed refreshments such as coffee and cookies during the Celtic Isle presentation.

## Friends of Sturbridge Trails to hold annual meeting

STURBRIDGE – In the winter of 2013, a group of Sturbridge residents came together expressing an interest in establishing a local, nonprofit (5013c) trail support group to be known as the "Friends of Sturbridge Trails" (FrOST) and how appropriate that their first organizational meeting was held in the winter of 2013.

This group was started by Sturbridge resident and Conservation Commission member David Barnicle, as the

establishment of a friend's group is one of the objectives set out in the Town's Recreation Trail Master Plan.

From that start in 2013 the friend's group has slowly grown, however as in any good organization, The Friends of Sturbridge Trails is looking for new members from the Sturbridge area, with a desire to help the trails in Sturbridge, from casual hiking and dog walkers to highly technical mountain bikers, folks who just like to

be outdoors and everyone in between.

In its bylaws, the mission of the Friends of Sturbridge trails states "composed of individuals, businesses and families sharing an appreciation of the potential for trails and trail related activities, interests and pursuits."

The Friends of Sturbridge Trails (FrOST) will hold its 13th annual meeting on Tuesday, March 25 at 7 p.m. at the Publick House. Along with the routine

business items of financials, membership, officer elections and annual report and calendar, new this year is the rollout of FrOST's online dues payment process, a re-designed Sturbridge Trails website with a page devoted to FrOST including a link to the recently released video on our trails and volunteer program entitled "The Sturbridge Trails: Pathways to Community" and a new email address: Froststurbridge@gmail.com.

FrOST will also be presenting the special David Barnicle Founders Award to Rich Paradise and Denise LaChapelle a couple who are longtime supporters and volunteers of our trail program and in the community. The David Barnicle Founders Award, the previous Pinnacle Award, was renamed

last year in honor of David, the founder of FrOST who passed away two years ago.

A presentation of the David Barnicle Founders Award is made only upon a recommendation and agreement by the FrOST officers and is not an annual award.

Also, as a part of the annual meeting, a special volunteer recognition program will be held. If you have ever volunteered to help the trail committee in any way, please plan on attending to be recognized as a part of this special volunteer appreciation presentation.

Last year trail volunteers put in an amazing 2500+ hours in construction and maintenance totaling some \$124,000.00 in value – achievements well worth celebrating.

The guide to Sturbridge

trails, trail brochures of the Leadmine, Heins and Riverlands properties, will also be available.

The friends' group is open to anyone who would like to support trails in Sturbridge. If you cannot make the March 25th meeting, and have questions or wanting to help in the organizational effort please email us directly at: Froststurbridge@gmail.com

More information on FrOST or to "like us" can be found on our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Sturbridge-Trails-476149822433894/> and the Sturbridge Trails website: <http://www.treksturbridge.org/>

Membership forms/online renewal to join FrOST will be available that night.

## Scouts BSA Troop 163 hosts waffle dinner fundraiser

CHARLTON – Sturbridge Scouts BSA Troop 163 is holding a waffle dinner fundraiser on Friday, March 28 from 6-8 p.m. at Charlton City United Methodist

Church, 74 Stafford St.

All are welcome to join the Scouts for a fantastic waffle dinner fundraiser that includes a number of toppings such as fruit, chocolate chips,

whipped cream, ice cream and more.

The cost for the dinner is any donation amount and will directly support Sturbridge Scouts BSA Troop 163.

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# - community -

## Local author offers new work of fiction

**LJ Cohen book signing at Stone Church**

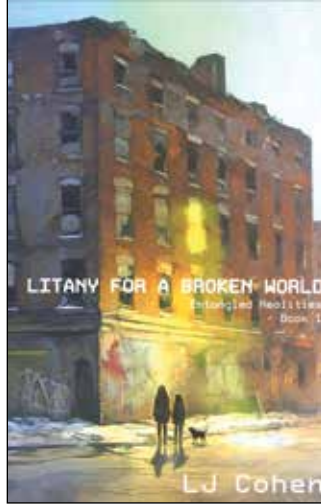
HARDWICK – Lisa Janice Cohen will celebrate the release of her ninth novel, “Litany for a Broken World,” at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 16, at the Stone Church Cultural Center, 283 Main St., Gilbertville.

The public is invited to a reading, book signing and reception with the author.

Cohen describes her newest work of speculative fiction as follows: “When three strangers, each broken in some way, are pulled into a conflict between those with the ability to travel the multiverse and the organization seeking to exploit them, they must risk everything that matters to heal the fractured places in themselves and throughout reality.”



Local author LJ Cohen is celebrating the release of her newest novel, “Litany for a Broken World” at the Stone Church Cultural Center on Sunday, March 16 at 4 p.m.



Author LJ Cohen has released her ninth novel, “Litany for a Broken World.”

Since moving permanently to Gilbertville where she lives with her spouse, Cohen has been a writer in residence at Eagle Hill School. She is also an active potter and homestead farmer, and she serves on the Board of the Friends of the Stone Church. Her website: www.ljcohen.net

### About FOSC

Friends of the Stone Church, Inc. is a public charitable corporation and community group organized in 2015 and open to all. Its mission is to preserve and protect the Gilbertville Stone Church Cultural Center and to make it available as a place of community enrichment.

The Friends welcome donations toward their ongoing preservation project online at www.FriendsoftheStoneChurch.org or by mail to FOSC, P.O. Box 347, Gilbertville, MA 01031.

