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Volume 18, Number 27

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

Friday, June 6, 2025

168th commencement honors the 20 graduating North Brookfield High School seniors

By Ryan Drago
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The 168th Graduation Exercise of North Brookfield Jr.-Sr. High School took place this past Sunday.

This ceremony recognized the graduating seniors of the Class of 2025. A total of 20 students sporting their school color of purple, made their way through the Elementary School auditorium in front of parents, guardians and loved ones.

Caden Fitzgibbons from the Class of 2026 led everybody during the Pledge of Allegiance.

The official welcome began with High School Principal John Diorio. The principal thanked all who attended and congratulated



The 168th Graduation of North Brookfield Jr.-Sr. High School commenced at the Elementary School Auditorium. Students of the Class of 2025 are shown about to take their seats.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

the Class of 2025.

Diorio reflected on his time the last couple years as principal and he believes these graduating seniors have left a positive mark on

their school.

“Every contribution counts,” Diorio said. “I am a proud dad and a proud principal.”

Diorio also asked the

students to “leave the school better than you found it” and “let your values guide you.” Diorio spoke highly of not only the Class of 2025 but the entire school

community.

The next to speak was Class President Anthony Polanco who reflected on his journey through high school during his speech.

Polanco talked about his time being active in sports and first joining Student

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School Committee OKs reduced budget

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – Superintendent Timothy McCormick gave an updated budget presentation to the School Committee for fiscal year 2026.

At the May 19 meeting, he said the initial proposed increase from FY 25 to FY 26 was just shy of \$1 million or about a 14% increase. He said this updated version of the proposed budget is level service, and does not include the addition of new staff for a sub-separate classroom.

“The cost of sending students out of district, although often necessary, is

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Revolutionary War heroes honored at Old Burial Ground

By Ryan Drago
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STURBRIDGE – There is a special place that is part of the history of Sturbridge as the Old Burial Ground was the scene of a traditional Memorial Day program.

This program honors the 68 Revolutionary War heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice for American independence almost 250 years ago. This ceremony is one of many historical traditions that take place in the town.

Since 1939, students at a Sturbridge school have placed geraniums at the graves of these heroes.

Staff Sgt. Robert J. Briere, U.S. Air Force, welcomed all to the Old Burial Ground for this year’s ceremony. Briere remembered his time in elementary school when he participated in placing geraniums at these gravestones.

Several years ago, Briere revived this tradition that honors the people of Sturbridge who left their homes



A musket salute was given by the General Henry Knox Regimental Color Guard with Christopher Tourtellot giving commands.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

to fight in the American Revolution. The decoration of the gravestones for these Revolutionary patriots is done by the fifth grade students at Burgess Elementary School.

Briere thanked Michael Glick and Michael Harrington of the Publick House who generously provided the geraniums for the program. The geraniums were lined up nicely in small

pots to be placed by the American Flags standing alongside the burial plots of these heroes.

During the introduction of the program, Briere mentioned the brief conversation

he had with the fifth graders and talked about what these veterans fought for.

“The Declaration of Independence meant giving America its freedom,” Briere said.

Briere also talked about the upcoming 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026.

As part of the program, the fifth graders of Burgess Elementary School sang “America the Beautiful”.

Town Administrator Robin Grimm spoke during the program and talked about how she views Sturbridge. Grimm said she saw a town that honors those who fought for the liberties they enjoy today.

Grimm said we should “always remember and appreciate.” From Grimm’s point of view, honoring these Revolutionary War soldiers is part of what makes Sturbridge so special.

See OLD BURIAL GROUND PAGE 5

School district’s financial concerns discussed

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – Town Accountant Shiela LeBlanc shared concerns about the school district’s financial issues which she said have gone unaddressed in the past couple of years.

At the May 19 School Committee meeting, LeBlanc noted that since the start of this year, the school’s new Business/HR Manager’s records did not balance with her records of the school’s General Funds. “Each month, town de-

partments are charged with balancing with the Town Accountant. This is part of the checks and balances of the town. The idea is to make sure there’s no errors in either department or on part of the Town Accountant,” LeBlanc said. “I expressed my concerns regarding the need to balance at your meeting of Feb. 24 and was told that it was basically a program glitch, and the new Business/HR Manager was receiving training.”

LeBlanc said she offered to help at that time, and to assist in any way she could to rectify the issue. LeBlanc said at the

School Committee’s March meeting, the budget that was received had clerical errors, didn’t have linked pages and didn’t have calculations using Excel formulas.

At the beginning of April, LeBlanc emailed the Superintendent, Business/HR Manager, the School Committee chair and vice chair and the Board of Selectmen chair, regarding her concerns about the school’s General Funds and its ability to cover the costs for the remainder of the year.

“I also noted that al-

See NB SCHOOLS PAGE 6

QVFPC releases Community Food Access Assessment

Submitted Article

The Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council, Healthy Quaboag, and the town of Ware are excited to announce the release of the Community Food Access Assessment, a report that sheds light on the challenges and opportunities surrounding food access in the region.

This comprehensive report, developed with the support of the Collaborative for Educational Services, synthesizes data collected through interviews and community events held in the spring of 2024.

Over six weeks, trained local residents conducted 22 individual interviews and hosted two community drop-in events and four smaller group interviews. The findings from these conversations provide invaluable insights into the experiences of Quaboag Valley residents and their access to food, particularly in a rural area with unique challenges and assets.

The report breaks down its findings into four key categories: Community Assets, Access Barriers, Priority Needs, and Opportunities. Community Assets

One of the most notable

takeaways from the assessment is the strong appreciation of the region’s agricultural landscape. Many respondents expressed how much they value the abundance of locally grown food and the integral role that local farms play in their communities.

The region’s rural character and small-town values emerged as clear assets that shape the way residents experience food access. Many locals emphasized the importance of supporting and maintaining these agricultural traditions, highlight-

See FOOD ACCESS PAGE 8

- community -

Quaboag Hill Chamber of Commerce hosted 2025 Choice Awards



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO
Jillian Smith, center, was the winner of the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce's Community Hero of the Year award. Standing with Smith, left to right, is Chamber President Renee Niedziela, state Rep. Todd Smola, Kim Mongeau from state Sen. Peter Durant's Office and State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume



The winners of the 2025 Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce Choice Awards, in the center, joined by State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume, Renee Niedziela, Kim Mongeau, State Rep. Todd Smole and Chamber CEO James Przypek.

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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WARE – The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce hosted its 2025 Choice Awards this past week at Teresa's Restaurant.

This dinner honored the finalists and winners of six awards. The table sponsors for this awards dinner include J. Stolar Insurance Agency, Inc. and Superior Plus Propane.

Chamber CEO James Przypek said the Chamber's Board of Directors helped appoint the nominees and the six winners out of the 36 finalists.

The participation was excellent as the Chamber received an overwhelming response with 22,682 total votes. This dinner and award ceremony highlighted the businesses and individuals in the region.

With an impressive number of votes, Przypek said it shows how passionate and how grateful the chamber and the community is for these individuals and organizations.

"Tonight, we recognize those who make the Quaboag Hills region so special," Przypek said.

Przypek also thanked the table sponsors and the underwriters for the year.

The six awards are for Community Hero of the Year, Educator of the Year, Food & Drink Establishment of the Year, Retail Establishment of the Year, QHMA Business of the Year and QHMA Volunteer of the Year.

The 2025 Underwriters were Country Bank, J. Stolar Insurance Agency, Inc, Monson Savings, SERVPRO of Hampshire County, Superior Plus Propane, Westfield Bank, Christopher Heights of Belchertown, and Behavioral Health Network.

Presenting the certificates was Chamber President Renee Niedziela of J. Stolar Insurance Agency.

Przypek began the ceremony by announcing the nominees for each award. The six finalists for Educator of the Year were Casey Kibbe, Swift River Elementary (Belchertown), Gregory Devine, Quabbin Regional School District (Barre), Heather Weirbrick, Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School (Ware), Marcie Fusco, Wildwood Acres Farm & Forest School (West Brookfield), Stephen Duff, Quaboag Regional School District (Warren), and Tina Young, Palmer Public Schools (Palmer).

The winner of the Educator of the Year Award



WBCA & Beyond President Dan Flynn, left, is shown alongside state Rep. Todd Smola, Quaboag Regional School District Superintendent Stephen Duff, and state Rep. Donnie Berthiaume.

went to Quaboag Regional School District Superintendent, Stephen Duff. Prior to the announcement, Przypek talked about how educators are important role models in the region's communities.

