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Friday, August 15, 2025

2nd Annual Agricultural Fair returned to Brookfield Common



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

Taima of Willow Brook Academy shared animal-themed balloons during the 2nd annual Agricultural Fair on Brookfield Common.

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

BROOKFIELD – The 2nd Annual Brookfield Agricultural Fair took place this past weekend on the common.

The Brookfield Agricultural Committee was excited to bring back this annual event and continue

to bring public awareness of agriculture and its positive influence on the town of Brookfield. The 2nd Annual Agricultural Fair celebrated Brookfield's farming heritage with a lively mix of family activities, local vendors, and educational exhibits.

Shelby Hill, the director and owner of Willow Brook Academy said the fair

“brought together residents of all ages to support local agriculture and community spirit.”

Members of Willow Brook Academy had balloons, snacks and games available at their booth on Brookfield Common.

A Vegetable Contest took place, and it showcases the work of local growers' creativity. The vegetables were

judged based on quality and presentation. The Brookfield Agricultural Commission had various vegetables from the contest displayed at their table, mostly from the children's vegetable contest.

Ribbons and awards were displayed as well.

See AGRICULTURAL FAIR PAGE 6

Select Board hears department reports

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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STURBRIDGE – Conservation Agent Lauren Vivier said a lot has been done in the Conservation Department over the past year and changes have been made; including staffing.

“We've been able to revise some of our processes...improve interactions with the public and public outreach that we are currently working on too,” Vivier said at the Select Board's Aug. 4 meeting.

The Conservation Department issued a total of 163 permits, which included for the urgent care on Route 20, the utility transmission line project on Podunk and Putnam roads, new trails and trailhead parking as well as accessibility upgrades at the Cedar Street Recreation Area.

Vivier said the Conservation Department does more than just deal with permitting, it also oversees the town's open space management for over 17,000 acres. It also works on public outreach and education.

She said a recent land legacy workshop at the Senior Center was well attended by residents. The Conservation Department offered this workshop in partner-

ship with the Opacum Land Trust.

Vivier said the Conservation Commission has a vacancy for one regular member and two vacancies for alternate members. She has had several residents reach out expressing interest in these positions.

“It's great seeing so many people wanting to be involved,” Vivier said.

Vivier said she has been offering quarterly Conservation & Coffee discussions with various stakeholders. She said it's a roundtable discussion that allows various groups to collaborate and share ideas.

“Those have proven to be very successful,” she said.

Vivier said the department has completed the town's stormwater review and is prepared to take steps forward for improvement.

She said the department is also making efforts to reorganize and digitize its records to allow for quicker research.

Vivier said the department has faced several environmental challenges this past year. This includes tree loss, especially white pines along the lakes and ash trees due to damage from emerald ash borers.

“We've seen this in the

See STURBRIDGE PAGE 6

Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council discusses community garden

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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WARE – The Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council recently met with residents from Ware and surrounding communities to discuss the creation of a community garden on the grounds of the Jubilee Ministries, 80 Pleasant St.

At the July 30 meeting, Sawyer Blake, Coordinator for Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council, welcomed over 20 people to the Senior Center who expressed interest in being involved with the creation of the community garden.

“This a project that means a lot to me,” Blake said.

Blake said they have been working on creating a community garden alongside Nisha Humayun, Project Coordinator for Com-

munity Health and a task force of volunteers.

“We're really excited to have this community garden,” Humayun said.

Blake and Humayun said they are hoping to open the community garden for planting in the spring of 2026.

The results of a recent Community Food Access Assessment highlighted access to food as being a concern in the region, with one way to improve this being to create a community garden. Having a community garden has been a goal for a long time that started before the results of the assessment came in.

“We're building off of the work already done by others,” Blake said.

Blake said the Trinity Episcopal Church, which manages the Jubilee Ministries, has offered to work with the food policy coun-

cil to create a community garden space at its newly dedicated 80 Pleasant St. location.

“I'm really excited and grateful for Trinity Episcopal Church offering a space for us,” Blake said.