The author characterizes her story as “‘The Wizard of Oz’, set in a Boston homeless encampment.” It is Book One of a new series.

Cohen’s novels have been praised by Sarah Pinsker, a Hugo and Nebula

Award-winning author; by Lynn Viehl, a New York Times bestselling author, and by Publishers Weekly. One reviewer said of this new novel that writing in the multiverse isn’t easy, but “Cohen makes it work.”

## Leaping leprechauns



Dancing leprechauns have returned to the bandstand on the West Brookfield common, ready for the upcoming St. Patrick’s Day holiday and the arrival of spring.

## Library Chess Club seeks more players

BROOKFIELD – The Chess Club at the Merrick Public Library, 2 Lincoln St., is looking for more chess players. Open to all ages and

levels of experience. The Chess Club is held on Fridays from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Please drop by; no registration is necessary.

## Krispy Kreme donuts are back at East Brookfield library

EAST BROOKFIELD – Stop by the East Brookfield Public Library now until April 29 and pay \$15 to reserve your box of Krispy Kreme donuts. The donuts will be de-

livered on Thursday, May 13 between 9 a.m.-5 p.m., which is also the town’s voting day. On voting day, the library will have fewer than a box and even single donuts on sale.

## New Braintree Library holds story time

NEW BRAINTREE – Story time will be held Monday, March 17 at 9 a.m. at the New Braintree Public Library, 45 Memorial Drive. The March 17 program for preschoolers focuses on St. Patrick’s Day. The readings will include “The Night Before St. Patrick’s

Day” by Natasha Wing and “Pete the Cat, The Great Leprechaun Chase” by James Dean. Parental supervision is required for this reading and crafts program. People may call the library at 508-867-7650 during regular business hours for more information.



Cecile Hewitt was photographed with Fire Chief Rich Lapiere, left, Police Sergeant Matthew Letendre, Police Chief Nathan Hagglund, and Highway Department Administrative Assistant Anne Garwood-Hamp.



Cecile Hewitt’s reaction when she arrived in party central at the care center. Everyone was clapping for Cecile, who was filled with tears of joy.

### 100TH BIRTHDAY FROM PAGE 1

nouncement after the surprise and wanted to thank Hewitt for letting everyone join her for her birthday.

“Thank you for letting us be a part of your celebration,” Macdonald said to Hewitt.

Hewitt received several gifts from family members, residents and special guests. A couple of gifts were presented by state Rep. Donnie Berthiaume and state Sen. Peter Durant.

In addition to flowers, Durant and Berthiaume presented a citation to Hewitt for her 108<sup>th</sup> birthday. Durant said it was an honor to meet Hewitt, who is also known as Cee Cee by her family and friends at the care center.

Hewitt was also greeted by West Brookfield Police Chief Nathan Hagglund, Fire Chief Richard A. Lapiere, Jr. and Police Sergeant Matthew Letendre. All the guests, residents and family members passed around a big birthday card to sign and give to her.

After singing “Happy

Birthday”, guests got to enjoy cake, cookies and tiramisu.

Hewitt was born on March 8, 1917, and has reached an incredible milestone in her life. This birthday celebration will forever be remembered at Quaboag on the Common as many celebrated with her in the party central room, which was decorated in pink and gold.

Happy 108<sup>th</sup> birthday to Cecile Hewitt.



Senator Durant reading a citation that was given to Cecile on her 108th birthday.



State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume and state Sen. Peter Durant presented flowers to Cecile during her birthday celebration.



Cecile Hewitt is shown holding up her citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts recognizing her and her birthday.

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# - opinion -



## Sweet potatoes get my vote

My dad was a “meat and potatoes” kind of guy. Mashed, baked or fried, potatoes were his thing.

Growing up, we usually had potatoes most nights for dinner. Since I have been an adult, I don’t eat potatoes very often at all.

I often wonder if that particular Irish gene missed a generation, since I prefer the sweet potato over the regular potato any day of the week. Read on to learn all about this nutritional powerhouse.

According to www.nutritiondata.com, sweet potatoes are “low in sodium, and very low in saturated fat and cholesterol. They are also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6 and potassium, and a very good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and manganese.”

If these facts aren’t reason enough to try adding this veggie to your garden this growing season, delight in the fact that it is also a very pretty vine!

In fact, once I grew “sweet potato vine” in the planter boxes at Old Sturbridge Village. I didn’t know at the time that the variety I was growing also produced bountiful tubers. It was one of those obvious things that I just didn’t put together.

It’s kind of funny that when I attempted to grow them on purpose at home, they were an utter failure. By the time I peeled the thumb-size roots, there was literally nothing left to eat.

It is time for a refresher on sweet potato culture.

Sweet potatoes require a long growing season – somewhere between 90-150 days. The tender shoots are cold sensitive, and must be planted into the ground after all danger of frost has passed. In our area we use Memorial Day as our “frost-free date.”

Then, the edible root, aka the sweet potato, must be harvested before the first frost of fall. By my records, the first frost usually occurs in early to mid-October.

This equates to 100 days bare minimum of growing time.

You can purchase plants through the mail or try sprouting your own from sweet potatoes purchased from the grocery store.

Dick Raymond, author

of my favorite gardening book of all time, “Garden Way’s Joy of Gardening” (Storey Publishing \$24.95) has some great tips for doing this: Seven or eight weeks prior to Memorial Day, simply cut the spuds in half lengthwise and lay them down in moist peat moss in a shallow tray. Cover with plastic wrap and place in a sunny window until sprouting occurs.

