

# QUABOAG CURRENT

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Newspaper

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Volume 17, Number 25

Friday, May 17, 2024

## Credit for Life fair takes place at Tantasqua



Tantasqua High School Principal Pete Dufresne and Jodie Gerulaitis of Country Bank welcome students to the Credit for Life fair that took place at the Tantasqua High School gymnasium. TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – Tantasqua Regional High School hosted the Credit for Life fair last week welcoming hundreds of high school students.

The senior classes of Tantasqua, Quaboag, and North Brookfield schools gathered at

the gymnasium where dozens of volunteers were prepared to assist the students in the fair. Credit for Life is where students learn the real-life budgeting and money management skills they will use throughout their lifetime.

Tantasqua High School Principal Peter Dufresne welcomed the students and volunteers. He described the Credit

for Life fair as a “real world simulation of how to work your finances.”

Dufresne commented on how great the fair is and encouraged all the seniors to learn as much as possible. If Credit for Life had existed when he was a student, Dufresne admitted that he would’ve wanted to experience it.

See CREDIT | PAGE 8

## Public hearing looks at changes for FY 25 budget

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Superintendent Tim McCormick gave an update for the school district’s proposed fiscal year 2025 budget during a public hearing.

At the May 9 hearing, McCormick thanked the school district’s leadership team for their work to help build the

budget.

McCormick said his update includes additional increased offsets and proposed cuts for the next school year.

“We want to make sure this budget is accurate, is transparent...and based on the needs of our students,” McCormick said. “We’re in this business for our students so our budget needs to reflect our priorities and our plan for achievement for all of our students.”

He said the preservation of resources is always the top priority, but they are always looking for continuous growth and improvement for the school district.

McCormick said not much has changed with the proposed FY 25 budget that he first presented in January in the amount of \$7,828,605.89.

He said based off of recommendations from the Finance

See BUDGET | PAGE 15

## State Auditor seeks signatures for November ballot question

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
pouimette@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – State Auditor Diana DiZoglio has one wish for her birthday on June 5, and that’s to gain the 13,000 signatures needed to get a question on the November ballot.

This ballot question would allow voters to compel the Legislature to be audited. The audit would be performative, and also look at how tax dollars are being spent.

“This is the same type of audit we do for every other entity,” DiZoglio said. “Legislature

See BALLOT | PAGE 11



State Auditor Diana DiZoglio speaks with residents at the West Brookfield Town Hall on May 5. DiZoglio is seeking signatures to get a question on the November ballot regarding an audit of the state Legislature. TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA OUIMETTE

## John Morello performs ‘Dirt’ for community

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – North Brookfield Public Schools partnered with the Quaboag Hills Substance Use Alliance to bring John Morello and his one-man performance of “Dirt” to both the students and the community.

Before the start of the evening performance on May 8, community members had the opportunity to meet with over a dozen local organizations who shared information about the services they provide.

Funded by a grant from the office of Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr., “Dirt” touches on the challenges that young people are facing today, including bullying, substance use and mental health issues.

See ‘DIRT’ | PAGE 12



John Morello performed “Dirt” at North Brookfield Elementary School last week to kick off Student Wellness Week. TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA OUIMETTE

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Thursday, June 20	Thursday, Sept. 19
Thursday, July 25	Thursday, October 31

# - community -

## Drums and Strums

# Music classes offered this spring

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – The West Brookfield Senior Center hosts a weekly music event known as Drums and Strums.

Teaching the class is musician and instructor Tim Kane, who has been performing and teaching music for 10 years all over the commonwealth. This week, Kane brought ukuleles for strumming and djembe drums for drumming.

These activities and programs are funded by the West Brookfield Cultural Council. The town's cultural council strives to support artists and organizations offering cultural programs taking place within West Brookfield.

The council encourages grant applications that will benefit the community by offering a wide variety of performances including musical, artistic, literary, and environmental.

Kane has his drums and strums courses at senior centers and town commons if the weather is appropriate. In the past, Kane has done drum circles on the beaches in the Cape Cod area, including Chatham.

These music events happen every Friday night at the senior center and the music and instruments are a way to celebrate different cultures. For the djembe drums, their origins date back the 12th Century by the Mandinke tribe in what is now Mali, in West Africa.

Other cultures known for having a djembe include Brazil and Puerto Rico. The djembe is a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum played with bare hands.

Kane set up the senior center with a drum circle as several residents joined him to play.

This class was an introductory class to help guests feel more comfortable playing the djembe. The center spot of the drum is known as the dune or the center spot.

The djembe is considered a spiritual instrument and are typically made by hand.



Tim Kane teaches a Drums and Strums class with drums and string instruments such as ukuleles. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

The company that most commonly produces djembe drums is Remo. The company was founded by Remo Belli in 1957 in North Hollywood, California. Belli was also a professional drummer himself.

During the lesson, Kane mentioned how good drumming is for a person's hands.

"Drumming is excellent for your hands," Kane said. "Very peaceful."

Following the drums, Kane provided an introduction on playing a ukulele. The ukuleles was color coded near the strings as a guide to help practice the notes. Kane mentioned if anyone would like to borrow a ukulele to practice at home it was okay.

Kane is also the drummer of his band, the Island Castaways Band. He is also a music teacher at the Quabbin Regional School District for grades kindergarten through five.

Music activities such as Drums and Strums are available every Friday at the West Brookfield Senior Center at 6 p.m. The Senior Center is located at 73 Central St.

If the weather is nice, the music activities will take place at the Town Common.

Discover new cultures and techniques in hand drumming on djembes and frame

drums of all sizes. Every week the class goes over a new cultural rhythmic focus.

More information can be found on the West Brookfield Cultural Council's Facebook page and on this website [massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/west-brookfield](http://massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/west-brookfield).



Drums and Strums takes place every Friday at the West Brookfield Senior Center and one the town common if the weather is nice.



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# - community -

## Family Fun Day with Music is May 18

HARDWICK – Artists and volunteers will host a free Fun Day with Music for children and families from 10 a.m. -1 p.m. on Saturday, May 18, at the Stone Church Cultural Center, 283 Main St. (Route 32) in Gilbertville.

Greg Brown of the BIG RanDom Band and entertainer Seth Newton will demonstrate instruments and music making. Activities will include a scavenger hunt, keyboard games, a singing circle, and a kazoo marching band.

Open to all ages, the program is geared to children in grades K-8 and is free. Refreshments will be served.

For more information, contact Kathy McCrohon by calling 508-404-7552 or emailing info.kmcd@gmail.com. Youth under age 8

must be accompanied by an adult.

Friends of the Stone Church, Inc. produces free Fun Day programs for families as part of its mission to preserve and protect the Gilbertville Stone Church Cultural Center and to facilitate its use by and service to the community. All are welcome at this free event.

### About FOSC

Friends of the Stone Church receives major funding from the Mass Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund in partnership with MassDevelopment. Currently in the process of stabilizing the stone tower of thevenue, FOSC welcomes donations from the community at www.FriendsoftheStoneChurch.org or by mail to FOSC, P.O. Box 347, Gilbertville, MA 01031.

## Historical Society holds program on Winnimuset Valley

NEW BRAINTREE – The New Braintree Historical Society will share stories and information about the Winnimuset Valley on Friday, June 14 at 6:30 p.m. at their museum on 10 Utley Road.

Paul Benoit will host a round table discussion of the Winnimuset Valley where King Philip had a campsite, where Sarah and Mary Rowlandson were taken after a raid of their home in Lancaster, where the Barre Hiller Airport, the Benoit Farm and the Dump fight took place. They will also discuss where the now abandoned roads and home were. Refreshments will be served. If people have any questions, they may call Deb at 508-867-3324.