After receiving the plaque, Duff spoke briefly and talked about how much it meant to him winning in award for doing something he enjoys so much.

"Winning an award for doing something you love is remarkable," Duff said.

Duff would then talk about many great things currently happening at Quaboag Regional School District and how everyone contributes in a small way to give kids opportunities. Duff mentioned a lot of students are getting an opportunity to turn their education into careers through the school district's Fire Academy and CNA program where they can learn early work experience in respective careers.

The finalists for Food & Drink Establishment of the Year were Arcpoint Brewing Company (Belchertown), Brimfield Winery (Brimfield), Figlio (Palmer), The Grapevine Grille (Belchertown), Hardwick Vineyard & Winery (Hardwick) and Steaming Tender (Palmer). The winner for this award was the Steaming Tender in Palmer. One of the owners was proud to accept the award and were proud to announce they will soon be going into their 21st year in business.

The finalists for Retail Establishment of the Year were Don's Auto Sales & Service (Belchertown), Hardwick Farmers Co-op (Hardwick), Life's Memories & More (Three Rivers), Monson Thrift Store & Community Center (Monson), The Spirit Shoppe (West Brookfield) and Tina Marie's Hair & Boutique (Belchertown). The winner was the Hardwick Farmers Co-Op in Hardwick. Accepting the award on behalf of the Hardwick Farmers Co-Op is Store Manager Steven Gould.

As part of the presentation of the awards, state Rep. Todd Smola, state Rep. Donnie Berthiaume, and Kim Mongeau, Communications Director in the



The Hardwick Farmers Co-Op in Hardwick won Retail Establishment of the Year. Store Manager Steven Gould, center, attended the awards dinner and accepted the award for Hardwick Farmers Co-Op.

office of state Sen. Peter Durant attended the awards dinner and congratulated the recipients of these six awards.

The Business of the Year Award went to Teresa's Restaurant in Ware. To accept the award on behalf of Teresa's Restaurant was Joe Ferrentino, who was keeping busy at the restaurant while the awards dinner took place.

Ferrentino came out to the banquet hall to accept the award and wanted to acknowledge all the customers who have been kind to the restaurant over the years.

"We have customers supporting us for 45 years," Ferrentino said.

After that statement the audience gave Teresa's a well-deserved round of applause.

The Volunteer of the Year went to Lorna Stone of Christopher Heights of Belchertown. Stone thanked everyone for the award and talked about her experience working with seniors and helping with assisted living communities.

The Community Hero of the Year award went to Jillian Smith of Wales, house fire savior to neighbors Andre and Madeline Bouchard. Smith was applauded for her heroic act by putting her own safety on the line by entering a burning house to help save her neighbors.

For more information and events about the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, visit www.qhma.com.



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- community -

District Safety Team simulate car crash

BARRE – On May 2, the Quabbin Regional School District Safety Team, composed of administration and members of the five district towns fire and police, hosted a Crash Simulation for grade 11 and 12 students.

The goal of this event was to encourage students to reflect upon decisions that they make when operating a motor vehicle or when choosing to be driven by another person.

The messaging to students was that “They Matter.” This simulated crash was held in the parking lot adjacent to Alumni Field. Although this was a staged event, emergency vehicles police, fire and EMS responded to the scene as they would for an actual event.

Quabbin student actors, Hunter McQuestion, Cameron Forde, Rachel Harrington, Jayne O’Brien, Brody Faucher and Jahzara Tweedell, took on the roles of “victims” in the crashed vehicles and did an admirable job in a difficult situation.

A special thank you is necessary for Barre School Resource Officer Mark Saw-



A victim sits on the ground near a car crash during a simulation staged by the Quabbin Regional School District safety Team.

yer, Barre Sgt. Russell Davidson, Barre Chief James Sabourin, QRSD Director of Safety Kevin Clark, New Braintree/Hardwick Lt. Kevin Landine and New Braintree Fire Chief Dennis Lentendre for their knowledge and expertise in organizing this event.

In addition, we are grateful for the emergency response participants from Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston and New Braintree who responded and re-enacted their important roles at a crash scene. We were

also fortunate to have three of our student intern junior fire department members, Kylie George, Madeleine Gaumond and Kevin Thompson participate in the scenario in their roles on the fire department. Final thanks go to Barre Select Board member, Mark Regenius and Paul Maio from New Braintree for donating the cars for the event.

Our juniors and seniors were attentive and respectful during the crash scenario as well as during a debrief after the event. Students asked

good questions and were fully engaged.

Counselors, administrators, and a comfort dog from the Princeton Police Department were on campus for the remainder of the day in the event any student needed to talk or share their feelings in regard to what they saw this morning.

Driving distracted or impaired has serious consequences. Talking to students on an ongoing basis is critically important to help this message stick. We appreciate support from families and our community. It is our hope all of our students will continue to make the best decisions for their health and safety during the upcoming prom and graduation seasons as well as throughout their lifetimes. Our students Do Matter, now and always.

Juniors and senior students at Quabbin Regional High School watch as emergency personnel respond to a staged crash on May 2 at the school.



St. Michael Romanian church’s benefit turkey dinner

STURBRIDGE – The Public House Historic Inn and Restaurant will host another in their series of community dinners on Monday, June 16, this time to benefit St. Michael Romanian Orthodox Church of Southbridge.

The Public House cooks for many local organizations as a way of giving back to the community. Each sponsored organization receives a portion of the ticket price for every dinner served.

The dinner will offer two seating times to accommodate guests: an early seating from 4:30-6 p.m. and a later seating from 6:30-8 p.m. Attendees will be treated to a buffet-style meal that includes oven-roasted tur-

key, cornbread-sausage stuffing, mashed potatoes, butternut squash and cranberry sauce

Tickets are priced at \$17 per adult and \$7 for children aged 4-12 years. To purchase tickets or for additional information, please reach out to Spiro Thomo at 774-200-8043 or Jen Boilard at 508-801-3030.

Payments may be made by cash or check made payable to The Public House. Tickets are pre-paid only, no tickets will be sold at the door. The deadline for ticket purchases is Friday, June 13.

The mission of St. Michael Romanian Orthodox Church is to experience the grace of God and to share it with others.

32nd annual Strawberry Festival to be held June 14

NORTH BROOKFIELD – St. Joseph’s Parish in North Brookfield will be having its 32nd annual Strawberry Festival on Saturday, June 14 from 5-6:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall, 296 North Main St.

The menu will offer baked ham, homemade baked beans, homemade

potato salad, homemade coleslaw, rolls, iced tea, coffee, water, and the always delicious strawberry shortcake.

Tickets can be obtained by calling the parish office at 508-867-6469. Tickets are \$15 adults and \$7 children ages 5-10. Take out is also available.

Church hosts annual chicken BBQ on June 14

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Christ Memorial Episcopal Church, 133 Main St., will hold its annual chicken BBQ on Saturday, June 14, from 1-2 p.m.

The meal includes a half chicken, baked potato, cole-

slaw, roll, drink, and fresh strawberry shortcake. Take-out or eat in available.

Tickets are sold at the door or call Sandi at 508-867-3272 or Mary at 508-662-8174. Tickets are \$20 per person.

Ham radio operators take to the field in West Brookfield

Emergency Communications Drill to be held on June 28

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Saturday, June 28, from 2-6 p.m., the Quaboag Valley Amateur Radio Club will participate in the annual American Radio Relay League Field Day on the town common.

Field Day is the largest emergency communication

exercise in North America, sponsored by the ARR), and it brings together over 35,000 licensed amateur radio operators across the U.S. and Canada. The goal is to set up temporary stations using off-grid power to demonstrate ham radio’s ability to provide vital communications during natural disasters, power outages, and other emergencies.

The public is invited to stop by and learn about am-

ateur radio, see it in action, and even try making a radio contact. Club members will be on hand to explain how amateur radio supports emergency preparedness, provides public service communications, and how anyone can get started and earn a license.

This is a great opportunity for anyone interested in technology, communication, or community service to see firsthand how ham radio can

connect people when it matters most.

For more information about the Quaboag Valley Amateur Radio Club, visit www.qvarc.com. Come join them on the town common and discover the power and fun of amateur radio.