Slips should be separated and planted about six inches deep, twelve to fifteen inches apart from one another.

He advises to water well for the first two weeks; after that sweet potato plants are reportedly somewhat drought tolerant. When fertilizing, choose a formulation that is a bit lower in nitrogen, otherwise you will have lots of vines at the expense of sweet potatoes.

Dig up your bounty on a dry day, being extra careful not to damage the skin. Don’t leave them exposed to the sun for more than an hour and don’t wash them either.

### Picky, aren’t they?

Fresh sweet potatoes aren’t all that sweet – a curing period of two weeks in the dark at 70-80 and at high humidity will bring out the great flavor we are accustomed to. Long-term storage should be at temperatures around 60 degrees.

To make sweet potato fries simply cut the root into thick wedges then toss them with seasoned olive oil (or a favorite salad dressing). Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for one hour, flipping occasionally. Some ketchup as a dip may help reluctant kids to give the “funny orange French fries” a try.

My dad is probably looking down and wishing I did an article on good, old fashioned russets. Sorry, Dad, but Happy St. Patrick’s Day anyway!

*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.*



## Male and female cardinal



I received an email from a Worthington resident, who reported the one male “red bird” in his yard all winter.

He said, “I feel like I know him and throw seeds to a special place he likes. His habit of showing up in the dim light of dusk and dawn almost makes him shine. He’s real quiet right now, but I really look forward to hearing him as it warms up.”

The red bird is also known as the northern cardinal. The male cardinal is bright red with black around the base of its red beak. The female is grayish brown above with buffy color below. Her beak is reddish and she has dark around her bill, but not as black as the male.

Both sexes have crests and are 8 ½ inches long. Although the Worthington resident said the cardinal was quiet now, soon he will sing a series of clear repeated whistles that vary and sound like “whoit whoit whoit, cheer, cheer, cheer.” The call is a metallic “chip.” Both male and female sing.

The female cardinal lays two to five buff white eggs with dark marks in a nest of twigs, bark strips, vines, leaves, rootlets and paper lined with fine grass and hair. They build their nest in dense shrubbery or among branches of small trees.

Bird watchers may witness mate feeding, a common ritual between a breeding pair. The male picks up a seed and brings it to the female. They touch beaks and his mate takes the offered seed. Mate feeding continues through egg laying and incubation.

Cardinals come to feeders. They feed either on the ground and come to platform style feeders. They prefer sunflower seeds, safflower seeds and cracked corn.

Tuesday morning I saw a female cardinal in a lilac bush. I love to see the male cardinal perched on a snow covered branch or ground especially after newly fallen snow. I have a pair of cardinals, which I usually see early in the morning or at dusk.

Red-winged blackbirds The Worthington resident saw a red-winged blackbird at his feeder and heard them on snow shoe recent hike by a beaver pond. He said, “They don’t sound very confident and I wonder what they find down there with the pond totally frozen and the cattails denuded by the wind.” He said, “The arrival of redwings is exciting for me, as I consider them our first migratory returns.”

### Bald eagle

In his email, the same resident wrote about seeing a bald eagle. He said, “Two weeks ago driving along the East Branch in Cummington, I saw an eagle lite in a dead tree, break off a small branch and fly off, hopefully to a new or repaired nest. It sure didn’t feel like spring then and even today [written March 3] I had zero degrees this morning.” He also re-

ports pretty good numbers of goldfinches at his feeder along with the winter regulars.

### Brimfield birds

On Feb. 19, I received an email from a Brimfield resident, who sends emails on a regular basis. He said, “Hope you survived our recent bout of nasty weather. Our driveway was cleared on Sunday evening and subsequently turned into a skating rink. Fortunately I had lots of sand and rock salt and a little calcium chloride on hand. Using all of that, I was able to get our cars up and out of the driveway. Of course I had to get the frozen garage doors unstuck before I could get the cars out of the garage.”

He took part in the Great Backyard Bird Count of Saturday and Sunday. He said, “I had nine species Saturday, things got a little more interesting on Sunday when there were 15 species seen including an adult sharp-shinned hawk that chased some junco into a quince bush (it missed) and a Carolina wren.”

### Bluebirds

He had a pair of eastern bluebirds earlier in the day on Feb. 18 and later five bluebirds showed up, two males and three females. He said, “That’s the most we have ever seen in the yard. Previously we had seen a single bird a few times and a pair investigated a nesting box one year but were chased away by house wrens.”

### Non-bird critters

During the snow/ice storm in February, my daughter and I saw a wet opossum digging in the snow for seeds while clearing my walk and driveway. On March 1, two of my grandchildren and I saw a porcupine in a tree while driving on our road.

*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.*



## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Did you hear about that person in the town of West Brookfield who was shot at? Crazy right?! Who in the world would do such a thing? Some people were saying that it was probably some liberal.

Sounds like something they would do, right?

Well, I can fill in at least half of the equation. Maybe you can figure out the other half. The person who was shot at was me.

For those who don’t know me, I am a one of those liberals. Yeah! I’m thinking that the part about the shooter being a “liberal” might be slightly off target, so to speak.

Let me give you the details.

You might have seen the

post by the PD. “Forest green, older model Chevy pickup truck.” I was out pushing my snow blower on that Sunday a couple weeks ago. My wife was moving one of our vehicles so that I could remove snow where it was parked.

I just happened to turn around and see a green pickup truck that had just pulled up at the end of my driveway. I saw the driver in the window from a distance. He was pretty well covered up in winter garb with his head and arm outside of the window holding a black gun.