Blake said soil testing of the site will be completed later in August to determine the best way to move forward with planting, and if having an all raised bed garden is necessary.

Blake said there is a lot of flexibility as to what a community garden can look like, from raised beds to strawbale gardening. Accessibility is also key when planning the design of the community garden.

“It has to be accessible to the community,” Blake said.

The community garden is proposed to have six beds,

See COMMUNITY GARDEN PAGE 10

Canvas tape art made during

Crafty Mondays



Turley Photo by Ryan Drago
Graham, age 6, waited to pull the tape off his canvas panel.

By Ryan Drago
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NEW BRAINTREE – The New Braintree Public Library hosts Creative Mondays throughout the

summer.

Throughout the month of July, the library had provided crafts such as rabbit in a hat thaumatropes, tie dye book bags, and tissue paper sun catchers. For the first Creative Monday in August,

kids get to create their own canvas tape art.

The work consists of an 8 inch by 10 inch canvas panel with colored tape and paint. Assisting with Creative

See TAPE ART PAGE 5

Healey-Driscoll Administration awards \$3.3 million in literacy grants

BOSTON – The Healey-Driscoll Administration announced today that it is awarding \$3.3 million in Partnership for Reading Success - Massachusetts III literacy grants to 25 school districts and collaboratives.

The PRISM III grant recipients include the Spencer-East Brookfield School District: \$62,015.

These grants will help

school districts implement lasting improvements in English language arts and literacy instruction for grades four-12 through the evaluation, selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials.

“Massachusetts has the best education system in the country, but we know more needs to be done to ensure all of our students have the

tools they need to be lifelong readers and learners,” said Governor Maura Healey. “Today's grant awards are a key piece of our administration's commitment to making sure our school districts have the resources and support they need to improve literacy among their students.”

“Ensuring every student has access to high-quality,

evidence-based instruction in literacy is essential for Massachusetts students and families,” said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. “Through PRISM III grants, we are providing more students the support they need to excel and thrive in the future.”

In the first year of PRISM III, grant recipients will engage in one of three

tracks based on their readiness: preparing to evaluate and select materials, purchasing selected materials, or deepening implementation of materials already in use. All grantees will receive leadership coaching from a DESE-approved PRISM curriculum and instruction coach to analyze current curriculum and instruction systems and to support the

establishment of a PRISM Curriculum Council.

Recipients can also use the grant for professional learning and for substitute coverage or stipends to compensate educators for their time in support of grant activities.

“We know that there are

See LITERACY GRANTS PAGE 6

- community -

Haston Free Public Library lists upcoming events

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Haston Free Public Library, 161 North Main St., lists upcoming events for the month of August.

For more information or to register for any of these events, stop by or call the library at 508-867-0208 or email hastonfreepubliclibrary@gmail.com.

Cook the Book Night

Bring a mocktail and your favorite cheese to share for Cook the Book Night on Thursday, Aug. 21 at 5:30 p.m. Select a recipe from this month's featured cookbook, "The Art of Mixology: Mocktails" available at the circulation desk and bring it to the potluck and discussion.

Video Game Freeplay

Children are invited to celebrate the end of the "Level Up" Summer Reading Program on Saturday, Aug. 23 from 10

a.m. to 1 p.m. with OneUp Games. There will be both modern and retro game consoles for everyone to play.

Summer Reading prizes will be drawn at this event and game-themed snacks will be served.

Registration is recommended but not required. To register for this event, stop by or call the library, or email blamb@cwars.org.

This program is funded in part by a grant from the North Brookfield Cultural Council, a local agency, supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Book Group

The Haston Free Public Library Book Group will discuss "This Other Eden" by Paul Harding on Tuesday, Aug. 26 at 7 p.m.

Adult Craft Night

Make floral apothecary

lights at the Adult Craft Night event on Thursday, Aug. 28 at 5 p.m. Registration is required.