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WARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

<p>School Choice openings for the 2025-2026 school year:</p> <p>Kindergarten.....2 Grade 23 Grade 35 Grade 45 Grade 75 Grade 815 Grade 925 Grade 1025 Grade 1125 Grade 1215</p>	<p>The School Choice application can be downloaded at www.wareps.org or picked up at Central Office 239 West Street, Ware, MA 01082</p> <p>Deadline to submit applications is June 16, 2025</p> <p>The selection of non-resident students for admission will be in the form of a random drawing, when the number of requests exceed the number of available spaces. The drawing, if needed, will take place on June 17, 2025.</p>
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The Ware Public School District strives to work with parents and the wider community to educate all students in an environment that supports high academic achievement, instills respect and fosters civic responsibility.

We believe that the ultimate goal of education is to support students as successful lifelong learners.

It is the policy of the Ware Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, military service, union activity or genetics in its educational programs, activities or employment policies as required by Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, Chapter 622 of the Massachusetts General Laws, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, M.G.L. c. 71A and c. 76, s. 5.

- opinion -



The peony takes the stage in June

As I look out my living room window, I can see the chubby round buds of one of my favorite June-bloomers, the peony. No doubt, the plant will be in full flower just in time for my birthday, as it has for a number of decades.

Read on to learn all you need to know, straight from the archives!

Who doesn't love the peony? Its frilly flowers, fine fragrance and fit form make it a favorite in the June perennial border.

And although it only blooms for a short while, the plant itself is reliably hardy and notably long lived in our climate. In fact, the peony that grows in my garden is one my great grandmother grew in the 1930s!

Here are a few tips to keep your peonies thriving for the next seventy years.

Planting

Peonies are best planted in the fall, September or October in our area. This timing will give the plants an opportunity to develop a healthy stand of feeder roots before the ground freezes.

Choose a location that receives six or more hours of sun a day. Don't skimp on the size of the planting hole; one that measures a foot and a half deep by two and a half feet wide will sustain the plant for many years.

If your soil is average, the addition of a balanced fertilizer may be all that is necessary at planting. Soils that are lean should be improved prior to planting by amending the hole with roughly equal parts good soil and aged compost or manure.

Peonies prefer a pH of 6.0-7.0, a wide enough range to accommodate most home garden situations. If your soil is more acidic than that, bring up your pH by adding lime.

Mail order plants usually arrive bareroot. These can be soaked in a bucket of water overnight to rehydrate prior to planting.

When it comes time to plant, remember this: eyes point up, roots point down! Eyes should end up no more than two inches below the soil surface; any deeper than that and flowers may be sacrificed. Get your plants off to a good start by watering occasionally until the ground freezes. Once it does, a light mulch can be applied over the peonies to prevent them from being heaved out of the ground during periods of freeze and thaw.

Fertilizing and Watering

Peonies fertilized at planting time require no additional food until the following fall. Bear in mind that too much nitrogen will

encourage lots of leaves but few roots and flowers. For that reason choose a fertilizer that is lower in nitrogen than the other nutrients.

After the third season fertilize after blooming, as well as in the fall. An established peony is drought resistant, but if spring rains are scarce, a weekly watering will promote good flowers.

Staking

Heavy peony flowers, especially the old-fashioned types will no doubt bow down to the ground in the wind and rain unless staked. I usually pick some for the vase in the bud stage in an attempt to avoid this task, but nevertheless it makes the plant nice and tidy and should be accomplished. Middle weight bamboo stakes inserted into the ground on the outer edge of the plant cut to three-quarters its height, work well. Run two rows of twine or jute at one third and two thirds up the bamboo, respectively. Simply start by tying a knot on one stake, wrapping around the next and tightening as you go.

If green bamboo and jute are used the staking will hardly be visible, especially if you don't tighten so much that it looks unnatural. I have been using a three rung, large tomato cage with success for the last several years. The key is to get the cage in place early!

Diseases

One year my peony buds wilted and dried up just prior to bloom. The culprit was botrytis.

Good hygiene can reduce the risk of this fungus invading your garden. Each fall simply cut the stems of herbaceous peonies down to the ground. Haul them off to the trash, don't compost.

If watering is necessary, do so early in the morning and water at the plant's base rather than overhead to keep foliage dry. Any stems that show signs of wilting should be cut away and thrown in the trash as well. Disinfect clippers in between cuts.

By next weekend, I am sure there will be peonies in a vase, perfuming the entire room, just like they have for a number of decades each June...

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. Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



By Ellenor Downer

Yellow bellied sapsucker



A Brimfield resident reported a yellow bellied sapsucker pair in his yard.

He said in an email, "I began seeing a male yellow-bellied sapsucker at a dogwood tree in front of the house. The bird was there every day last week. On Saturday, I saw a female on the same tree. I'll try to find a nest, I did find a sapsucker nest in the Brimfield State Forest a few years ago." He also has a mountain ash in his yard with lots of sapsucker holes.

Yellow-bellied sapsuckers lap up the leaking sap and any trapped insects with its specialized, brush-tipped tongue from holes they makes in a variety of trees especially birch and maples

Like many of the woodpecker family, it has barred black and white feathers with a red cap. The male also has a red throat. They sit still on tree trunks for long intervals while feeding. To find one, listen for their loud mewing calls or stuttered drumming.

Sapsuckers inhabit young deciduous forests. To find a

sapsucker's territory, people should keep an eye out for their distinctive, neatly organized rows of sap wells. They cling motionless to trees while calling, birders should look closely at the trees around the for their sharply contrasting black-and-white face stripes and the bright-red patches on their heads.

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker makes two kinds of holes in trees to harvest sap. Round holes extend deep in the tree and are not enlarged. The sapsucker inserts its bill into the hole to probe for sap. Rectangular holes are shallower and must be maintained continually for the sap to flow. The sapsucker licks the sap from these holes, and eats the cambium of the tree too. New holes usually are made in a line with old holes, or in a new line above the old.

The sap wells made by yellow-bellied sapsuckers attract hummingbirds, which also feed off the sap flowing from the tree. Other birds as well as bats and porcupines also visit sapsucker sap wells.

Although a few individuals remain throughout much of the winter in the southern part of the breeding range, most head farther south, going as far south as Panama. Females tend to migrate farther south than do males.

Other birds

The Brimfield resident reports the return of the

rose-breasted grosbeak, catbird and great crested flycatcher. His wife saw two great crested flycatcher near the nest box a pair used last year.

Eagle nests

The Brimfield resident also reported a tree with a bald eagle nest at the Stebbins Wildlife Refuge in Longmeadow fell down and the fire department rescued two chicks. They have been placed in the care of a local raptor rehabilitator. The chicks look to be fully grown, but unable to fly. He will care for

the birds until they are old enough to release.

In Ludlow there is another eagle nest and there are two chicks in that nest also but they are still very young, their heads are just visible above the rim of the nest.

Solitary sandpiper

The Brimfield resident reported seeing a solitary sandpiper at one of the ponds in Warren. He said he has seen spotted sandpipers there, but this was the first time he saw a solitary sandpiper at that location.

Black bear

Saturday, May 24 I saw a black bear walking down the side of my road about 4:30 p.m. I slowly followed him in my car. He left the road and went up a steep path leading into some woods. At the top of the hill, he turned and looked toward the road. He had a healthy, dark black coat of fur.

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.

QUABOAG CURRENT TEAM



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

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to: Quaboag Current, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.



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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.

Pothole cheerleaders...



I'm a retired veteran; why must I pay for Medicare?

Dear Rusty:
I'm a retired Navy veteran, who is going to be turning 65 years old this year.

My question is concerning mandatory Medicare sign-up requirements. Why do I have to sign up for Medicare coverage at 65 when I can't start collecting full Social Security benefits until I turn 67? My Social Security benefits will not pay for my mandatory Medicare because I can't start collecting full Social Security benefits until I'm 67.

I currently pay for Tricare and utilize my local Veterans Administration medical facilities and referrals for my healthcare. With me turning 65 and having to wait until I'm 67 for my full So-

cial Security benefits, it just seems unfair that I'll have to pay out of pocket Medicare monthly expenses for two years. Is there any way to avoid this unfair penalty?

Signed: Retired Navy Vet

Dear Retired Navy Vet:

First, I want to thank you for your military service to our country. Please know that here at the AMAC Foundation we care a lot about our veterans and you may find the "For Veterans" section of our Foundation website interesting - visit www.amacfoundation.org.

Regarding your question, you should be aware that enrolling in Medicare is not mandatory, but there

are consequences if you do not enroll when you become eligible, normally at age 65). For one thing, if you are a retired veteran on military TriCare, you will lose your TriCare benefits if you don't enroll in Medicare when you are eligible.