Immediately a report came from the gun and some kind of projectile hit near me. Now, it sounded more like some kind of gun that

was compressed air powered rather than by gunpowder combustion.

The man then pulled the gun in the vehicle and drove down the hill on Lake Street towards Lake Wickaboag Road and, I believe, turned left. My view of the license plate was mostly obstructed because of the angle as he drove away.

I believe it is important to point out that the man who shot at me saw me see him. I certainly don’t know if he was trying to hit me or scare me, but I firmly believe from what I saw that it was one or the other.

Of course, it may be a bit naive for me to say, but he accomplished neither. Now, the fact that he shot the gun,

even though he knew I saw him, leads me to believe that I was not a “random” target.

If that is truly the case there’s a few questions I would have for him, “What in the world would make you want to do this? Is it my politics? Do you think by shooting at me that I am suddenly going to change my views? Did it make you feel powerful behind that gun, shooting at some innocent stranger you don’t even know? What, or more likely who, made you fear someone like me so much that you would shoot a gun at me?”

In a sane dream world where I am asking questions and actually imagining coherent answers, I would have a couple questions for those

of you who are looking away. “Is this what you expected? Is this really the world you want?”

At this point I find my emotions zigzagging between anger, pity, and sadness at the state of the country we all share.

Of course, there is the nagging, continuous disbelief that so many, once thoughtful, caring human beings, were manipulated and twisted by fear to hate so deeply. I can’t ever seem to shake that.

But, Mr. shooter-guy, I don’t really fear you. I fear for you. I fear for America!

And they said it couldn’t happen here.

**Eric von Bleicken**  
West Brookfield

## QUABOAG CURRENT TEAM



**EDITOR**  
Paula Ouimette  
pouimette@turley.com



**ADVERTISING SALES**  
Dan Flynn  
dfflynn@turley.com



**STAFF WRITER**  
Ryan Drago  
rdrago@turley.com



**SPORTS EDITOR**  
Greg Scibelli  
sports@turley.com

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### WEB

www.quaboagcurrent.turley.com

**PATRICK H. TURLEY**  
CEO

**KEITH TURLEY**  
President

**DEANNA SLOAT**  
Graphics Manager



www.turley.com

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**Quaboag Current**



# - community -



Community members joined staff at West Brookfield Elementary School for the annual Community Reading Day held on March 1.



Officer Craig Charron read "The Foot Book" by Dr. Seuss to Tannis Rossi's second grade class.



West Brookfield Postmaster Matti Sjoblom read "Yertle the Turtle" by Dr. Seuss to Julie Jaskowski's first grade class.



Linda Higgins, the Children's Librarian at the Merriam Gilbert Library is showing "Every Color" by Erin Kono to Judith Knight's first grade class.

## DR SUESS FROM PAGE 1

Routhier said the annual Community Reading Day helps to incorporate the love of reading with a sense of community for the school's students.

"It opens their minds," she said.

In addition to celebrating Read Across America Week, the students and staff also participated in a Spirit Week, with March 3 being "Cat in the Hat" day.



Sara Chioda of McCarthy Bus Co. read "Oh, the Things You Can Think!" by Dr. Seuss to kindergarteners.



Jodie Gerulaitis of Country Bank gets ready to read "Mr. Peabody's Apples" by Madonna to sixth grade students.



Patti Ostroft of North Brookfield Savings Bank read "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" by Dr. Seuss to Melissa O'Neill's third grade class.

## COVERED BRIDGES FROM PAGE 1

them are on private property.

Paradise's passion for covered bridges began 25 years ago when he bought a copy of a book "The Last of the Covered Bridge Builders" by Wilton Graton. Paradise recalled being contacted by Walter, Milton's son, and learned that the Graton family built the first covered bridge in the 20th century.

Inspiration from Graton's book sparked the idea of giving this covered bridge presentation and the event at the Publick House was his first time talking about the subject.

Previously, Paradise had done a presentation about stone walls with the Sturbridge Historical Society.

The presentation focused on covered bridges in Massachusetts, but Paradise also shared ones in other New England states. Vermont has several covered bridges including the Winter Bridge in Windsor.

There are a total of 12 bridges in Massachusetts, but there is a 13th bridge that is part of a restaurant, located in Shirley.

Patterns of these bridges were patented by several familiar family businesses, but Paradise also talked about the Graton family business in New Hampshire. Part of the

presentation had Paradise explaining the different methods of bridge construction.

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.

Paradise brought a signed copy of Graton's book and had it on display at the Publick House during his presentation.

"It's important when they build a bridge out of wood," Paradise said. "The hole they drill for the pegs, called trunnions, must be made right."

Berkshire Bridge in Sheffield, is the original covered bridge in Massachusetts, built in 1837. The bridge was rebuilt in 1998.

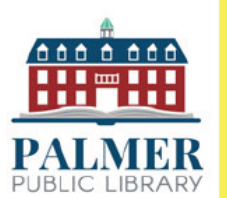
If you get a chance to visit Sturbridge, as you walk through Old Sturbridge Village you will come across a covered bridge called the Hamant Brook Bridge.

Another Massachusetts covered bridge in the region is the Ware-Hardwick Covered Bridge in Hardwick. It is 137 feet long and is above the Ware River.

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.



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# PALMER FOR TOMORROW

Gathering

## WHAT IS IT?

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Now we must decide how to best use the money to support our community, and we want to hear from YOU!