Adult D&D interest meetup

The library is gauging interest and availability to explore the possibility of starting an adult Dungeons & Dragons or tabletop gaming group at the library. An interest meetup will be held on Saturday, Aug. 30 at 10:30 a.m.

Tabletop Gaming at the Library

Young adults are welcome to join the Tabletop Gaming group on Wednesdays at 2 p.m. No experience is necessary.

Dungeon World

Adults and teens are welcome to embark on an epic adventure playing Dungeon World, a beginner-friendly roleplaying game on Thursdays from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Registration open for 2025-2026 dance season

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance, a community tradition since 1975, is now accepting registrations for the 2025-2026 dance season.

Classes resume Monday, Sept. 8, with a wide range of offerings for children of all ages and skill levels.

Students of all ages and experience levels will learn from a team of talented instructors who share a passion for dance and a commitment to helping each dancer grow in skill, confidence, and appreciation for the art.

"There's nothing like the first day back in the studio – the music, the movement, and the smiling faces ready to learn and grow," said Miss Betty, studio director. "We can't wait to welcome both new and returning dancers to another season of creativity and joy."

There are three ways to register: in person by visiting the studio on Saturday, Aug. 16, from 10 a.m.-noon;

by phone, call 508-867-8925 anytime; or online, returning students may use the Parent Portal on the studio website.

More information about studio faculty, the fall class schedule, tuition rates, and important dates are available at bettygundersendance.com.

With a variety of classes in ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, contemporary, acrobatics, and more, Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance continues its long tradition of providing high-quality instruction in a welcoming, encouraging environment.

About Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance

Founded in 1975, the Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance has inspired generations of young dancers in central Massachusetts. The studio, located at 79 Wickaboag Valley Road, is dedicated to fostering a love for dance while developing discipline, technique, and self-confidence in every student.

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

Samuel Hill graduates from UMass Amherst

AMHERST – Approximately 5,000 students received bachelor's degrees in over 100 majors at the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Undergraduate Commencement on May 16 at the McGuirk Alumni Stadium.

Samuel R. Hill of Brookfield received a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Close of Concerts on the Common to be held Saturday, Aug. 30

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Concerts on the Common will be held on select Saturdays on the town common from 6-8 p.m.

The final concert of the season will be held on Aug. 30 and features the Superchargers.

These concerts are free, but tips for the band and free will donations toward future events are appreciated. Food trucks will be available, or people are welcome to bring their own.

Chairs, blankets or something to sit on are en-

couraged, as well as insect, sun and weather protection.

The Concerts on the Common series is made possible by the North Brookfield Parks and Recreation and the North Brookfield Cultural Council.

Rep. Berthiaume office hours

State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume and Chief of Staff, Donna, invite constituents and town officials to meet them to express any concerns, ideas or issues that they may need assistance with. People may call Donna at 774-402-4742 if they would like a private meeting.

Office hour schedules include Tuesday, Sept. 9 town of West Brookfield,

at the Senior Center from 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. and town of Brookfield at the Town Hall, 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m.; on Wednesday, Sept. 10 town of East Brookfield at the Senior Center from 11:15 a.m.-noon; and on Thursday, Sept. 11 town of New Braintree at the Town Hall from 10-10:45 a.m.; town of North Brookfield Town Hall from 11 a.m.-noon.

Chuck & Mud to perform at Summer Concert Series



Chuck & Mud and The Hole in the Dam Band will perform at the Summer Concert Series on Sunday, Aug. 17 at Powder Mill Park.

SPENCER – The Spencer Parks & Recreation Commission's 2025 Summer Concert Series continues from 2-5 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 17 at Powder Mill Park, corner Smithville and Meadow Roads, with Chuck & Mud and The Hole in the Dam Band.

Chuck & Mud and The Hole in the Dam Band is a fun six piece band fronted

by Spencer's own Chuck and Mud Demers and featuring Walter Crockett, Peter Alard and others.

Following Chuck & Mud and The Hole in the Dam Band, next up in this series will be a rain date make up on Aug. 24 with The Chain.