TriCare requires that you enroll in Medicare when eligible. And, since you are not yet collecting Social Security, you will be required to separately pay the Medicare Part B premium directly to Medicare; they will bill you when you enroll in Medicare. Another potential consequence is that if you do not enroll in Medicare Part B when you are first eligible, you may incur a lifetime late enrollment penalty for enrolling in Part B later.

Something else to keep in mind is that there are two "parts" to Medicare - Part A, which is coverage for inpatient hospitalization services and Part B, which is coverage for outpatient healthcare

See SOCIAL SECURITY PAGE 14

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A Memorial Day program was held at the Old Burial Ground in Sturbridge to commemorate the Revolutionary War heroes who are buried in this historical cemetery.



Retired Staff Sgt. Robert J. Briere, U.S. Air Force welcomed all the guests who attended this Memorial Day program at the Old Burial Ground



Past Regent Anne Marie Safae, right, and Regent Helen Poirier of the Massachusetts Daughter of the American Revolution attended the program at the Old Burial Ground and gave a presentation about DAR.



Town Administrator Robin Grimm spoke during the Memorial Day program.

BURIAL GROUND
FROM PAGE 1

Briere welcomed members of the Massachusetts Daughters of the American Revolution for a presentation. The DAR was founded back in the 1890s and is a nonprofit, volunteer women's association that provided patriotism, education and historic preservation.

Sharing information about the DAR was Past Regent Anne Marie Safae and Regent Helen Poirier. The DAR is also involved in participating in events that honor veterans.

Commander Christopher Tourtellot from the Massachusetts Sons of the American Revolution presented a toast to the flag. After the toast, the fifth graders began placing the geraniums at the burial plots of the Revolutionary War patriots.

The musket salute was



These geraniums were placed by the burial plots of the Revolutionary War patriots at the Old Burial Ground by students from Burgess Elementary School.

presented by the General Henry Knox Regimental Color Guard, with Tourtellot giving commands. A presentation of "Taps" would soon follow as the trumpets echoed across the Old Burial Ground.

As a decoration of the graves of the Revolutionary War patriots, these geraniums were placed by fifth grade students at Burgess Elementary School.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

Commander Christopher Tourtellot from the Massachusetts Sons of the American Revolution is shown during "A Toast to the Flag".

BUDGET FROM PAGE 1

expensive and if we can build those programs internally, it's better for the student, it's better for their families, it's better for our teachers as well," McCormick said, when explaining the need for a sub-separate classroom.

He said the amount of out of district costs not being reimbursed by Circuit Breaker have been over \$200,000 for the past couple of years.

McCormick said without the new positions, staff salaries increased by \$268,842 over the prior year.

He said that Chapter 70

funding increased from what was projected previously, and the town is now receiving about \$41,000 more.

McCormick said the town's net school spending has decreased from year to year, with the Finance Committee suggesting the school district budget at 100% for the coming fiscal year, which is the minimum required.

The budget drivers continue to be out of district tuition, transportation and staff salaries.

He said with staff realignments and offsets, the proposed budget will be reduced by \$108,000 since the last up-

date he provided. He said the high school has also received a \$40,000 grant to be used for curriculum supplies.

These, including other offsets, have reduced the proposed budget by \$480,311.50, without reducing any staffing positions.

"Unfortunately, when we're talking about reductions...the most money's involved with salaries," McCormick said.

Another cost saving measure is eliminating one bus and reconfiguring the bus routes. He said this will increase students time on the bus by about 15 or 20

minutes.

McCormick said while he understands that this is a small school district with a declining student enrollment, the elimination of positions is "very challenging."

He provided a list of positions that could be removed, including an art teacher, music teacher, district-wide instructional coach, English Language Arts teacher in the high school, an English Language Learner teacher, paraprofessional, a physical education teacher and an elementary school media specialist for a total savings of

\$448,180.

McCormick said these reductions would bring the budget close to the target of net school spending, reducing the budget by \$1.05 million.

"The impact of reductions for these positions will be felt by all of our students, some greater than others," he said. "Anytime you lose a staff member...students are impacted."

McCormick said he recommended a level service budget, which would prevent the loss of art, music, and more.

"If we continue to cut

positions, we're going to really build obstacles for that continuous improvement for our students and our families," he said.

The School Committee members discussed the merits of each of the positions on the list to be eliminated, and how important they are to the students.

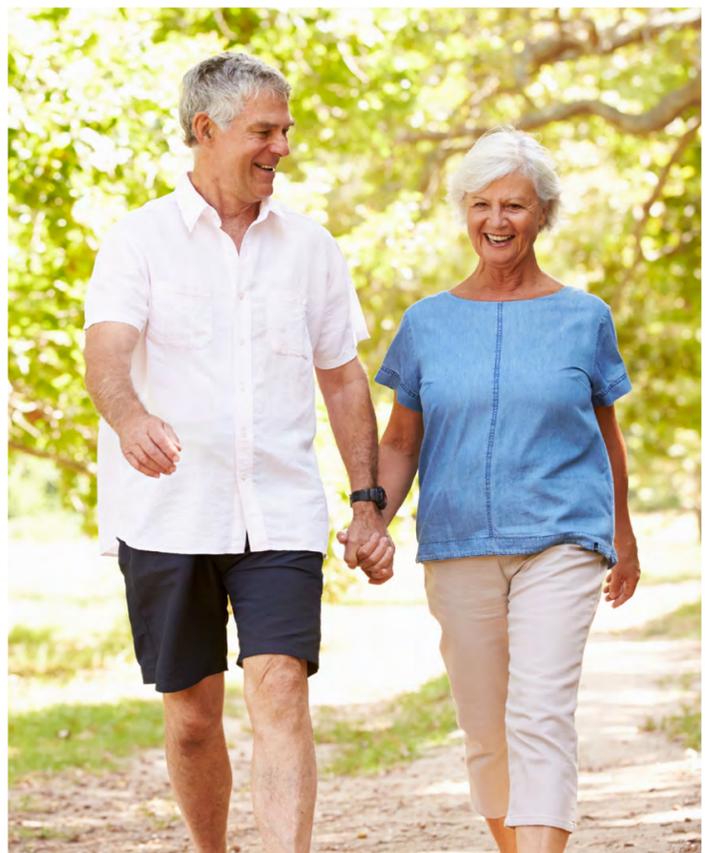
The School Committee voted to accept the level service budget as presented by McCormick, keeping the art, music and physical education teachers. This brings the total reduction of the proposed FY 26 budget to \$828,063.

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NB SCHOOLS FROM PAGE 1

though the percentage amount remaining that showed on the report looked okay, it did not take into consideration lump-sum payments of about \$345,000 and the estimated \$425,000 of summer pays that were not accounted for," she said. "I also noted that there were grants that were in the negative balance, most importantly at that time, was a negative balance of \$39,000 in the Targeted Assistance grant. To date, I have not received any response to that email."

On April 30, LeBlanc sent another email to the Superintendent and Business/HR Manager, and included all members of the School Committee, Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee chair.

"I reiterated my concern with the school's ability to fund the expenses through the remainder of the year," she said. "According to my estimates, the school still had payroll obligations of \$1.552 [million], never mind any other expenses... the balance in the General Fund at that time was \$1.513."

LeBlanc said this means that \$39,000 of the payroll obligations would need to come from revolve, grant or gift accounts. She said this did not include the still-to-come expenses of tuition, transportation, or monthly operating costs.

She said major spending out of Circuit Breaker, school choice funds, Rural School Aid, Small Rural Schools grant, or other revolve or gift accounts could "have a major impact on any available offsets for the FY 26 budget."

LeBlanc said she has still not received a response to her emails.

She said it has also been discovered that the school has not expended all of its fiscal year 2024 grants, and now the Business/HR Manager will need to go back through expenditures to find items that are part of the specific grant categories, resulting in transfers that need to be approved by both departments.

"These grants are designed to supplement the school's budget," LeBlanc said. "At a minimum, there should be a plan to use them monthly with corresponding drawdowns also conducted monthly. These FY 24 grants must be expended before you use any of the 25 grants."

LeBlanc said this responsibility falls directly on the Superintendent and the School Committee.

"It's my hope that we can work and find a way that maybe if there's any unused FY 25 as well as the FY 26 grants, to decrease any of the deficit on the net school spending figure and the school budget request," she said.