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Website: [www.quabbinhealthdistrict.com](http://www.quabbinhealthdistrict.com)

Please RSVP via email or phone

Training provided courtesy of the following organizations:



# - opinion -



## Memories on Mother's Day

I came across the column below and it brought back a wonderful memory of my oldest daughter being a year old and her having a fascination with pansy faces.

Fast forward to Mother's Day 2024, 16 years later, and I find a vase of fragrant double narcissus "Bridal Crown" and lilacs in my bedroom from said child. How sweet.

But before I even found and read the column, I was seriously thinking about devoting one of my perennial borders to a garden of memories. Most of the plants in my landscape hold special meaning anyway, but a garden devoted to my childhood would be neat.

It was certainly those early experiences that shaped my career and honestly my life in general. Maybe you can relate.

Read on for a "blast from the past."

Gardening was a big part of my childhood. Our backyard, while under an acre in size, was immense to me, full of nooks and crannies to explore.

We had a rock garden, and garden on a banking, a garden devoted to annuals, and of course, a vegetable garden. We also had a few choice flowering plants and shrubs just outside of the screened porch and fruit trees and bushes tucked in here and there.

One of my favorite spring pastimes as a kid was to pick little bouquets of lily of the valley, lilacs or peonies and place them around the house. I also enjoyed moving plants from one place to another in the yard.

My mother is reminded of one of my adventures in transplanting each time the lawn mower maneuvers around a clump of lilacs planted smack dab in the middle of the upper landing.

Most of the flowering perennials we had were handed down from my mother's grandmother ("Babci") or her Aunt Julia. They aren't rare by any means, but to know they came from a line of strong women before me makes me want to pass these same plants on to my daughter.

My daughter is just over a year old and she has already taken an interest in flowers. This, of course, has made me very happy.

She points them out on her shirt or in books, and each time we stroll around the yard she clamors relentlessly until I give her a stem or two to hold. Recently, a single pansy face held her attention long enough for me to actually do some work in the garden...nothing short of a miracle for a busy little girl like her!

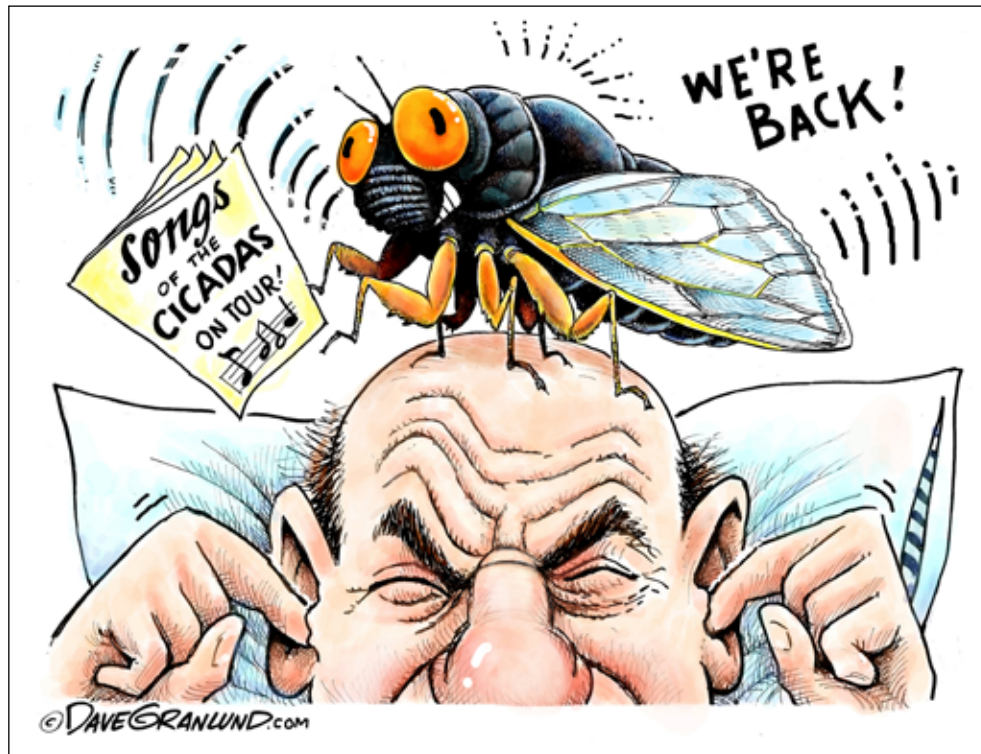
When she is a bit older I think it would be fun to plant a memory garden. In it we could commemorate five generations of flowers and the ladies who grew them.

First, I would include all of the heirloom flowers that my mom has tended over the years originating from her grandmother and aunt's garden: the deep purple bearded iris, the sweetly scented lemon lily and frilly pink peony. Then I'd add her favorites, the flowers I remember her growing when I was a kid: ground phlox, lily of the valley and candytuft.

Next would be my contribution, pretty primroses that originated in England and double columbines that I started from seed several seasons ago. My daughter could add her favorites too – this year pansies would have certainly made the cut!

Fast forward to the present day, Mother's Day 2024. Why not consider installing a memory garden of your own?

If you aren't lucky enough to have family heirlooms already growing in place, ask your mom or grandma what their favorite plants are and go from there. I'm sure that many are still



## in my BACKYARD

By Ellenor Downer

Two Rutland residents and my daughter spotted a pair of mute swans on Long Pond in Rutland.

Mute swans are about 55 inches in length and are white. The bill is pink to orange with a black knob at the base.

They swim with their neck held in an S curve and with the wings slightly raised over their back. Immature swans keep their brownish feathers for a full-year.

Mute swans are beginning to aggressively compete for food with other waterfowl. They eat the leafy parts of fresh and salt water plants as well as algae and waste grain.

The female lays four to eight pale, grayish eggs in a nest, which is a large pile of vegetation lined with feathers placed near the water.

Mute swans are native to Great Britain and Europe and were brought to the United States in the 1800s. These swans are usually seen at parks, but they are also in the wild.

They got their name because they are usually silent. Mute swans do not have the same vocal structure as native swans and can only make hissing and snorting sounds.

**Nesting bluebirds**

I received this email from an Oakham resident. He said "Two months ago I repaired an old bird nest box and placed it in an apple tree. A pair of Eastern Bluebirds took to it, going in and out with nesting material." He said, "Today, from my kitchen window, I admired the male, perched

at the corner of the deck rail. It was scanning the lawn for prey items. It flew to the ground and returned to the perch with what appeared to be a beetle. The male then flew off with it."

"Moments later, the female landed at the exact same perch and, like the male, was scanning the lawn. It spotted a prey item and returned with it to the perch: it looked like another beetle. The female then exhibited the crouched fluttering posture, like a hungry hatchling. Within seconds, the male appeared and was given the insect by the female. As many of you know, the male of most (but not all) bird species feeds the female during courtship."

**More birds**

A Brimfield resident sent some of the birds he has seen in an email dated April 29. He said, "Today in the yard, male ruby-throated hummingbird and male rose-breasted grosbeak. I rushed to put a couple of feeders out. I had planned to do that next week but the hummingbirds got here earlier than expected."

He also had a turkey wander through the yard: a couple have been irregular visitors lately. Other backyard sightings were red-winged blackbirds and a cowbird pair as well as a Carolina wren.

He said, "Ospreys in Wilbraham and Warren are sitting on nest as are the great blue herons in Warren. I have to get to the Monson rookery soon to see what is going on there."

He also said, "Some members of the Allen Bird Club are monitoring peregrine falcon nest

and at one of the sites I'm watching, my wife and I saw three for sure and maybe four chicks in a nesting box setup by Mass Fish and Wildlife."

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.



Mute Swan

## OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

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

### Send opinions to:

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

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Quaboag Current Newspaper

## - community -

# East Quabbin Land Trust Celebrates 30th Anniversary

**HARDWICK** – On April 20, over 175 friends and families gathered at the The Center at Eagle Hill to celebrate the founding of the East Quabbin Land Trust over 30 years ago.