The concert series is proudly sponsored by Cornerstone Bank. Serving Worcester County, Cor-

nerstone Bank's local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout central Massachusetts.

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Thrift Store at Methodist Church open on select Saturdays

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Thrift Store of the George Whitefield United Methodist Church is open the first and third Saturdays of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at 33 West Main St.

Many lovely summer wardrobe selections are now available for women, men and children, as well as other seasonal updates to inventory. The Thrift Store offers quality used clothing, shoes, accessories, household goods, décor, picture frames, children's toys, books and DVDs at bargain prices. Donations of gently used items are appreciated and may be arranged by contacting Jane Dolan at 508-867-5571. Proceeds from sales support the church's ministries and missions.

- community -

DCR awards nearly \$117,000 to rural and volunteer fire departments

The Department of Conservation and Recreation announced it has awarded \$117,000 to 43 rural, call, or volunteer fire departments across Massachusetts through the Volunteer Fire Capacity Program.

The funding will help smaller departments train personnel, prevent forest fires and enhance community safety.

"The VFC grants provide critical funding to rural fire departments across Massachusetts, enabling them to invest in the training and equipment they need to quickly and effectively respond to wildfires," said DCR Commissioner Nicole LaChapelle. "As a former mayor, I know firsthand the importance of partnerships between federal, state, and municipal entities. These

grants are a great example of what we can accomplish when we work together, ensuring that we can protect our natural resources and continue to provide safe outdoor spaces."

"The Healey-Driscoll Administration leads in recognizing the dedication of our firefighters and I especially appreciate knowing that our rural communities are so well protected," said Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi. "Congratulations to the towns and thank you firefighters."

VFC grants are only eligible to municipalities with a population of 10,000 or lower that are home to community volunteer fire departments responding to wildfires. To be considered for a VFC grant, fire departments must be made up

of at least 80 percent call or volunteer firefighters, be a state-recognized fire department, and be National Incident Management System compliant.

Many of the communities receiving VFA funds are designated high-risk areas, where local firefighters partner with federal firefighting agencies to respond to wildfires.

"The Volunteer Fire Capacity Grants are examples of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's continuing commitment to partner with federal agencies like the US Forest Service in helping rural and volunteer fire departments enhance their ability to provide public safety," said DCR Chief Fire Warden Dave Celino. "The historic statewide wildfire activity last fall showed the need

for and the value of this collaborative grant effort in support of our rural fire departments, who are the first line of defense in response to these incidents."

This year's awards represented seven additional communities and nearly \$30,000 in funding over last year's program.

The VFC program is authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 and is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and administered by DCR on a 50 percent reimbursement basis.

Towns that received an award from this year's program are: Brookfield, \$3,500; New Braintree, \$3,500; North Brookfield,

\$725.96; Warren, \$3,500 and West Brookfield, \$3,087.42.

"In small towns like those receiving grants today, every dollar makes a difference," said state Sen. Peter Durant. "Departments that rely on volunteer firefighters don't often have funding for equipment or training, yet they face the same dangerous situations as firefighters in larger communities - sometimes more-so because of a lack of staffing. These funds will allow these departments to be better equipped and trained when they respond to protect the lives and property of their neighbors."

Last fall Massachusetts experienced an unprecedented level of a wildfire activity, with the DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry reporting wildfire occurrence increased

by roughly 1,200% during the months of October and November. This accounted for roughly 1,300 separate wildfires that burned across the state.

About DCR
The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. The agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all.

To learn more about DCR, its facilities, and its programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr or email mass.parks@mass.gov.

Register for Rotary's annual TREK Sturbridge Halloween 5K, 1K & Fun Walk

STURBRIDGE – The Rotary Club of Sturbridge has announced that pre-registration is now open for its popular TREK Sturbridge Halloween 5K, 1K, and Fun Walk, which is slated to return on Sunday, Oct. 26, according to club president and race director Klaus Hachfeld.