Comments from students

and teachers

Valedictorian of the Class of 2025 Dayton Ford said he is concerned and heartbroken about the proposed budget cuts for the school district's fiscal year 2026.

"They will be given the bare minimum," he said. "No child deserves the bare minimum."

Ford spoke of the merits of the athletics and arts programs at the school and said they help to foster a love of learning. He said over the past four years, he has watched the high school "grow and improve" as well as build a sense of community for students.

Seniors Anthony Polanco and Aiden Rodriguez were joined by junior Nathaniel Stonehouse to present a slideshow about the importance of the high school, its faculty and its programs.

Rodriguez said he struggled in school until he came to North Brookfield where he found the support he needed. He is planning to study engineering when he attends UMass Dartmouth in the fall.

"North Brookfield has built me up and I greatly appreciate that," he said.

Teacher Heather Macpherson said her child has school choiced to the district since he was in kindergarten and is now a junior. She said it has been an honor working with her colleagues and the students.

"It would be absolutely devastating for our students to be shut out of this building and tuitioned out to Quaboag," she said.

She shared data on the long-term impact of school closures, and how the effects can leave a lasting impression on students into adulthood.

Teacher's union president Damian Sarrette said if students were sent to Quaboag Regional Middle High School, they wouldn't have any of their trusted educators and staff with them.

He said this is not a gateway to regionalization with the larger school district.

Superintendent's report Superintendent Timothy McCormick said he attended the final session of his three-year new superintendent induction program put on by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. He said he has worked with a coach during that time.

He said on May 13, he attended the One8 Foundation's event in Norwood with Principal John Diorio and science teacher Caitlin Malone. He said they attended this event after observing Applied Learning techniques in action at other schools earlier in the year.

McCormick gave an update on the high school's Advanced Manufacturing Pathways, which is a four-year pathway with Project Lead the Way.

"What we're trying to

do is offer our students a pathway to career and college readiness in Advanced Manufacturing starting next year," he said. "We will tailor our classes in STEM technology and every freshman will take a STEM class...if they enjoy this pathway they can stay in this pathway through their senior year in high school."

McCormick said this program allows students to take dual enrollment courses at Quinsigamond Community College, earn credentials and more.

McCormick said he is "very excited to build those opportunities for our kids."

McCormick said the first year the high school received this designation it can receive \$75,000 in grant funding, and then they can apply for \$50,000 per year for the next four years in order to support the program.

Washington, D.C. trip

Margaret Hanson gave an update on the recent Washington, D.C. school trip. She said this is the third time the school has sent students on this trip, which was open to students in grades seven-12.

Hanson said the students and their families held many fundraisers to make this trip possible.

"It was almost \$40,000 in two years so that all of the students who wanted to go but couldn't afford to were able to," she said.

One of the trip leaders sent an email to the chap-

trones after the trip to applaud the students for their behavior.

A number of students shared their photos and favorite memories from the school trip and shared their experiences.

Recognitions

McCormick recognized the outgoing Student Council representative Dante Gi-grande.

"Dante has been a strong advocate for everything North Brookfield," he said. "Whether it be Student Council events, athletics, student government, he has been involved."

He also welcomed Noah Gillette, who is taking over Giangrande's position.

Student Council update Gillette said the Executive Board elections were held on May 5 and Teacher Appreciation Week was May 5-9.

He said the Junior Conference event for fifth graders will be held on June 3.

"This will be for the fifth graders to give them the opportunity to learn about our school and Student Council," Gillette said.

The annual Student Council lock-in will be held from Friday, June 6 through Saturday, June 7.

On the last day of school, the Hanson family and the Student Council will enjoy milkshakes and nondairy slushies for an end-of-the-year sendoff.

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SEND US YOUR SPORTS SUBMISSIONS

Pioneers make quick work first tourney opponent

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—Just like they did a year ago, the Pathfinder Tech softball team didn't have very much trouble defeating a charter school from Boston in a Division 5 state tournament home game.

The 25th-seeded Lady Pioneers exploded for 13 runs in the second inning enroute to a 22-0 victory over the 40th-seeded Neighborhood House Charter School in a preliminary round game, last Friday afternoon.

The contest ended after 4 ½ innings due to 12-run mercy rule.

"The girls have worked very hard all season long and they deserve to celebrate a postseason victory," said Pathfinder Tech first-year head coach Phil Gallo. "We didn't know very much about our opponent, and they probably didn't know anything about us either."

The victory improved the Lady Pioneers overall record to 13-5. They beat Boston Collegiate Charter School, 19-4, in last year's preliminary round home game.

During the regular season, the Lady Pioneers scored ten or more runs in nine games. The 22 runs is a new season high. They posted a 21-0 home win against the Renaissance School in the middle of May.

The Neighborhood House Charter School,



Taylor Thorton hustles for first base.

which is in Dorchester, opened its doors seven years ago. The school is nicknamed the Legends and the softball team qualified for the Division 5 state tournament for the first time. The Legends (11-8) didn't appear like they were ready to compete at the state level yet. The MIAA should think about having the charter schools play in their own state tournament in the future.

While the Lady Pioneers offense pounded out 13 base hits, which included a couple of home runs, senior right-hander Kendra Burke struck out the first twelve batters that she faced.

"When Kendra is hitting her spots, I wouldn't want to have anyone else standing in



Claire Maschi fouls off a pitch.



Emily Forcier sizes up a hit.



Kendra Burke sends a pitch to the plate

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

the circle for us," Gallo said. "She pitched very well in today's game."

It was the final home softball game for Burke, along with her classmates Greenly Lagimoniere, Lianna Carrasquillo, and Isabella Nompoggi.

Carrasquillo, who started at third base, knocked home the game's first run with a flyball single to right field with no outs in the bottom of the first inning. Junior left fielder Addison Doktor capped off the opening frame with a 3-run homer to left. Doktor also had an RBI single in the third.

"This was Addison's best game of the season," Gallo

said. "We just kept hitting the ball hard from start to finish, which was good to see."

Junior right fielder Emily Prouty led the way offensively with three base hits.

Lagimoniere (2-for-3), who started in centerfield, hit a two run home run in the second inning. It was her second home run of the season.

The Lady Pioneers sent 18 batters to the plate during that frame. Nompoggi (shortstop) contributed with a pair of singles. Pathfinder also drew five walks in the

See **SOFTBALL**
PAGE 8

Warriors grab 14th win over Auburn, head into tournament

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

AUBURN—Kaydie O'Neil is one of the three seniors on the Tantasqua girls' varsity lacrosse roster.

O'Neil, who recently broke the team's record for career goals, began playing lacrosse nine years ago as a third grader. The Lady Warriors also won 14 matches during the 2016 season.

For the first time since 2016, the Lady Warriors won their 14th match of the season following a 14-7 victory against the Auburn Rockets at Memorial Field in Auburn on May 19.

"We haven't won 14 games in several years and it feels great," said Tantasqua head coach Heather Egan. "All of the players on this year's team have been working very hard and I'm very happy for them."

The road victory improved Tantasqua's overall record 14-4.

Tantasqua also defeated Auburn, 14-10, in a home match at the beginning of the regular season.

The second meeting of the regular season was played on a cool and windy evening.

"I thought the wind was a factor in today's game," Egan said. "The wind made it very difficult for the players to communicate on the field."

Jessica Farland, who graduated from Tantasqua in 2012, previously held the team record for career goals with 206. O'Neil tied the record on a free position goal during the Lady Warriors

11-10 senior night victory against Shepherd Hill Regional on May 12. The other two seniors listed on the Tantasqua girls' lacrosse roster are Anna Hendrikes and Stella Buday.

O'Neil then broke the record two days later with an unassisted goal in a 16-11 win at Northbridge High School.

"I couldn't have broken the record without the help of my teammates," O'Neil said. "(Junior) Tess Alexander has assisted many of my goals this season. The defense also causes a lot of turnovers, which makes things a lot easier for the offense. We do have a very strong all around team this year."

The members of the Lady Warriors defensive unit are sophomore Bryn Carey, sophomore Tessa Sheldon, sophomore Kat Robbins, junior Elle Kearns, and Buday. The Lady Warriors starting goalie is junior Fiona Knott.

Egan first informed O'Neil that she was approaching the record at the beginning of May.

"I didn't know what the goal record was before Coach Egan told me," O'Neil said. "I never expected to break a team record, but it was a cool feeling when I did do it."