COME JOIN US TO DISCUSS THE NEXT STEPS IN THE PROCESS AS WE TALK ABOUT:

- Creating a Community Survey
- How to Support Those With Substance Use
- Preventative Measures
- After Care

FREE FOOD WILL BE PROVIDED!

## WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

- People with lived experience
- Individuals in recovery
- Family/friends of those with substance use disorder

To Join Our Group!

## WHEN & WHERE

The Second Wednesday of Every Month  
3:00pm-4:30pm  
at The Palmer Public Library

For any questions reach out to:

(413)283-2606 or ngauthier@townofpalmer.com

\*You will always be able to stay completely anonymous at Palmer for Tomorrow, we will never ask or share your name or your story.



### 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

@QuaboagCurrent

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# SPORTS

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## Warriors suffer defeat in first round of tournament



Sam Pleczynski drives into the lane.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

FISKDALE – On Friday, Feb. 28, Tantasqua boys basketball was defeated in the Division 3 State Tournament by Old Rochester Regional 58-47. The Warriors went 14-6 in the regular season before suffering the tournament-opening loss.



Adam Howe takes the three-point shot.



Max Cohen and Noah Wotton both go after an offensive rebound.



James Sciaraffa fakes then takes a shot.



Noah Wotton readies a shot near the hoop.

## Wrestlers complete tournament competition

Wrestling season has come to an end and several area teams crowned champions at the sectional and state levels.

In the Division 2 state tournament, Max Holloway took home a state title at 215 pounds. Stella Christopher won a state title in the girls meet while Gabriella Ramos was a runner-up. Minnechaug's Kal Ly won the 132-pound bracket while John Bermudez was a runner-up at heavyweight. Holyoke's Steven Santiago finished second in D2 at 120 pounds.

Ludlow's Lucas Alvan was a state champion in the Division 3 meet at 175 pounds.

In the sectionals held last month, Agawam had a big day with multiple placers. They had four champions. Ryan Sexton at 150, Max Holloway at 215, and Jordan Agosto at 126 all took home titles. Cole Ingham was a runner up at 175, as was Kaleb Progulske at 106.

Keymani Rivera (157), and Tyler Gervais (190) both took third place. Agawam would finish third overall in the meet with 204 points.

Minnechaug was the second-place finisher behind champion West Springfield with 213 points. They had two champions, Kal Ly at 132 pounds and John Bermudez at 285. Matthew Macphail and Hunter Gormally had runner-up finishes. The Falcons had one third place finisher and five fourth-place finishers.

Chicopee's Michael Jenkins placed second at 144 pounds.

In the Division 3 Western Mass. tournament at Mt. Greylock, Belchertown, which returned its program to varsity status this season, saw Jack Bergerson finish fourth at 175 pounds and Evan Perkins finish fifth at 150 pounds. Brogan Bottari also took fifth place at 120

See **WRESTLING** PAGE 8

## Streets of Holyoke set for 10K Road Race

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – The rich tradition that is the Holyoke St. Patrick's Road Race will make its return next Saturday, March 22. This will be the 48th running of the popular race.

Louis Serafini was the big winner of last year's event. He completed the very hilly, 6.2-mile course in 30:12. Serafini is from Cambridge.

The top female was a local runner from Western Massachusetts. Anna Steinmen, of Springfield, came across the finish line at 37:00.

Ryan Davis, of South Hadley, was one of the top local finishers at 34:36. He was 20th overall.

This year's race would feature runners from all over the region, the state, and surrounding states as many are preparing for the Boston Marathon, set to take place in just under a month. Many runners over the years have enjoyed using the St. Patrick's Day Road Race as practice for the marathon because of the challenging hills throughout the streets of Holyoke that runners must navigate through.

Of the more than 6,000 runners who were registered, 4,442 finished the 10K course last year. Race officials have said the participation level in the event



The runners are off in the 2024 Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Male top finisher and first overall Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, finishes the race at 30:12.



Anna Steinmen, of Springfield, was the top female finisher at 37:00.

is still rebounding from the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic in 2019, race participants totaled about 7,000. The race was not held in 2020 and 2021 before it returned in 2022 with around

5,000 participants. More made their way out to the race last year, but that number was surpassed this year. Because of that, the start of the race featured multiple waves, though 4RUN3

ran the bibs and electronic results kept accurate results for all those involved.

A number of this year's participants were featured

See **ROAD RACE** PAGE 8

## Valley Wheel tryouts set for next month

Players looking to join the Valley Wheel Over-28 Baseball League can attend the tryouts beginning Sunday April 6. The time and location of the tryout is to be determined.

The league, which plays its games in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut, makes sure that everyone gets a fair share of the action. Everyone plays a minimum of 4 innings in the field, and everyone bats. The league follows MLB rules with some modified rules adapted with safety in mind.

The Valley Wheel stands apart from other leagues across the country for this reason:

Their league charter and one of their main goals, is

to work toward having a league with teams of equal strength.

The league is now seeking new players to fill open roster slots. Enjoy the competition and camaraderie with a great group of guys who enjoy the game as much as you do. Stay in shape and make new friends. Be part of something that happens once a year, and with luck, win a championship that might be once in a lifetime. Grab your glove and cleats and join a team for a great adventure. It's not too late don't miss out; opening day is just around the corner. For more information, contact Jim Nason at 413-433-4308 or visit the website www.ValleyWheelBaseball.org.

## Registration now open for Quabbin Valley baseball

The Quabbin Valley Over-28 Baseball League is looking to infuse new talent into its league for the 2025 season.