It was a joyous evening as everyone enjoyed the delicious choice of meal offerings, soft live music and warm camaraderie.

The EQLT was formed to foster a meaningful relationship with the natural world by conserving, connecting with, and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts.

The Trust currently holds 1,700 acres of woods, fields, wetlands and streams in 24 separate property groupings throughout the nine towns comprising this region. These lands are open to the public and many have miles of recreational trails for everyone young and old to enjoy.

You can learn more about EQLT online at [www.eqlt.org](http://www.eqlt.org).

In addition to the dinner and entertainment, there were several fundraising activities to help continue funding the



East Quabbin Land Trust's Executive Director Cynthia Henshaw, left, is shown with Judith Jones at the land trust's annual gala. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The first activity was a silent auction of 50 generously donated items from local businesses and individuals ranging from massage sessions to vacation getaways that helped to raise nearly \$8,000 for the Trust. The second activity, which is still ongoing, was a matching challenge grant of \$50,000 which raised \$34,000 in one evening where each dollar raised is matched dollar for dollar.

EQLT encourages everyone to con-

tinue to participate in the still open challenge as they strive to reach their goal of fully matching this \$50,000 grant by going to <https://eqlt.org/support/>. All donations made to EQLT are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law and directly impact the land conservation and community character of the East Quabbin region not only for current residents but for future generations to come.



Supporters of the East Quabbin Land Trust enjoyed the annual gala at The Center at Eagle Hill.

## - sturbridge -

### 2024 Sturbridge Business of the Year Award program underway

**STURBRIDGE** – The Sturbridge Tourism Association is promoting its annual “Sturbridge Business of the Year” Award program.

Town residents and visitors can vote for their favorite shops, restaurants, hotels and specialty stores. The award program is designed to highlight local businesses, encourage consumer spending, build community support, enthusiasm and offer awards and marketing resources to the winning businesses.

Voting can be easily accomplished by visiting the new Sturbridge Tourism website: [www.experiencesturbridge.com](http://www.experiencesturbridge.com)

Voters can select their favorite businesses under the categories of :

**Shopping:** Businesses that sell goods to customers in town.

**Eating:** Businesses that prepare meals and/or drinks for patrons in town.

**Staying:** Businesses offering overnight stays.

**Playing:** Businesses offering patrons something fun to enjoy.

#### Contest schedule

Voting will be from May 9 to May 23 and winners will be identified the week of May 29. Winners will be honored at a June 17 Board of Selectman's Meeting.

#### Prizes

Winners will receive a free \$1,000 grant to market their business, \$250 toward a one year membership to Discover Central Massachusetts and recognition from the Town with a “Business of the Year Award” plaque.

### Historical Society presents ‘The Publick House in World War II’

**STURBRIDGE** – World War II saw American society rally behind the war effort as the nation geared up to be the “arsenal of democracy”.

All communities experienced changes as citizens and businesses did their part. On Thursday, May 23, at 7 p.m. at the Publick House, Wally Hersee of the Sturbridge Historical Society will discuss the role of the Publick House in World War II.

Initially, the Inn became the Defense Center for the training of civilians and the State Guard. Eventually it became the 1st Service Command Tactical School for the training of Army officers in guerilla tactics.

The presentation will also look at the 366th Regiment, the Women's Defense Corps, and the type of training they underwent. The second half of the program will be the showing of a newly enhanced film of the Sturbridge Defense Center's Dedi-

cation on October 25, 1941, including the “Battle of Sturbridge” that was presented for the townspeople and dignitaries on that day.

Hersee grew up in Medfield, where he refined his interest in local history. Having moved to Sturbridge it was only a matter of time before he took an active part in Sturbridge history.

A photographer for more than 45 years, his 2017 book, “Follow the Light”, tells of his photographic journey. Hersee retired as a registered nurse in 2019.

Today, he lives in town with his wife, Mary, and is active on town boards, volunteers at Tanglewood, and writes for the Sturbridge Historic Society on their Facebook page.

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

#### GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

available for purchase.

Involve the kids by making stepping stones, plant labels and other simple ornaments to decorate the space. Tailor the design to suit your taste – it certainly doesn't have to be grandiose, just special, like the gardeners who came before us.

*Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to [pouimette@turley.com](mailto:pouimette@turley.com) with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.*



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Meet your local resident

# James Pierce of West Brookfield

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
rdrago@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – Resident James Pierce has a special bond with the town he's called home for many years.

His house off of Wickaboag Valley Road has been home to the Pierce family since 1971. Pierce recalls his life in school where he attended class in a single room schoolhouse that used to be off of Ragged Hill.

Pierce said all six of his elementary school years were in that schoolhouse.

For high school, prior to the building of Quaboag Regional Middle High School, Pierce attended Warren High School which was housed at the current Shepard Municipal Building off High Street.

While attending high school, Pierce did a lot of side work to bring in some income for the family. Right after school, Pierce would go work at the Barre Foundry.

Wanting to take care of his family, Pierce stopped his schooling before his senior year in high school and entered the workforce in 1951.

Pierce soon took a new job at Roger's Plastics in West Warren. The company was based out of a nearby building over by the Wrights Mill Complex in West Warren.

Pierce worked as a machine operator for Roger's Plastics and worked there for a total of 10 years. For a few years, Pierce also worked at the Ware Woolen in Ware.

Pierce's time was well occupied when he was working for Pratt & Whitney out of East Hartford, Connecticut. Pratt & Whitney is a world leader in the design, manufacture and service of aircraft engines and auxiliary power units.

Despite a longer commute from West Brookfield to Hartford, Pierce worked for Pratt & Whitney for 30 years as a material handler. Although work kept his time well occupied, Pierce always made time for home and family back in West Brookfield.

What made West Brookfield so special for Pierce is how great the neighborhood and community were to each other throughout the years.

"The whole neighborhood would always get together," Pierce said.

Pierce loved keeping busy and returned to a line of work he had done since he was a teenager.

Pierce was a farmhand for not just one, but at one point all the notable farms in the town of West Brookfield. Farmwork was not an unfamiliar line of work for the Pierce family.

Life on the farm dates back to the time of Pierce's great-grandmother, Isabelle Perry. Pierce to this day appreciates the fact that he was a great-grandchild and got to know his great-grandmother.

On Perry Farm, Pierce would operate a sickle bar mower, pulled by horseback, to mow the farm's grass.

Pierce still has a lot of pictures saved from his time doing all the farm work he did in town. One of them is him back in the 1940s operating that horse driven sickle bar mower.

Other family farms Pierce worked for included McGrevey Farm, Buzzell Farm and Frew Farm. Pierce shared that when he was working for the McGrevey



James Pierce has worked several different jobs throughout the community.

family farm they owned the most land in West Brookfield.

Pierce kept busy but working at Pratt & Whitney took up most of his time. Pierce said that commuting to work and back took up a good amount of time. At one point, Pierce would take a bus out of Sturbridge to go to work in Hartford.

In 1993, Pierce retired from Pratt & Whitney after working there for 30 years. However, Pierce didn't stay retired for very long as he committed himself to helping around the town.

Pierce, now at age 90, reflected on how much he enjoyed helping out the senior citizens in town. Pierce would take up yardwork and mow lawns for the seniors.

By the time Pierce retired from Pratt & Whitney, he didn't do as much farmwork. The Perry Farm had closed in the mid-1990s and according to Pierce it was a time when farms in town began to downsize.

Family farms at that point were selling their properties.

Yard work kept Pierce busy as he knew almost everyone in town and he would always get a referral from other residents.

"Call Jim, he'll take care of it," Pierce paraphrased as he heard that a lot while working on residents' yards.