O'Neil grew up playing lacrosse with Ally Orquiola, who's a senior on the Wilbraham & Monson girls' lax team.

Egan also coached Farland, who played both soccer and lacrosse at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

"I really enjoyed coaching Jess Farland when she played for the lacrosse team. She held the goal record for a long time," Egan said. "Kaydie is another outstanding lacrosse player and is also a great kid."

O'Neil, who was also a starting defender on the Lady Warriors soccer team, will be joining the Wheaton College women's soccer team in the fall. She's also thinking about playing lacrosse at the collegiate level.

The two main reasons why O'Neil decided to attend Wheaton College, which is in Norton Mass, is because of the coaching staff and it's not very far away from Sturbridge.

"When I visited the school, I had a very good meeting with Mary-Frances Monroe, who's the women soccer coach," O'Neil said. "I also liked the campus and it's a perfect distance away from home."

If another member of the Lady Warriors lacrosse team does break the goal record during the next couple of years, O'Neil is hoping her younger sister, Maeve, who's a freshman, will be able to accomplish the milestone.

"It has been a lot of fun playing on the same lacrosse team with my younger sister this year," Kaydie O'Neil said. "She's also a very good goal scorer. If anyone is going to break the record, I would be very happy if she did it."

While Kaydie O'Neil led the way offensively with four goals and three assists

See **WARRIORS**
PAGE 8

After pair of big wins, Pioneers draw in home opener

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—Putting the ball into the back of the net wasn't a major issue for the Western Mass. Pioneers in their first two regular season matches.

The Pioneers, who outscored Boston City and the Albany Rush, 15-0, on the road, played a 1-1 draw against the Seacoast United Phantoms in the home opener at historic Lusitano Stadium on May 23.

"I thought it was a very good game tonight," said longtime Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. "Seacoast won the championship last year and they're a very good team again this year. They defended very well against us. We did play much better during the second half than we did in the first half."

The Pioneers first home match was played on a miserable night weatherwise.

Eleven different players scored a goal in the Pio-



Cameron Hall, Pioneers goalie, sends a free kick away.

neers' first two road matches.

Israel Neto led the way offensively with three goals. Matt Cence and Robbie Lyons both scored two goals. The other goals for the Pioneers were scored by Oskar Kaufmann, Aiden Kelly, Austin Bush, Jose Suarez, Jose Bustamante, Gustavo Barbosa, and Mamadi Jiana, who's a former mem-

ber of the Chicopee boys' soccer team. The Phantoms (0-1-1), who are the defending USL League Two National champions, had won the previous three matchups between the two rivals held at Lusitano Stadium.

The home team had an opportunity to take an early lead, but a breakaway opportunity by Kaufmann in the second minute of the match was saved by Seacoast goalie Jahn Tobias.

With 15 minutes remaining in the first half, Tobias made a diving save on another shot attempt from Kaufmann.

Down at the other end of the field, Western Mass. goalie Cameron Hall also made a couple of key saves, which kept the contest scoreless until the second half.

The Phantoms also had



Oskar Kaufmann grabs a quick stop.

See **PIONEERS**
PAGE 8

- community -

Local author presents book talk and signing on June 12

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Thursday, June 12 at 6:30 p.m., the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library, 3 West Main St., will be hosting a book signing and author talk with Ed Orzechowski. Orzechowski (local author and former teacher at Quaboag Regional High

School) will talk about his latest book: “Becoming Darlene: The Story of Belchertown Patient #4952”. At age 7, Darlene is sent to Belchertown State School, a dehumanizing institution where she meets a sister she didn’t know she

had. Darlene considers herself an “it.” unworthy of a name. Little Girl, Boy and Brains are voices inside her head who help her survive. Books will be available for purchase. Please contact the Library by calling 508-867-1410 to register.

FOOD ACCESS FROM PAGE 1

ing the interconnectedness between the farms and the people they serve.

Access Barriers Food access continues to remain a challenge for many residents. A significant portion of the interviewees noted barriers to effectively utilizing benefit programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), school lunch programs, and Meals on Wheels. Although many people are familiar with these programs, accessing them is often more difficult than it seems.

The Healthy Incentives Program, a matching initiative for SNAP recipients to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, was also mentioned as a program that many find confusing or difficult to navigate.

While HIP is available across Massachusetts, only certain farm stands, farmer’s markets, and mobile markets

are eligible to accept these benefits. This creates a gap in availability for those who do not have access to HIP vendors nearby.

Additionally, interviewees shared concerns about the income eligibility threshold for SNAP, which many feel is too low to cover those who are just above the qualifying line but still struggle to afford healthy food.

Priority Needs One of the most pressing needs identified by the community is the establishment of more public growing spaces, including community gardens. Many residents voiced a desire for accessible spaces where they could grow their own fresh produce.

In response to this need, the Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council has formed a task force dedicated to expanding community garden initiatives.

“We are excited to work with the community to support residents in growing their own fresh produce,” Sawyer Blake said. “This is a

fantastic opportunity to empower people to take control of their food access.”

Opportunities for Improvement The assessment also highlighted several opportunities for enhancing food access in the region. These included increasing outreach and education about available benefit programs, expanding access to HIP vendors, and raising awareness about local food assistance resources.

Furthermore, community members expressed a desire for more initiatives that support local farmers and promote the region’s agricultural heritage.

Next Steps The full results of the Community Food Access Assessment are now available online. To view the comprehensive report and learn more about the findings, visit healthyquaboag.org/food-policycouncil.

Community members interested in joining the QVFC can email Sawyer at sblake@townofware.com.

West Brookfield Farmers Market is held on Wednesdays

WEST BROOKFIELD – The West Brookfield Farmers Market has returned on the beautiful West Brookfield Common for its 15th consecutive season.

The market is held on Wednesdays from 3-6 p.m., rain or shine, throughout

the spring, summer and early fall.

The 2025 season the market will feature 17 vendors with a wide array of locally grown and made goods including three new vendors sure to please the palate. The West Brookfield Farm-

ers Market is held every Wednesday afternoon from 3-6 p.m. on the common starting on June 4 through Oct. 8, rain or shine.

SOFTBALL FROM PAGE 7

second. Junior catcher Emily McNeaney had a two run double in the third inning, as the Lady Pioneers scored four more runs. Burke’s perfect game bid came to an end after allowing a leadoff ground-ball single in the fifth inning. The base runner was

thrown out trying to steal second base by McNeaney. Burke struck out the final two batters of the game.

During the regular season, Burke, who’s from Ware, hurled a perfect game and three no-hitters. She also struck out 21 batters in another game.

“It feels amazing winning my final home game,” Burke said. “I loved being

a member of this softball team. I’m looking forward to coming back and watching them play next year.

Burke is planning to play college softball at Worcester State University next year.

The Lady Pioneers played eighth-seeded Hopkins Academy in a round of 32 game two days later.

WARRIORS FROM PAGE 7

against the Rockets (9-7), Maeve O’Neil scored two goals. She also had a pair of assists.

Alexander and junior Abbie Wotton each scored two goals.

Alexander was credited with a team-high four assists.

“Tess is one of the most unselfish players that I’ve ever coached,” Egan said. “She’s had nine or ten assists in a couple of games this season.”

Rounding out the scor-

ing column for the Lady Warriors were Carey, Hendrikes, and sophomore Tayvia Reissner.

The Rockets, who celebrated their senior night, held a 4-2 lead at the end of the opening period.

The Lady Warriors took the lead for the first time at 5-4 following a goal by Kaydie O’Neil with 6:47 remaining in the first half.

She scored another goal less than twenty seconds later and the visiting team never looked back.

Goals by Carey and Alexander gave Tantasqua an

8-4 halftime advantage.

“Our defense stepped up and the offense calmed down in the second period,” Egan said. “For some unknown reason, we’ve started several games slowly this season. We buckled down in the second period.”

The Lady Warriors, who outscored the Rockets, 9-3, during the second half, celebrated their 14th win of the 2025 campaign. They’ll be looking to celebrate a couple of more wins in the Division 2 state tournament.

PIONEERS FROM PAGE 7

nine corner kicks during the first 45 minutes.

Early in the second half, the referee awarded the Phantoms a penalty kick following a foul inside the box.

Hall, who posted shut-outs in the first two matches, made a diving save on the shot taken by Taig Healy. The ball was deflected away by Hall, but Healy was in the right spot to knock home the rebound shot giving the visiting team a 1-0 advantage.