Registration for the 2025 season is now open and any interested players can go to www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org to get registered, or to seek more information or make inquiries about the league. The league website will also be updated over the next month with information about the upcoming season.

There are many open roster spots available in the league for the 2025 season, which is tentatively scheduled to begin on Sunday, April 27. The league plays most Sunday from late April through mid-August with playoffs following that. The league plays a 15-game schedule and typically fields six teams each year. Games are usually

played at 10 a.m. with fields in Easthampton and South Hadley normally used. The Quabbin Valley league is an all-abilities league and all are welcome to join. Eligibility is players who are age 28 and over. You must be 30 to be eligible to pitch in the league. Your age for eligibility is whatever age you will turn in 2025. The next league board meeting is scheduled for

Sunday, March 23 at 11:45 a.m. at the Hangar Pub & Grill in South Hadley.

The league has also scheduled two open practices on Sunday, March 30, and Sunday, April 6. Both practices are scheduled to be held at Beachgrounds Park in South Hadley and are weather-permitting. The league website and social media accounts will have updates as the preseason continues.

The league website and social media accounts will have updates as the preseason continues.



# - community -

## STURBRIDGE BOS FROM PAGE 1

ing up 9.9%. Retiree insurance rates have increased by 20%, and property and casualty insurance rates will see a smaller increase as well.

Overall, insurance rates account for a 16.1% increase in the budget, Grimm said.

Grimm said the FY 26 budget is projected to increase by \$1.5 million over last year, with about 45% of it due to the costs of the retirees' contribution and various insurance rates.

Grimm said at the start of the budget season, there was a \$815,000 gap, which was reduced by combining two positions, removing the purchase of two police cruisers and a school bus from the operating budget, reduction of overtime requested by police and fire, elimination of any unnecessary upgrading of equipment or purchases and limiting funding of stabilization while still honoring financial policies.

The school bus and one police cruiser will be purchased through the use of free cash. A second school bus will be purchased through Tantasqua's transportation assessment, which is eligible for 75-80% reimbursement from the state.

"We had to kind of look at what's the really 'nice to have' and what we 'must have' when you have a gap of \$815,000," Grimm said. "Sturbridge has been very blessed; we've had a lot of 'nice to have's' but this year was a 'must have' year as we move forward."

Grimm said general salaries accounted for a roughly 2% increase in the FY 26 budget, due to contractual and personnel manual increases. She said there were savings in this area due to retirements and the consolidation of positions.

The part-time pool administrator position was also eliminated.

Grimm said there were also key departmental changes, including shifting a total of \$10,000 (\$5,000 each) out of the landfill's pay-as-you-throw and Board of Health's revolving funds to go toward the Health Director's salary. She said this portion of the salary will continue to be paid out of the revolving funds going forward.

Some of the highlights in betterment include funding for a deck ride mower, the cost to rent a cherry picker truck to install American flags on the streetlight poles, hydroseeding at Cedar Lake and field seeding.

Capital planning projects to be funded by free cash and stabilization include the purchase of an ambulance using free cash and money from the ambulance stabilization fund, Department of Public Works dump vehicles using free cash and the library elevator.

Grimm said the DPW dump vehicles need to be ordered prior to July 1, due to a state mandate that requires all vehicles sold in the commonwealth be electric, including plow trucks. This will go into effect for model year 2026 vehicles.

"Nobody has the infrastructure in the state right

now for electric plow trucks, including DOT [Massachusetts Department of Transportation], but the mandate is still in place, it has not been rescinded," Grimm said.

Grimm said the current free cash balance is \$5,982,486, with proposed spending articles on both the special and annual town meeting warrants totaling \$2,099,692.29.

Grimm said the town has historically funded as much capital as it can out of operating budgets, but was unable to do so for this upcoming fiscal year and had to rely on free cash.

"It's one of the first priorities of what we do," she said. "But it's what we had to do this year to make it work without putting more of a burden on the taxpayer or literally cutting services."

Grimm said they will not be funding the ambulance or fire stabilization accounts in the FY 26 budget, and the road budget has also been reduced from \$150,000 to \$100,000.

"It doesn't mean we're not going to pave as many roads, we still have Chapter 90 money," Grimm said.

Barry said the town has almost \$3 million remaining in its current Chapter 90 funding and its next allocation will be approximately \$400,000.

Grimm said there is some good news, as the town did meet its goals as outlined in the fiscal policy.

"We're not in trouble, we're not a town that's in distress," Grimm said. "Some years are leaner than others...we are trending a

good direction, we stayed stable. This is a balanced budget."

### Vote by Mail/Early Voting hearing

Town Clerk Lynne Girouard requested that the board vote to opt out of Early Voting and Vote by Mail for the annual town election. She said Absentee Voting will still be available for voters.

Girouard said voters can call the Town Clerk's office to request an Absentee ballot application, which will be mailed to them. Once the application is completed and returned, voters will then receive an Absentee ballot.

She said voters can also stop by her office and complete an Absentee ballot application and vote during office hours.

The board voted in favor of opting out of Early Voting and Vote by Mail.

### Town Administrator's report

Grimm said she attended a luncheon at Old Sturbridge Village hosted by its President and CEO Jim Donahue along with local legislators to discuss tourism in this part of the commonwealth.

"The state did do some budget cutting toward tourism," she said. "There's a concern that the money's not coming out here."