Alongside the farm work, yard work was one of his favorite jobs to ever have.

Also during his time on the lawns, Pierce was a board member of the West Brookfield Senior Center. Pierce served on the board for 10 years from 1990-2000.

To this day, Pierce still visits the Senior Center for coffee and bingo. Pierce also goes to have lunch and keep up with their activities by reading their newsletter.

To this day, Pierce still loves calling West Brookfield home and views it as a town where everyone knows each other and helps one another.

"West Brookfield is always home," Pierce said. "I knew a lot of people here, and they'd always help each

other out."

Pierce and his late wife Louise Pierce were married for 65 years. They are the proud parents of Donna and David.

Pierce said his wife loved taking pictures of the family and has dozens of them all over their home. Louise worked for the Wrights factory in West Warren for 35 years.

Their house was a small cottage when they first bought it. Over the years, the house grew and expanded in size.

Out of all the farms in West Brookfield that Pierce worked for, the Buzzell farm still has land with buildings still in place. As far as Pierce knows, the farm is not operating.

Pierce misses working, especially for all the seniors he used to help all the time with yard work.

"I would still do it if I could," Pierce said.

While on the job, Pierce would have up to four yard jobs a week. Now, the only lawn Pierce takes care of is his own.

If he had time to spare, Pierce would help his kids practice their sports, such as soccer and softball. Pierce said his son David was a great softball player.

If he didn't have time, his wife Louise would help them play; she was very well involved with the kids' activities. Pierce and his wife would have their wedding anniversary dinners at Salem Cross Inn.

Although no longer involved with farm work, Pierce is still in contact with family members of the town farms he worked for.

Pierce is still in contact with David Frew of Frew Farm. They were classmates in school.

Last year, Pierce and Frew reunited for a 70th high school reunion at Teresa's Restaurant in Ware. Not just a reunion of his graduating class but over 100 guests consisting of former Warren High School students of different graduating classes.

Helping out family farms reminds Pierce of his great-grandmother's farm, the Perry Farm.

Though he doesn't recall their names, two young kids from Massachusetts would come out to the farm and help Isabelle Perry. Even when they grew up and moved away from the area, those helpers never forgot Isabelle and would still visit her every weekend.

Pierce loves living in West Brookfield and not only recommends them but all the Brookfields as great places to live and raise a family.

"Neighborhood has been very good to me," he said.



James Pierce is a lifelong resident of West Brookfield. Here is Pierce back in the 1940s working at one of the town's farms. SUBMITTED PHOTOS



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# - community -

## Touch-a-Truck coming to Brimfield on June 1

BRIMFIELD – Trucks of all sorts will be rolling into Brimfield on Saturday, June 1 not for construction, but for the town’s first Touch-a-Truck event to be held at the Brimfield Winery, 35 Main St. from 10 a.m.-noon.

The morning will consist of over 20 different vehicles including fire trucks, tow vehicles, police cars and even a helicopter converging in town for the day. Attendees of all ages will be able to climb on, in, and around the many different vehicles as well as meet the crews and drivers.

Children and adults alike will be able to look up

close at the many different pieces of equipment and ask plenty of questions of the drivers and operators.

Held on the 13th anniversary of the tornado that came through the area in 2011, it is being organized by the Friends of the Brimfield Library and the Brimfield Fire department. The day is planned in honor of Toto the Tornado Kitten, a tiny cat who was found in the storm’s debris and whose subsequent books and travels raised over \$78,000 for local animal shelters.

Toto passed away last November and his legacy is being celebrated by the community with this special Touch-a-Truck event. A special table will be on display

that is being donated to the Brimfield Library in Toto’s honor and donations will be accepted by the Friends of the Library for funding future activities.

The event is free for all; however, attendees are encouraged to bring a bag or can of pet food to be distributed to local animal shelters. Snacks will be provided by the Sturbridge Coffee House.

This is one of many community events sponsored by the Brimfield Winery. Anyone interested in participating by bringing a truck are welcome to contact the event organizers at toto2024event@gmail.com.

## National Grid is inviting you to an Informal Open House Learn More: Palmer to Ware Improvement Project

National Grid’s Palmer to Ware Improvement Project is a proposed transmission line project that will upgrade a deteriorating electric transmission line. The upgrade will focus on portions of the 10.35-mile-long segment of overhead power lines that run through Palmer, Ware, and West Brookfield. Once upgraded, the newly rebuilt transmission line will provide enhanced electric reliability for the region.

National Grid is hosting Open Houses for the Palmer to Ware Improvement Project. We encourage you to join us to learn more about the project.

If you are unable to join us at the in-person event and are interested in learning more about the project, please email [info@O15nproject.com](mailto:info@O15nproject.com) to set up a meeting with a member of our project team.

### Questions? Contact us!

Phone Number: (800) 674-9510

Email: [Info@O15nproject.com](mailto:Info@O15nproject.com)

Website: [PalmerToWareImprovementProject.com](http://PalmerToWareImprovementProject.com) or scan the QR code.

**nationalgrid** 7-57 Wells Ave., Suite 27, Newton, MA 02459



You are invited to an Informal Open House

## Palmer to Ware Improvement Project

May 22nd, 2024

5:00pm to 7:00pm

Ware Senior Center  
1 Robbins Road  
Palmer MA 01069

May 28th, 2024

5:00pm to 7:00pm

Palmer Public Library  
4105 N. Main Street  
Palmer MA 01069

[PalmerToWareImprovementProject.com](http://PalmerToWareImprovementProject.com)  
E: [Info@O15nproject.com](mailto:Info@O15nproject.com)  
P: 800-674-9510

**nationalgrid**



CREDIT | FROM PAGE 1

“I wish I had this when I was in high school,” Dufresne said.

Dufresne introduced Jodie Gerulaitis, the Vice President of Community Relations at Country Bank. Gerulaitis also encouraged the students to enjoy the simulation, learn what they can and understand the importance of credit and keeping a budget.

The students visited every booth and after drawing a random credit score and choosing a job in the exercise. Not all credit scores were good, but Gerulaitis encouraged students to make it work no matter how high or low their selected credit score was.

“This is a good experience to what you’ll be involved with in the future,” Gerulaitis said.

Ellis Cropper was one of the volunteers at the credit booth and explained how credit scores impact many necessities in life adults will need.

“Credit scores affect every element,” Cropper said. “Approval for car loans, mortgages, interest rates, etc.”

One of the booths that can be impacted by credit is insurance. The insurance booth involved first time volunteer Keith Blanchette.

The insurance booth volunteers explained to students how important insurance is in all aspects of life and it can change as individuals get older.

“There are components to all ages in life insurance,” Blanchette said.

Insurance can be for automobiles, houses, life and health.

Joining her students during the Credit for Life Fair was Quaboag Regional School District teacher Jean DiRico. One of the classes that DiRico teaches at her school is personal finance.

DiRico views Credit for Life as a great experience for all seniors to practice handling a budget and prepare for their financial future.

“Attending an event like Credit for Life offers numerous advantages,” DiRico said. “Students have the chance to practice budgeting based on their anticipated careers and gain a deeper understanding of the significance of a credit score in shaping their financial prospects. While many seniors cover these topics in their personal finance class, participating in Credit for Life serves as a valuable reinforcement of the curriculum.”

Moreover, it extends this essential learning opportunity to seniors who may not have the chance to take DiRico’s personal finance class, ensuring that all students benefit from this crucial financial education event.

Tantasqua seniors Ryan Blaine and Jace Hess both view Credit for Life as an opportunity to learn how to manage money better in the future. Blaine is interested in pursuing a career as an electrician and Hess is interested in becoming a welder.

Over at the banking booth students have the opportunity to raise their credit score with activities and answering banking questions. The most common questions asked relate to starting accounts such as

checking and savings, and saving for college.