The Pioneers scored the equalizer a little more than ten minutes later.

The scoring play began with Suarez sending a crossing pass from the left side of the penalty area to Kaufmann, who fired a shot into the lower right corner of the net.

Neither team was able to score another goal during the last 30 minutes of regulation.

The second meeting of the regular season between



Santiago Blasco Gomez balances the ball.



Jaiden Williams sets for a throw-in.

the two squads is scheduled to take place on June 25th.

The Pioneers played a road match against the Boston Bolts on June 3 before

returning home three nights later to face NEFC, who’s competing at the USL-League Two level for the first time this season.



Israel Neto looks to clear the ball away.



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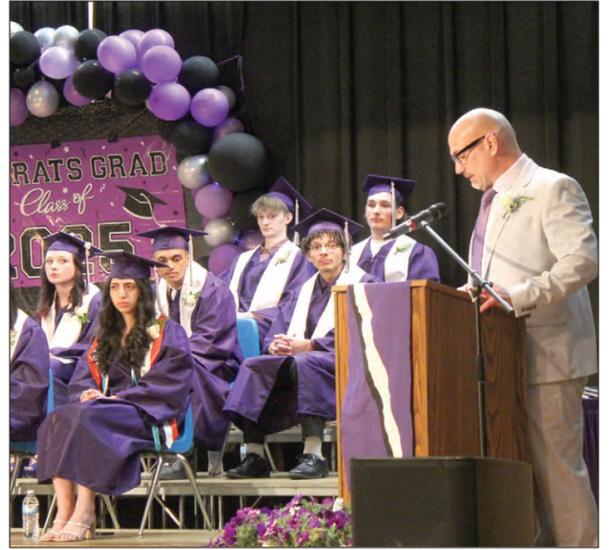
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North Brookfield Class of 2025 graduates



The seniors take the stage of the auditorium.



Principal John Diorio spoke during the ceremony and expressed how proud he was to be their principal.

GRADUATION
FROM PAGE 1

Council. Polanco congratulated his fellow classmates for making it to this accomplishment in their lives. Polanco also expressed a thank you to Diorio for his tremendous support and leadership.

"We can count on you to be in our corner," Polanco said.

The class Salutatorian was Asher Beaupre who spoke during the graduation ceremony. Beaupre talked about the tremendous support from family, teachers, and friends.

Beaupre ended with an inspiring quote: "Choose your future, choose life."

The Valedictorian, Dayton Ford, spoke next and talked about his journey through high school and the importance of working hard. Ford made an interesting point to his fellow classmates about what is next after finishing high school.

Ford talked about how high school will always give them a boat full of memories and reminded his classmates its time to move forward in their own boat.

Ford said "go set sail" while concluding his speech.

School Committee Chairman John Magario came up to share some congratulatory remarks. In his remark, Magario congratulated the Class of 2025 and said "this moment is yours and you earned it."

Magario talked about how



URLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

Dayton Ford is shown during his valedictorian speech

the world these students are about to enter into is a time of rapid change.

"The world is out there waiting for you," Magario said.

Superintendent Tim McCormick came up to speak and thanked all the staff, parents and caregivers for being a part of this ceremony. He spoke highly of all the graduating seniors and talked about their paths during high school.

McCormick strongly believes these students will have "the power of perseverance and self-belief."

"You're defined by the lives you touched and the people you helped along the way," McCormick said.

Awards and scholarships were also announced during the high school ceremony. Aubriya Hutchinson was

the recipient of the Julianne Caron Memorial Scholarship; the Random Act of Kindness Award was given to Ayden Burnor and Aiden Rodriguez was the recipient of the John & Abigail Adams Merit Scholarship.

Presenters Maybeth Kularski and Melissa Hearnlaye came up to present the Michael Keenan Memorial Scholarship, which was awarded to two students, Claudia White and Beaupre.

After receiving their diplomas, the Class of 2025 turned their tassels as their school song "Mingle Your Cheers" played as they exited the auditorium. The graduating class would then go outside for some final group photos and to toss their caps into the air.



Anthony Polanco is the Class of 2025 President who was the first senior speaker during the graduation ceremony.



Mia Socha approached the stage during the graduation.



Claudia White is shown going up to receive the Mike Keenan Memorial Scholarship that was presented by Marybeth Kularski and Melissa Hearnlaye.



Parents, guardians and loved ones prepared to stand as the Class of 2025 entered the auditorium.



Jackson Babineau received his diploma alongside Principal John Diorio.



Jamaal Jackson Jr. approached the stage during North Brookfield Jr.-Sr. High School graduation ceremony for the Class of 2025.

Class of 2025

QUABOAG REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL



Isabelle Aberle



Aviendha Andreoli



Alejandro Aponte-Cruz



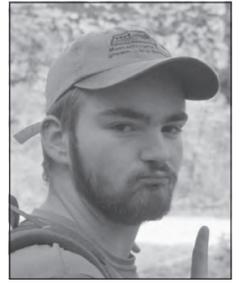
Mackenzie Archambault



Trenton Benson



Juliette Boos



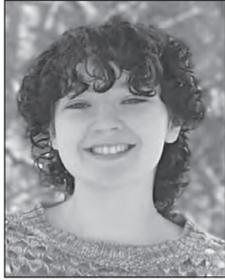
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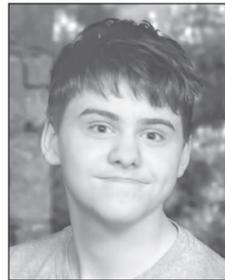
Izaiah Flores



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Jeffrey Hurley



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Congratulations
Class of 2025

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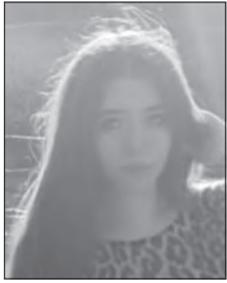
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Class of 2025

QUABOAG REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL



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Yousif Khudhair



Elise Kopec



Joshua Leaming



Evelyn Luukko



Dante Martino



Sadie May



Amelia McDonald



Norah McElroy



Erin McGrath



Leyton Mclsaac



Blake Merrill



Matthew Miller



Jack Morgan



Alexie Morrison



Corah Neilsen



Madison Neilsen



Lillian Orozco



Samuel Oveka



Alessa Parks



Aaron Patchen



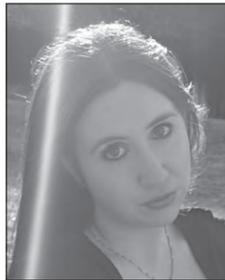
Kassidy Pelland



Nora Pennington-Russell



Evan Pollier



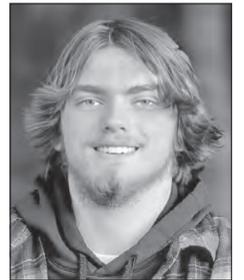
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Class of 2025

QUABOAG REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL



Norah Schwenker



Blair Shown



Chloe Smith



Lucas Snow



Katelynn Swistak



Cristyna Tambolleo



Elizabeth Tetlow



Caydence Tetreault



Liam Tetreault



Richard Tracy



Sydney Tracy



Parker Tunley



Giovanni Twomey



Sebastian Veliz-Baldizon



Nina Vorobiova



Hart Waz



Kandace Wilcox



Makenna Williams

Camera Sky GRADUATES

- Luke Devine
- Dorian Frongillo
- Isaac Hazard
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- Elisas Morley

CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!

Good Luck Class of '25



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Wishing This Year's Graduates
Great Happiness & Success

Hats off to the students whose hard work and dedication have led them to this milestone achievement. May the classroom and life lessons you've learned from your peers, parents and teachers here guide you toward continued success as you take the next step.



We're proud of your accomplishments, and we wish you all the best!

Peter Durant,
State Senator
Donnie Berthiaume,
State Representative



Congratulations, Class of 2025!

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A Note of Congratulations

May your hard work and education open the door to a world of new opportunities and success!

To Our **2025 SENIORS**

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- Kylie George**
- Evelyn Luukko**
- Chloe Lagrant**
- Ange Feliciano**
- Dakota Kularski**
- Leah O'Clonnell**
- Jenna Tucker**



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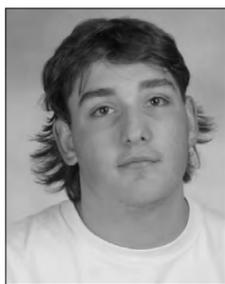
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Class of 2025



NORTH BROOKFIELD JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL



Jackson Babineau



Asher Beaupre



Ayden Burnor



Christopher Clervil



Alex Connon



Nikko Corvese



Dayton Ford



Anthony Guertin



Aubriya Hutchinson



Jamaal Jackson



Kenyon Lawrence



Mark McGraw Jr.