Grimm said the legislators were unaware that the funding had been reallocated, and she said it was an important event. She said Old Sturbridge Village is a benefit to both the town and surrounding communities.

Grimm said the lights are being rebuilt at the Joshua Hyde Public Library and

common, and the lights will be on a dimmer.

"They're going to be brighter and given that we have homes right along the commons, we want the ability to dim," she said.

Grimm said the elevator inspector was at the Senior Center that day, and it still needs a hydraulic O-ring to be operational. She said this work should be completed in a couple of days and then it will be reinspected.

"First floor is open...it looks lovely," Grimm said.

The Senior Center first floor is now open, and an official open house should be held in a few weeks.

### Recreation Department software

The board approved the use of new software, MyRec.com, for the Recreation Department.

Recreation Director Andrew St. George said this is a standard software utilized by the majority of communities across the commonwealth for recreational uses. This includes program registration, facility use requests, attendance tracking and more.

"It's really streamlining the whole process," St. George said.

St. George said the cost of the software is based off of the department's revenue. He said the town brings in approximately \$60,000 in revenue and the software would cost \$3,295 annually which would be paid for from the revolving fund.

"We did get quotes on other software, and this was significantly cheaper than anything else out there," St. George said. "Again, it's also

the industry standard."

St. George said the department does not currently have software, and this is software that he has used at previous jobs.

### NEMBA event

Resident Nate Lane, president of the local chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association, requested a special use permit for an event on June 14. He said this is the second annual event hosted by NEMBA.

Last year, he said there were 120 people participating in the event, as well as volunteers.

"NEMBA is all across New England, there's now 37 chapters and every chapter hosts an annual event, so there are a lot of people in New England who just attend all of these," Lane said. "It was great exposure in that way."

The board voted to approve the special use permit.

### Appointment

The board voted to reappoint Cheryl Wood Creeden to the Board of Registrars with her term to expire in March 2028.

### Committee vacancies

Moderator Leigh Darrin asked that residents interested in filling potential vacancies on the Finance Committee reach out to her through email at moderator@sturbridge.gov with a statement of interest. She said there are no vacancies at this time, but she anticipates one opening in the future.

"I'd like to have people become interested, perhaps talk with Kevin and other members of the board and me, to see if this is a fit for them," Darrin said.

## WRESTLING FROM PAGE 7

pounds.

Ludlow, Granby, Quabbin, and Pathfinder participate in the Central Mass. Championship meet. Ludlow's Lucas Alvan took first place at 175 pounds while Noah Simard was second at 150. Ryan Gomes had a third-place finish at 126 pounds.

Quabbin's top finisher was Abe Brown at 126 pounds. He finished in second place. Three others, Brady Dennis at 215, Brent Benoit at 132, and Cole Wilson at 150, all took fourth place in the meet.

Pathfinder had one placer, which was Dominic Jerry at 165 pounds. Granby's Nathan Benson finished fifth at 113 pounds.

## ROAD RACE FROM PAGE 7

in the usual celebratory costumes and outfits for St. Patrick's Day, while many others opted for cartoon and other fictional characters, such as Spider-Man. Several local running clubs also made their way to the race, as did the youth of the region. Youth participants in the race were as young as seven-years-old.

Security was in full force at the event with plenty of presence from the Massachusetts State Police, Holyoke Police, and Hampden County Sheriff's Department, and the event went off without any incidents.

If you're still looking to participate in this year's race, go to www.holyokest-patricksroadrace.org.

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# - community -

## CELTIC CELEBRATION FROM PAGE 1

grams, colleges, community groups, and museums. This past weekend Bates provided a program known as "A Celtic Celebration", telling stories and songs that originated from Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Stories of seal folk and wee folk, and sing-alongs galore that are popular to hear with St. Patrick's Day approaching. This program was funded in part by a grant from the North Brookfield Cultural Council, a local agency, supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Many of the songs and stories performed by Bates were once told and sung by his father. Growing up, Bates would keep these stories and songs and incorporate them into his fun performances.

His performances are a mixture of family, Native American, international and regional songs and stories.

Bates' recording "Family Stories" won a prestigious Parents Choice Magazine Gold Award and received a



Davis Bates is shown singing a song while using spoons as an instrument.



Davis Bates got the audience to sing along with him. Many of the songs and stories by Bates performed originated from Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

starred review by the American Library Association's Booklist magazine. His storytelling and songs empower and encourage audiences of all ages to join in the fun, and to take the stories home with them to share with others.

Bates would share the history behind each song he chose to sing at the Haston Free Public Library and talked about the background of how each song began.

Bates mentioned that many songs have traveled

around throughout history and many who are familiar with the song would claim where it originated from. Many will say one song originated from Ireland or Scotland.

No matter the origin, according to Bates the song is still being told to this day.

One of the stories Bates told was about a "wee fella" who collected gold, silver and copper and it was enough to feed his family. Bates said this story had two different

versions of it, but they're both good and fun to tell.

"This story has traveled around," Bates said. "I first heard it 42 years ago, I still enjoy telling it."

There were several songs Bates played for the audience at the library with some originating from Ireland, Scotland and Wales. However, there were some familiar songs that got the audience to sing and relive their childhood. One familiar song was

"Working on the Railroad." Bates would play this song using spoons as an instrument. While Bates played using spoons at different speeds, the audience would sing along.

Youth Services Librarian Brianna Lamb was in the audience singing along as well.

Another familiar song from your childhood is the famous Bingo song.