Quaboag seniors Jenna Duff, Riley Patchen and Lexi Cacace had a great experience during the Credit for Life fair and wanted to learn as much as possible when budgeting their finances.

Duff was interested in learning more about how credit works. Patchen wanted to learn how to have better spending and saving habits and Cacace was excited to meet more students during the fair.

The career samples chosen by these Quaboag seniors were high school educator (Duff) and physician’s assistant (Patchen and Cacace).

North Brookfield High School senior Jake Standrowicz also chose physician’s assistant for the Credit for Life simulation. He is interested in majoring in health science and found the fair helpful when handling a budget.

“Manage the money you’re spending,” Standrowicz said. “Save for the more important things, not just perks.”

When visiting the reality check booth with the spinning wheel, Standrowicz lucked out with a bonus.

Quaboag seniors Abigail Long and Rachel McGrath did the Credit for Life simulation together and decided to be roommates. Both McGrath and Long found it important to learn how expensive certain purchases can be including a house and a car.

McGrath selected a nutritionist as a job and Long selected a registered nurse. These are careers both McGrath and Long want to pursue after high school.

Credit for Life features dozens of dedicated volunteers to assist students in areas such as banking, employment, transportation, nutrition, clothing, furniture, housing, savings and retirement, utilities and fun.

First time volunteer Kaelin Falke was over at the employment information booth where students learn how to apply for jobs.

“Helping students with their future endeavors,” Falke said. “It is important for kids to know that jobs aren’t claimed super fast”.

Falke’s statement is valid considering some of the competitive fields that many kids will pursue when they enter in the workforce.

Throughout the fair, Gerulaitis was excited to meet many students who experienced a simulation of real-life experiences that occur as high school students transition into adulthood.

“This is an eye-opening experience,” Gerulaitis said. “First time exposures to these topics are very empowering. This gives students an idea of what they want their future to look like.”

On the subject of financial literacy, Gerulaitis says that Country Bank will continue offering this beneficial program of Credit for Life. The program plays an essential role in the students’ transition into adulthood and teaches them to learn to live within their budget.

“Country Bank is fully committed to financial literacy,” said Gerulaitis. “We continue to look for new and innovative ways to make a difference.”



Quaboag seniors Rachel McGrath and Abigail Long are shown at the Credit for Life fair. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



Employment information is one of the booths for students to visit and speak to volunteers Kaelin Falke, left, and Alyson Weeks.



North Brookfield High School senior Jake Standrowicz found Credit for Life helpful and learned the importance of spending wisely.



Volunteers at the Credit for Life Transportation booth assisted students with all the important questions that they will be asking in the future.



Tantasqua seniors Ryan, Jace and Aaron were ready to try out the fair and learn how to manage their finances better for the future.



Quaboag seniors, left to right, Lexi Cacace, Riley Patchen and Jenna Duff hope to learn proper saving and spending habits along with how credit works in all aspects of personal finances at the Credit for Life fair.



A group of Quaboag seniors participated in the Credit for Life fair.





# SPORTS

## Indians, Cougars invade Polar Park

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

WORCESTER— During the course of the regular season, several high school baseball teams had the opportunity to play a game at Polar Park in Worcester.

Two of those teams were the Ware Indians and the Quaboag Cougars. The rivals battled each other on the beautiful home field of the WooSox, who are the Triple-A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox, last Monday afternoon.

With the help of a couple of

unearned runs in the top of the first inning, the Indians players enjoyed their bus ride back to Ware following a 4-2 victory.

“It was very nice getting a chance to play a game at a local Minor League ballpark,” said Ware head coach Scott Slattery. “The parents from both schools did a very good job of organizing this game for us. I would love to play another game at a Minor League Park next year.”

The booster clubs from the two high schools helped out a lot, but former Quaboag School Superintendent Maureen Binienda played a major role in

making sure the baseball game between the two teams would take place at Polar Park this year. Binienda, who’s currently the interim Superintendent of the Easthampton Public Schools, was previously the Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools. She contacted the people in the WooSox organization about playing a game at their ballpark.

Current Quaboag School Superintendent Steve Duff announced each batter during the game.

Quaboag sophomore Madison Schreier also did an out-

standing job of singing the National Anthem before the start of the game.

While it was a memorable day for the players from both teams, it was a little bit extra special for Ware sophomore righthander Brady Guimond. His father, Brian, is the long-time Quaboag varsity baseball coach.

Brady Guimond made his first start against his father’s team, and he was the winning pitcher.

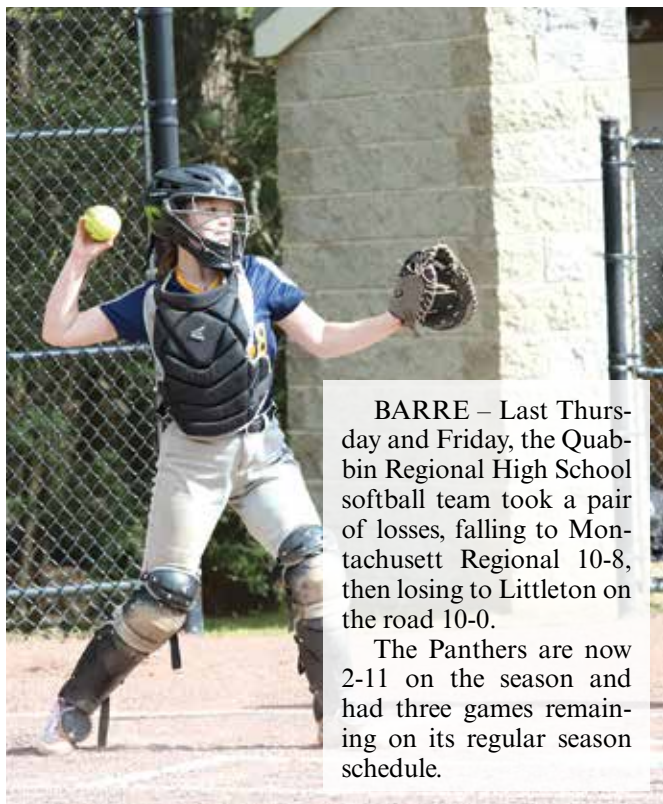
“I was supposed to be the starting pitcher in last year’s home game against Quaboag,

but John Mumper wound up starting that game,” Brady Guimond said. “I waited a whole year, but it just feels great to beat my father’s team. He has helped me so much throughout my baseball career. It was a fun game today. We’re very grateful for everyone who made this game possible for us. It was a cool experience.”

Guimond, who was also the starting pitcher against Monson at Dunkin’ Park in Hartford, Connecticut in the middle of April, went the distance against the Cougars allowing two runs

See POLAR PARK | PAGE 11

## Panthers suffer pair of defeats



BARRE – Last Thursday and Friday, the Quabbin Regional High School softball team took a pair of losses, falling to Montachusett Regional 10-8, then losing to Littleton on the road 10-0.

The Panthers are now 2-11 on the season and had three games remaining on its regular season schedule.

Catcher Abby Rogowski makes a throw down to second. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Lilly Swett picks up a soft hit to right.



Juliana Guilderson makes a pitch for the Panthers during recent action.



Kherington Deschenes swings and connects.

## Girls tennis sweeps a doubleheader

BARRE – Doubleheaders are more of a baseball thing, but Quabbin Regional girls tennis had a split doubleheader last Friday afternoon as the Panthers hosted two different teams and played consecutive matches. First, the Panthers would sweep Doherty High School 5-0. Following that, the Panthers got a 4-1 win over Tyngsborough.

In the win over Doherty, Annabelle Magill, Camryn Orsini, and Carlee Rich all picked up singles wins. Both doubles teams were also victorious.