Sama Moshin



Bella O'Regan



Olivia Palmer



Anthony Polanco



Nathan Reilly



Aiden Rodriguez



Mia Socha



All the graduates showed their school pride by wearing purple



Valedictorian Dayton Ford is shown holding his diploma alongside his mother, father and grandfather.



Superintendent Tim McCormick spoke during the 168th Graduation Exercise of North Brookfield Jr.-Sr. High School.



Salutatorian Asher Beaupre is shown alongside family after the graduation ceremony.



Aiden Rodriguez was the recipient of the John & Abigail Adams Merit Scholarship.



Nathan Reilly is shown with his mom after the graduation ceremony.

East Brookfield Police Log

During the week of April 28-May 4, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 190 building/property checks, 52 directed area patrols, 12 traffic controls, nine radar assignments, five emergency 911 calls, five citizen assists, five assist other agencies, one motor vehicle investigation, two complaints, two safety hazards, one identity theft, one scam, one property damage, one larceny/theft/shopping, two animal calls and 45 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, April 28

8:20 a.m. Identity Theft, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
8:46 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
9:32 a.m. Scam, Young Road, Report Taken

11:11 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, East Main Street, Transported to Hospital
3:12 p.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, East Main Street, Transferred Call to C3
4:51 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued

Tuesday, April 29

9 a.m. 911 Neighborhood Dispute, Drake Lane, Services Rendered
1:35 p.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, East Main Street, Officer Handled
8:15 p.m. 911 Hang-up/Abandoned, West Main Street, Services Rendered
8:41 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Wednesday, April 30

8:11 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Connie Mack Drive,

Citation Issued
9 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Connie Mack Drive, Citation Issued
9 a.m. Assist Citizen, Gleason Avenue, No Action Required

11:06 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
2:55 p.m. 911 Misdial, Flagg Road, Services Rendered
4:02 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued

4:41 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Criminal Complaint

Thursday, May 1

6:35 a.m. 911 Misdial, North Brookfield Road, Checked/Secured
7:10 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Lashaway Drive, Citation Issued

7:17 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Lashaway Drive, Citation Issued

8:10 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

9:34 a.m. Assist Citizen, Unknown Location, Services Rendered

9:35 a.m. Safety Hazard, Podunk Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

2:07 p.m. Larceny/Theft/Shoplifting, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled

4:39 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued

5:41 p.m. Property Damage, Lashaway Drive, Negative Contact

6 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued

6:12 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued

sued
7:29 p.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Harrington Street, Negative Contact

Friday, May 2

11:54 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued

4:24 p.m. Assist Other Agency, West Main Street, Services Rendered

5:27 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled

Saturday, May 3

4:08 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Out of Town, Officer Handled

7:19 a.m. Assist Citizen, Shore Road, Services Rendered

5:15 p.m. Safety Hazard, East Main Street, Officer Handled

7:43 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Out of Town, Ser-

vices Rendered
8:07 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Spencer, Services Rendered

11:38 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued

Sunday, May 4

9:04 a.m. Radar, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued

9:32 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Blaine Avenue, Citation Issued

11:17 a.m. Traffic Control, Harrington Street, Citation Issued

11:28 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Harrington Street, Citation Issued

3:21 p.m. Traffic Control, West Main Street, Citation Issued

3:40 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued

New Braintree Police Log

During the weeks of May 19-June 2, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 27 building/property checks, 22 directed area patrols, 13 radar assignments, two traffic controls, five emergency 911 calls, three citizen assists, four assist other agencies, four safety hazards, one complaint, one motor vehicle investigation, three animal calls and 16 motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Monday, May 19

9:35 a.m. Safety Hazard, Dennis Whitney Road, Dispatch Handled

Tuesday, May 20

6:02 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Barre Road, Transported to Hospital

5:43 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

6:57 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

Thursday, May 22

7:50 a.m. Safety Hazard, Ware Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

8:08 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Padre Road, Transported to Hospital

Friday, May 23

3:21 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Hardwick Road, Transported to Hospital

9:01 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Barre Road, Services Rendered

Saturday, May 24

8:29 a.m. Assist Citizen,

Gilbertville Road, Officer Handled

Sunday, May 25

5:08 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Vehicle Towed

Monday, May 26

12:13 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning

12:36 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning

Tuesday, May 27

10:09 a.m. Safety Hazard, Ware Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

Wednesday, May 28

9:20 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

1:23 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Unknown Location, Officer Handled

Thursday, May 29

11:23 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Hardwick-New Braintree, Officer Handled

Friday, May 30

10:10 a.m. 911 Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, North Brookfield Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

10:38 a.m. 911 Misdial, Barre Cut Off Road, No Action Required

3:59 p.m. Suspicious Ac-

tivity, Cushman Road, Report Taken

Saturday, May 31

7:38 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Citation Issued

Sunday, June 1

10:21 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Citation Issued

4:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning

4:55 p.m. Safety Hazard, Gilbertville Road, Officer Handled

8:43 p.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, Ravine Road, Services Rendered

Job Connection

HELPING YOU FIND HELP

HELP WANTED HOUSEKEEPING / CUSTODIAL POSITIONS

Eagle Hill School, a college-prep board school located in Hardwick, MA, seeks to hire highly motivated, hardworking, and energetic individuals to join our housekeeping team.

Essential Duties & Responsibilities:

- Window cleaning; Vacuuming; Dusting; Trash Removal; Restroom Cleaning; Floor cleaning with commercial machines

Required Qualifications & Skills

- Ability to work in a team environment; Proven ability to work independently with minimal supervision; Must be flexible regarding scheduling based on business demands; Successful completions of background check; Willingness to work flexible schedule including nights, weekends, and/or Holidays as needed

Physical requirements:

- Able to lift up to 50 lbs.; Able to push/pull up to 50 lbs.; Able to bend, stretch, and twist; Able to stand for long periods of time; Able to climb multiple flights of stairs on daily basis and walk frequently; Able to work with chemicals according to directions

Eagle Hill School is located in Hardwick, MA and is a private boarding school for high school students in grades 8 through 12. If interested, call Devon Jurczyk, 413-207-7021. Phone calls only.

HELP WANTED KITCHEN / DISHWASHING POSITIONS

Eagle Hill School, a college-prep board school located in Hardwick, MA, seeks to hire highly motivated, hardworking, and energetic individuals to join our kitchen staff.

Eagle Hill School is seeking full and part time kitchen staff for dishwasher positions as well as food preparation and serving.

- Ability to work in a team environment
- Ability to work independently with minimal supervision
- Must be flexible regarding scheduling, including nights, weekends, and/or holidays as needed
- Successful completion of background checks is required
- Physical Requirements and Work Environment
- Must be able to lift approximately 30-50 pounds
- Bend, kneel, push, pull, and other physical exertion
- Ability to stand and walk for extended periods of time
- Work in a hot and damp environment with moderate to high noise volumes

Schedule

Year round, full time schedule
Ability to work evenings, weekends, and holidays as needed, including occasional events
Extended hours required on an as needed basis

SOCIAL SECURITY FROM PAGE 4

services – doctors, medical tests, etc. Medicare Part A is free to you, but there is a premium for Medicare Part B (\$185/month for 2025).

Note that you will need to pay a Part B premium as long as you are enrolled in Medicare Part B (it doesn't go away after you are collecting Social Security, but it is taken from your Social Security payment). And there is no way for you to avoid the Part B premium after enrolling and enrolling in Part B is necessary for you to continue your military TriCare-for-life benefits. Note that Medicare Part A and Part B do not include prescription drug coverage, but your TriCare coverage usually does.

It's important to note that Medicare and Social Security are two independent se-

nior programs with different eligibility rules. As you may know, you can collect early (reduced) Social Security at age 65 (and have your Medicare Part B premium deducted from your SS payment). But you would be collecting Social Security early and, in addition to a reduced benefit, you would also be subject to Social Security's annual earnings test if you are still working. The SS earnings test limits how much you can earn before some of your SS benefits are taken away if you exceed the earning limit prior to your full retirement age.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or finan-

cial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

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Once again, thank you for your service to our country.

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