To add on to the entertainment, Bates brought out his wooden dog figurine and

said his name was Bingo. The toy was attached to a string where the dog is designed to dance.

Bates would make his wooden dog dance while singing "Bingo was his Name-O."

Other Irish and Scottish folk songs Bates shared included "Mary Mac", "Molly Monroe", "Wild Mountain Time", and many more. One of his favorite songs to sing are sea shanties. Those songs remind Bates of his father, who he described as "a wonderful storyteller."

Bates has now been telling stories for 46 years and enjoys offering programs that give him the opportunity to share those stories and songs. For Bates, its more fun singing with guests.

"I like getting people singing along," he said. "It's about getting people together."

For more about Davis Bates' programs, visit his website at [www.davisbates.com](http://www.davisbates.com). For more activities at the Haston Free Public Library, visit [www.northbrookfieldlibrary.org](http://www.northbrookfieldlibrary.org).

# SUMMER CAMP GUIDE



## Kamp for Kids to celebrate 50 years of summer fun for all abilities with a Golf FUN-raiser on April 10

SPRINGFIELD – Kamp for Kids, a summer day camp for children and young adults with and without disabilities, has planned a season of special celebrations in honor of the camp's 50th Anniversary, starting with a Golf FUN-raiser event on Thursday, April 10, 2025, from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Max's Swing Lounge, located at 1000 Columbus Avenue in Springfield.

The Golf FUN-raiser event will bring together supporters, community members, campers and friends to begin a season of celebration

for 50 years of growth, inclusion, and joy for children and young adults of all abilities. Proceeds from the Golf FUN-raiser will directly benefit Kamp for Kids, helping to ensure that the camp continues to thrive for years to come.

Tickets are \$100 and include access to the driving range, mini golf, appetizers, two drinks, and the chance to win exciting contests and prizes. Tickets can be purchased at [kamp50.eventbrite.com](http://kamp50.eventbrite.com). Sponsorship Opportunities are also available for businesses and individuals.

Those interested in sponsoring this event should reach out to Kelly Brown at Kelly.Brown@BHNInc.org or 413-654-0930. Sponsorships can also be made on the event website, [Kamp50.EventBrite.com](http://Kamp50.EventBrite.com).

Founded in 1975 by Dick and Judy Hoyt, Kamp for Kids was created to offer an inclusive camp experience for their son, Rick, who had cerebral palsy, and his brothers without disabilities. Over the years, the Hoyts

have championed disability inclusion, inspiring countless families worldwide. Today, Kamp for Kids continues to honor their legacy, demonstrating that every child-regardless of ability-deserves the chance to participate in meaningful, fun, and educational experiences.

Located in Westfield, Kamp for Kids serves children and young adults ages 5-22, both with and without disabilities,

hailing from cities and towns throughout Western Massachusetts. Each summer, the camp provides a unique environment for growth and inclusion, offering activities such as expressive arts, outdoor education, arts & crafts, non-competitive sports, and a spray park-all designed to create a sense of belonging and joy for every camper. Kamp for Kids operates during the summer months, serving about 150 campers in three sessions.

"Kamp for Kids is celebrating 50 years of creating a space where every child, re-

gardless of ability, can grow, learn, and have fun together," said Anne Benoit, Program Director of Kamp for Kids. "We're excited to celebrate this milestone and look forward to many more years of providing life-changing experiences that foster inclusion, friendship, and personal growth."

BHN has been providing behavioral health services to children and families in Western Massachusetts since 1938.

The agency provides community-based services that include innovative, integrated whole-health models as well as traditional clinical and outpatient and therapeutic services, day treatment, addiction services, crisis intervention and residential supports.

**The Hartsbrook School SUMMER CAMPS**

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This is a benefited position with a salary range of: \$52,000.00 - \$75,733.00. The successful candidate shall be highly motivated, self-disciplined, possess a community policing philosophy and live in or near Worthington. This position has the potential to be elevated to Police Chief.

Send letter of interest, resume and three references with relevant contact information to:  
**Worthington Police Department P.O. Box 247 Worthington, MA 01098**  
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# - community -

## LWPA & MEP sponsor boater safety certification class March 29

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Hanson-Milone Act recently became law in Massachusetts requiring motorized boat operators to pass a boater safety certification class.

For those born after Jan. 1, 1989, the new law takes effect on April 1, 2026, with penalties assessed beginning

Sept. 1, 2026. For those born on or before Jan. 1, 1989, the new law takes effect on April 1, 2028.

To avoid penalty once the new law takes effect, boaters will need to carry their certification with them at all times while operating a motor boat. Since Massachusetts boater safety certi-

fication is good for a lifetime, those who are already boater safety certified do not need to recertify.

To help members and the general public complete the certification requirement, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association has partnered with the Massachusetts Environmental Police

to host a free class, including course materials as follows: Saturday, March 29, class instruction and test from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (doors open at 7:45 a.m.) at the West Brookfield Senior Center.

There will be a working lunch, so attendees should pack lunch and snacks needed for the day. Coffee, tea

and water will be provided by the LWPA for free.

Ample parking is available at the Senior Center or Town Highway Department barn.

Space is limited to 55 attendees, so pre-registration is recommended. Walk-ins will only be accepted if space allows. To preregister,

visit [www.mass.gov/forms/mep-boating-safety-course-online-enrollment-form](http://www.mass.gov/forms/mep-boating-safety-course-online-enrollment-form), and use class ID 5112.

Those who would like to attend a different in-person class or take the class and test on-line should visit <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/boat-safety-certification-course>.

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