In the Tyngsborough match, Magill and Rich both scored wins and the doubles teams of Farrah Wojcik and Kalina Dyer and Madelyn Stauder and Elizabeth Matheson both won as well.

The wins were followed by a 5-0 sweep of Gardner High School. Dyer got a match in singles action against Gardner and picked up a 6-2, 6-0 win. Magill and Rich also won singles matches. The doubles team of Mia Ducos and Haley Ayer got a win in the match. Quabbin girls tennis is now 13-1 on the regular season.

# - sports -

## Pioneers comeback falls short in seventh



MONSON – Last Saturday afternoon, Monson baseball scored three times in the fourth inning to lead the Mustangs to a win over Pathfinder. In the 5-3 decision, Monson got some big hits from the top of their lineup to back a great effort by pitcher Austin Meacham, who had two of the RBI for the Mustangs. The Pioneers were led with two hits each from Miguel Velasquez and Hunter Griswold. Griswold scored two of Pathfinder’s three runs.

Hunter Griswold slides into second on a steal attempt. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



Edward Szostek beats the throw to the base.



Miguel Velasquez fires a throw across the diamond.



Brayden Mega pitches for the Pioneers.

## Academy names new hockey coach

WILBRAHAM – Wilbraham & Monson Academy is pleased to announce Lawrence Biondo has been named Head Coach of the Boys Varsity Hockey program beginning with the 2024-25 season.

Coach Biondo will take the helm with a strong foundation of current and new student-athletes and support from the entire WMA community. The Titans compete as a full varsity member of the New England Prep School Athletic Council.

“Coach Lawrence Biondo is a prep school person, through and through,” Head of School Brian P. Easler said. “He played at prep school, has coached at prep schools, sent all of his kids to prep schools, and now he chose to return to prep school teaching and coaching after retiring from the New York City Police Department. He is fully committed to WMA and the development of our hockey program for the long term, and I can’t wait to see how it grows under his leadership.”

Biondo’s hockey resume includes both playing and coaching experience at the prep school and collegiate level. As a coach, count Avon Old Farms, St. Benedict’s Prep and The Harvey School in his prep school experience.

Joining Biondo will be Steven McGeary as Assistant Coach. Formerly the Boys Ice Hockey Head Coach at Wyoming Seminary, McGeary played at Bethel University (MN). Assistant Coach and Goalie Coach Brian Musa ’92 will round out a stellar coaching staff. Musa has over two decades of coaching experience, played goalie at Elmira College and is USA Bronze Goalie certified.

As a player, Biondo was a three-year member of a Deerfield Academy team that won the 1983-84 Prep School Championship, and he lettered all four years at Tufts University. He played on the Olympic Development U16 summer program at Lake Placid, N.Y., and the Springfield Pioneers AA Bantam championship team that included WMA alumnus Rick Bennett ’86.

Already a current English faculty member at WMA, Biondo retired as a lieutenant in 2023 after 20 years of service with the NYPD. Two of his five children are recent alumni of WMA, both Class of 2021, and they are currently matriculated at United States Military Academy West Point and Florida Atlantic University.

“I look forward to building upon the hockey program here at WMA and appreciate the full support I’m receiving from the school,” Biondo said. “We have a solid schedule, we’re expanding our off-and-on-ice program and we’re eager to begin the season this November.”

# Quabbin Middle School lists honor roll

BARRE – Quabbin Regional Middle School, 800 South St., lists the third quarter honor roll.

## Grade Seven, High Honors

Kalina Bassett, Hazel Carter, Lauren Colleton, Adalyn Cranston, Xavier Fjeld, Olivia Gregory, Carson McConnaughy, Gemma Mullins, Greyson Mullins, Whitney Reeves, Robert Tobin, Launa Tran and Jack Wynne.

## Grade Seven, Honors

Adeelya Andrade, Joshua Caranci, Joseph Cook, Madison Cyr, Gabriel DelGiudice, Jeremy DeMoranville, Fiona Derr, Landon Devine, Brynn

Dunphy, Maya Faucher, Finian Fauteux, Silas Flint, Mason Garey, Juliana Guilderson, Hayston Hay, Madisyn Hill, Reese Jamieson, Sarah Jean-Francois, Ryan Morin, Sarah Neal, William O'Neill, Chloe Richardson, Ava Rogowski, Connor Roohan, Jacob Rosario, Zoey Salvadore, Dimas Santos Jr., Madison Scanlon, Madisyn Shotwell, Annabelle Silver, Rosalie Stark, Addison Surprenant, Michael Tabares, Mackenzie Toupin, John Tyler and Maxwell Wade.

## Grade Eight, High Honors

Nicolas Antonio, Brent Benoit,

Abraham Brown, Josephine Buck, Vivien Burch, Nichols Carroll, Kaylee Correia, Samuel Feldman, Alison LaRoche, John Orsini, Zion Parks, Stella Pears, Ellie Poulin, Moira Powers, Benjamin Thompson, Erin Trottier and Catherine Tucker.

## Grade Eight, Honors

Haleigh Agurkis, Anyiah Bergeron, Mackenzie Black, Carlmorisia Campbell, Eleanor Carroll, Alianna Casey, Justen Chriss, Wyatt Clark, Aiden Crane, Adrien Cyr, Jake Doty, Olivia Drake, Andrew Erickson, Arianna Fargnoli, Audrey Faucher, Julian For-

syth, Sydney Freeman, Daniella Gaudreault, Violet Hanks, Callahan Hardy, Ally Harrington, Chloe Howarth, Ava Kinney, Matthew Labrousse, Loralie Lamarre, Dylan Lantiegne, Collin Leclair, Emma Lindsey, Kingston McKenzie, Max Melad, Lynn Diarrah Michel, Anthony Noborini, Angelina Orr, Aubrie Phelps, Juliet Priestley, Lucas Proctor, Gwendolyn Ruis, Kristen Schur, Ava Sobol, Carter Stevenson, Hailey Stoll, Noah Toupenise, Akhai Tran and Matthew VanScoy.

## BALLOT | FROM PAGE 1

is the only one refusing.”

Last fall, over 75,000 residents across the commonwealth signed a petition after DiZoglio’s request to audit the Senate and the House of Representatives was denied by the House Speaker and Senate President.

DiZoglio and her office staff have been traveling to towns and cities, asking for help to collect the necessary signatures before the deadline, making a stop in West Brookfield on May 5.

DiZoglio said she has a “deep love and affection” for policy making and transparency in the Legislature, after spending six years as a state representative and four years as a state senator before taking her current office in 2023.

“We do so many great things here in Massachusetts,” DiZoglio said.

Despite this, the commonwealth is

ranked one of the least transparent state governments, she said.

“As your state auditor I’ve been given the really unique opportunity to have a platform; a singular voice,” she said. “We need transparency. There are a lot of tough conversations that need to be had.”

DiZoglio said she has been reflecting on the saying, “knowledge is power,” and she feels that this applies to a legislative audit, and how its results will spread knowledge and power back to the voters.

“I’ve seen knowledge hoarded, essentially, by people in power,” she said. “If we have knowledge about state budget and government, we have an opportunity to join in – to rise against or support.”

DiZoglio said her office works to “bring light” to over 200 state entities. She is it is common practice in many other states to audit the Legislature reg-

ularly as well.

“The decisions that impact us all should be made in the light of say,” she said.

DiZoglio said no system is perfect, but that the government should strive to be better.

“Our goal and our mission is to help,” she said of the State Auditor’s office. “To make sure everyday people get the best services.”

DiZoglio said the government cannot improve its service to constituents if potential problems can’t be identified and addressed. She said it’s “deeply concerning” that her office’s efforts to get access to the Legislature have been demonized and talked down about.

“It doesn’t say a lot of good things about how our system is running. What is there to hide?” she said.

DiZoglio said there have been 113 audits of the Legislature completed by her office dating back to 1849. Now, they are unable to get access to information about public tax dollars, she said.

DiZoglio said the audit is a nonpartisan issue, and it’s more about those who have power and those who do not.

“Leadership has a lot of power,” she said.

Retaliation is also a common occurrence in the Legislature, DiZoglio said, adding that this behavior is “unacceptable.”

She said retaliation directed at herself personally is missing the mark, and coming back on the voters who elected her.

“This is something that need to be talked about over and over again... This is not the Massachusetts we know and love,” she said.

DiZoglio urged residents to “have a seat at the table” before decisions are made in the Legislature, asking them to help gather the remaining signatures for the ballot question before the June 5 deadline.

“You have the power to make change, I cannot do this without you,” she said.

For more information about the audit or to sign the State Auditor’s petition, visit [dianaforma.com](http://dianaforma.com). For more information about the State Auditor’s office and its role in state government, visit [www.mass.gov/org/office-of-the-state-auditor](http://www.mass.gov/org/office-of-the-state-auditor).

## POLAR PARK | FROM PAGE 9

on eight base hits. He didn’t issue any walks and recorded 11 strikeouts.

“I really wasn’t expecting to go the distance in today’s game,” Guimond said. “When we faced Monson at Dunkin’ Park, we used several different pitchers.”

The Indians, who had a 9-4 overall record following the victory, were the visiting team.

The Cougars, who were looking to reach the .500 mark, had a 5-7 overall record.

Guimond had a 3-0 lead to protect before walking out to the mound for the first time in the bottom of the first inning.

“When I walked out to the mound for the first time, I felt like a big leaguer,” he said. “Having an early lead also gave me a lot of confidence.”

Not very many big league pitchers have their father’s standing in the third base coaches’ box.

“This was the third time that we’ve played Ware since Brady has been on the varsity baseball team, but it’s the first time that he has been a starting pitcher against us,” Brian Guimond said. “I wasn’t sure that he was going to start against us in today’s game until he went out there in the bottom of the first. I just told my guys that he has a slow curveball, and you must keep your shoulder tucked. He did a very good job.”

Brian Guimond, who graduated from Ware High School in 1993, and Slattery were teammates on the same baseball team, which captured the Western Mass. title. Slattery’s father, John, is the Indians scorekeeper.

John Mumper, who started at shortstop, began the Indians first inning rally by lining a leadoff single into centerfield against Quaboag senior righty Ryan Fernandez. After stealing both second and third, Mumper, who’s one of the Indians four seniors, scored with one-out on another line-drive single by junior first baseman Nathan Kaczuwka (2-for-3). After the next batter reached first base on a fielder’s choice play, senior DH Octavio Cotaj hit a flyball to the outfield that was dropped allowing two more runs to cross the plate.

“The backdrop here is a lot different than we’re used to and our outfielder just didn’t see the ball well,” Coach Guimond said. “We didn’t take infield/outfield practice and it was the first flyball of the game. We just kept battling back after that. We never gave up.”

Fernandez, who went the first 52/3 innings, allowed three runs (one earned) on six hits. He walked four and had six strikeouts. He was replaced by senior righthander Matt Tiberii, who started at shortstop.

The Cougars loaded the bases with no-outs in the second inning following three straight singles by junior third baseman Brasen Sauriol, sophomore left fielder Connor Burgess, and senior centerfielder Tyler Withers. Then freshman first baseman Liam McGrath drove home Quaboag’s first run with a sacrifice fly. Guimond then struck out the next two batters, which quickly ended the Cougars rally.

Fernandez helped himself with a RBI single to center in the following frame, which sliced the Cougars deficit to 3-2.

The Indians had at least one base runner against Fernandez in each inning that they batted, but they made several outs on the bases.

“We had a lot of runners on base, but we just kept making costly mistakes,” Slattery said. “Brady pitched well, and we played well defensively.”

Sauriol hit a double down the left field line and he advanced to third on a wild pitch. He was tagged out by sophomore catcher Kyle Kaczuwka trying to score on a groundball to the shortstop.

Kyle Kaczuwka also had an RBI single to left with two outs in the seventh giving the Indians an insurance run.

With two outs in the bottom of the seventh, Tiberii blasted a triple to center, but Guimond got the next batter to hit a ground ball to the shortstop for the final out of the game.

The two neighboring high schools could possibly meet for the second time this season during the upcoming MIAA Division 5 state tournament. The state finals are scheduled to be held at Polar Park in the middle of June.

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# - community -

'DIRT' | FROM PAGE 1

With his background in theater, Morello started his career as an actor and stand-up comic before writing and performing "Dirt". Using interwoven fictional characters based on the people and experiences from his childhood, Morello paints a captivating and raw portrait of life and its complexities.

Morello admits that it's unusual that his career shifted from the stage to performing for students in schools over 20 years ago, but it is a path that he continues to travel down and embrace.

"It's very strange I would end up in school for a living," Morello said. "I hated school."

Morello grew up outside of Detroit, Michigan before settling in Worcester. His family life was influenced by poverty, substance use and the traumatic loss of his brother at a young age.

School was a challenge for Morello, who set out to be the class clown to draw attention away from his own struggles.

"I became really good at making fun of other people at school," Morello said.

Morello remembers one of his high school teachers pulling him aside and telling him that he was really funny and that he loved having him in class. This teacher allowed Morello to tell jokes at the beginning of class, as long as he wasn't disruptive for the rest of the period.

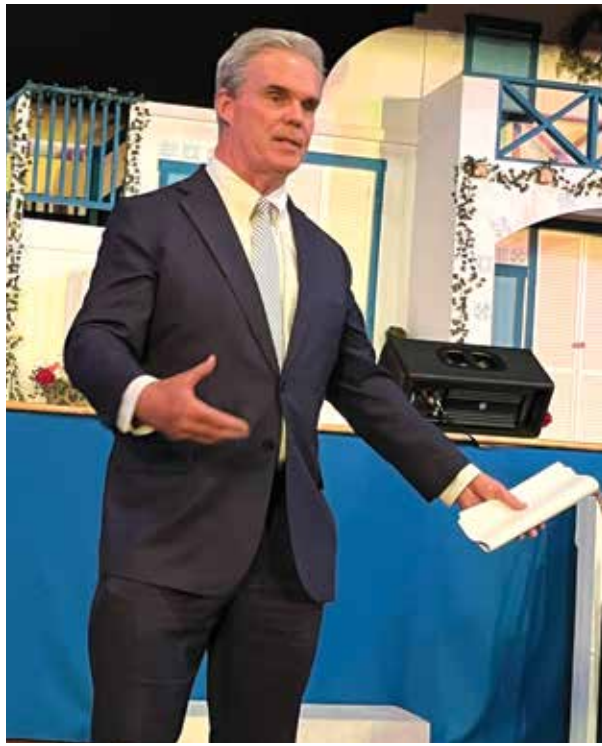
He started coming to school just so that he could attend this class, and tell his jokes.

"I wanted him to be proud of me," Morello said. "He was an adult who told me I was good at something."

By his senior year, Morello had turned his school experience around and was bound for college.

"My life started to change," he said. "We can't define ourselves by our worst day."

There were two school subjects that Morello enjoyed; art and science. He remembered how his art teacher used to tell him, "draw what you see; not what



Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr.'s office provided grant funding for the performance of "Dirt". TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA QUIMETTE

you think you see."

Morello also remembered his science fair entry of "tornado water," using green colored water in a jar that he swirled to create a vortex. At 16 years old, he left the science fair with his tornado water, and smashed it into a pile of dirt outside the school.

He watched the dirt absorb the green water and thought, "maybe I can become someone else, someone good."

At this point in the performance of "Dirt", the audience watched Morello transform into Jason, a class-

mate who never seemed to be in class.

Jason is often overlooked by his teachers and peers, and labeled as a "burnout." But Jason is also fiercely loyal and kind to his cousin, who is often the target of bullying by students and adults alike.

Jason and his cousin begrudgingly attend a youth poetry contest, where "Pi" or David reads his poem "Dirt", and the audience is then transported to a support group at a detox center.

David explains he is there for his substance use, and how Jason is one of the nicest kids he knows, and a talented guitarist, despite his dependency on marijuana.

David brings attention to issues with bullying in their school, and a time at lunch when a girl he didn't know but called "Costa Rica" was on the receiving end by a table full of other girls.

The girl goes on to share her story, from surviving a brutal sexual assault, to the loss of a parent.

The last character the audience meets is a World War II veteran, who talks about suicide, depression and discrimination during his time in the military. He talked about protests and civil rights, and how fear changes as he nears the end of his life.

He is also David's grandfather and the only family member that seems to relate to him.

Morello said he chose to write "Dirt" to work through some of the trauma he experienced in his life, including the death of an older brother the day after Morello turned 11. His other brother became an addict and died from a fatal overdose.

Morello said he was touched by the level of compassion and caring he felt from the North Brookfield students that day, and how they showed incredible empathy during his performance of "Dirt".

"That says something about your town, and your kids, and your kindness...that's beautiful," Morello said.

For more information about Morello or "Dirt" visit johnmorello.com or follow him on Facebook.

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## Grange hosts next gardening workshop May 23

WARE – Ware Grange’s next gardening workshop, “Equip Yourself for Success,” will be held on Thursday, May 23 at 7 p.m. at the Grange Hall at 297 Belchertown Road.

Our presenter will be Roberta McQuaid, author of the weekly “In the Garden” column for Turley Publications.

In this workshop participants will discuss some gardening tools to help improve garden success, including the scuffle hoe, circular weeder, black plastic, mulch, and insect netting. Bring your favorite tool, plant or other garden item to talk about with the group.

Visit us on Facebook or at waregrange.org for more information.

# - public safety -

## New Braintree Police Log

During the week of May 6-13, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 15 building/property checks, 11 directed/area patrols, one traffic control, three radar assignments, five emergency 911 calls, two citizen assists, one larceny/theft/shoplifting, four animal calls and four motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

**Monday, May 6**  
11:12 a.m. Assist Citizen, Wine Road, Spoken To  
12:51 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Memorial Drive, Services

Rendered  
**Tuesday, May 7**  
6:14 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning

**Wednesday, May 8**  
9:48 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Gilbertville Road, Citation Issued

**Thursday, May 9**  
7:07 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

**Friday, May 10**  
2 p.m. Larceny/Theft/Shoplift-

ing, Barr Road, Report Taken

**Saturday, May 11**  
11:15 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Sibley Road, Transported to Hospital  
12:52 p.m. 911 Animal Call, Gilbertville Road, Officer Handled

**Monday, May 13**  
3:26 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, McEvoy Road, Services Rendered  
6:10 a.m. 911 Animal Call, Barr Road, Services Rendered

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## BUDGET | FROM PAGE 1

Committee, the school district was asked to cut \$800,000 from that initial figure.

Salaries still make up 67% of the budget, and special education tuition has increased by 7.3%. Transportation has also increased by 14.8% over the last fiscal year.

Out-of-district placement tuition increased by 6% after going up 14% the prior year.

"This is a number that is based on what we know and what we have," McCormick said of special education tuition for out-of-district placements. "It is our moral obligation to always provide the best services for all of our students...these placements are made in the best interests of these students."

Circuit Breaker reimbursement for special education costs is projected to increase to \$1.184 million.

McCormick said the final round of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds will be running out in September of this year, creating a fiscal cliff for many school district across the commonwealth.

"A lot of districts, including North Brookfield, used that to offset salaries because of budgetary constraints," he said.

McCormick the school district is looking at ways to save money and use what they have to fill gaps caused by the loss of ESSER.

He said recent adjustments to the FY 25 budget have helped the school district recover \$606,731 of the \$800,000 reduction. This includes an increase in offsets such as Circuit Breaker reimbursement, Rural School Aid Fund, a teacher resignation, American Rescue Plan Act money, and more.

McCormick said the school district will make up for the remaining shortfall by eliminating two sixth grade teaching positions at the elementary school, and moving those students up to junior high.

"That is the model that most districts are adopting," he said, grouping grades six, seven and eight together in one wing.

Other cost saving measures include eliminating one special education teacher, and also using unspent salaries from FY 24 to pre-buy Into Reading curriculum for kindergarten through grade six.

He said these measures put the district "in a good place for FY 25."

McCormick said a group of about 20 people spent about a month

and a half looking at the school district's priorities.

"Part of this process, we conducted surveys we looked at data from students and families. We talked about what are those big-picture, overarching goals for the next three years," he said. "In this process, we developed a new mission statement."

The mission statement is focused on empowering each student to reach their full potential through a high-quality education.

"Statements are simply words; unless they're backed up by action. I think that over the last two years we've backed up these words with a lot of action," McCormick said.

The school district is working to achieve this by streamlining its curriculum and adding programs such as Project Lead the Way. The district is also partnering with the Boston Celtics and Mass IDEAS, as well as area manufacturers to bring more opportunities to students.

McCormick said the school district is working toward receiving an Innovation Pathway designation in advanced manufacturing.

Mental health concerns and anxiety have increased since the pandemic, and McCormick

said many students are coming to school with trauma. The school district has used a Safe and Supportive Schools grant to increase in-school counseling and allow a therapy dog to come to the schools.

"Every classroom will have what is called a 'common corner,'" McCormick said. "Where there will be items that students can use to process anxiety while remaining in class."

This grant will also provide professional development for staff in order to better support students.

"I'm really proud of the work that we're doing as a leadership team. I'm really proud of the work that our teachers are doing; our support staff... and our kids. Our kids are embracing these positive changes," he said.

## public notice

### Town of North Brookfield Accepting Bids

Town of North Brookfield is seeking proposals from MassDOT pre-qualified general contractors for construction of proposed sidewalk upgrades along N. Main Street. Bid documents may be downloaded at **www.BiddocsOnline.com**. **Bids due 05/31/2024 at 10 a.m.** 05/17, 05/24/2024

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### CLUES ACROSS

- Geological time
- Ooze
- A set of eight
- Obstruction
- Swiss mathematician
- Philosophy
- The night before
- A timid person
- Unifies
- Gangs
- Alternative name
- Acumen
- Cathode-ray tube
- Tantalum
- Soluble ribonucleic acid
- Humiliate
- Earthy pigment
- Air Force
- Adult males
- Stiff untanned leather
- Before
- Atomic #18
- Beer mug

### CLUES DOWN

- Excessive fluid accumulation in tissues
- Untangle
- One from the U.S.
- Academic terms
- San \_\_ Obispo, in California
- Not healthy
- Self-assessment questionnaire (abbr.)
- Arugula genus
- VIII
- Makes a monarch
- Tormentor
- Commercials
- Sprinkle
- Make a mistake
- Freshwater fishes
- Vermont town
- Man-made device
- Entrap
- Places to store important things
- Accumulate
- Greek mythological

### nymph

- Gregory \_\_, American dancer
- Denotes past
- Becoming popular again
- Indicates position
- Come before
- An extra seed-covering
- Cheerful
- Deli sandwich staple
- Skateboarders love them
- Mandela's party
- Sierra lake
- Nickname for Elizabeth
- Remove from record
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Former NFLer Newton
- Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- Work unit
- Town in Cambridgeshire

# QUABOAG CURRENT

**WEST BROOKFIELD**  
Drums and Strums  
program p2

**REGION**  
EGLT celebrates 30 years  
p5

**WARREN**  
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