"To pre-register for this year's event, just go to getmereregistered.com, and type 'Sturbridge' in the search field in the upper right-hand corner," said Hachfeld. Participants who pre-register by Oct. 21 will get a free 2025 TREK Sturbridge Halloween

5K T-shirt. All activities begin at the OSV Education Center on Old Sturbridge Village Road (not to be confused with Old Sturbridge Village Academy at the main entrance to the village). Parking will be available in the Education Center lot.

The family-friendly event offers two timed races, including a 5K Trail Run & Fun Walk, and a 1K Pre-Teen Run. In the spirit of the season, participants are encouraged to come in costume. The event also includes free children's game starting at 9 a.m. at the Education

Center. The timed 1K Pre-Teen Run (\$20 registration) starts at 9:15 a.m. This is for the 12 and under crowd, and the course is accessible for anyone with mobility challenges.

The timed 5K Trail Run (\$35 registration) & Fun Walk (\$30 registration) will start at 10 a.m. using Old Sturbridge Village Road and the Arbutus Park Trail in the Leadmine Mountain Wildlife Conservation Lands.

An awards ceremony will follow at 11:15 a.m. starting with a competition for best Halloween costume for all registered runners and walk-

ers. Judging will be by popular choice.

On-site registration will also be available starting at 8:30 a.m. on the day of the race.

The Trek Sturbridge Halloween 5K and Fun Walk is a Sturbridge Rotary Club fundraiser, with all profits going to the organization's community needs projects. For additional information, or to sign on as an event sponsor, email the race director at laserklaus@gmail.com. Or visit the Sturbridge Rotary Club website at <https://sturbridgerotary.com>.

St. Joseph's hosts chicken BBQ and family picnic

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Blessed Carlo Acutis Parish, St. Joseph Church, 296 North Main St., will host a Chicken BBQ & Family Picnic on Saturday, Sept. 6 and Sunday, Sept. 7.

All are welcome to come join parish members for plenty of fair food on Saturday evening and a delicious BBQ chicken dinner served on Sunday from 12:30-1:30 p.m. The cost of the chicken dinner is \$15 for adults and \$8 for children ages 12 and under.

Music will be provided by DJ Richard "Tabby" LeBlanc on Saturday and Sunday. There will also be assorted raffles including a scratch ticket raffle which features the grand prize of a book (50) \$30 lottery scratch tickets, and lastly a delicious bake sale.

On Saturday, the Fam-

ily Picnic begins on the church lawn at 5 p.m. after the 4 p.m. Mass. Music by DJ Richard "Tabby" LeBlanc, lawn games, fair style food, and plenty of raffles will be offered from 5-7 p.m.

On Sunday, there will be music by DJ Richard "Tabby" LeBlanc, lawn games, bake sale, and plenty of raffles. Chicken dinners will be served (eat in and take out) from 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Music and raffles will be available both days. For chicken dinner tickets and more information, please call the parish office Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at 508-867-6469.

Explore Lake Wallace with the Quabbin Photo Group

BELCHERTOWN – The Quabbin Photo Group invites the public to an inspiring evening on Monday, Aug. 25, at 7 p.m. at the Belchertown Recreation Department, 66 State St., that will feature retired Belchertown educator and environmental advocate Louise Levy.

Levy is well known in the community as one of the visionaries behind the creation of the Lake Wallace Recreational Area (www.belchertown.org/lakewallace), a scenic spot tucked away in the heart of Belchertown. During her career as an educator, she brought countless students into the outdoors, using hands-on ecology lessons to help them connect with the natural world.

Today, as a leader of the Friends of Lake Wallace, she continues to champion its environmental and educational importance.

At this special program,

Levy will share her extensive knowledge of the lake – its history, its diverse plant and animal life, and why it's such a treasure for photographers and nature lovers alike. Following her talk, members of the Quabbin Photo Group will present a showcase of their favorite landscape and wildlife images taken at Lake Wallace, revealing the area's beauty through the eyes of skilled local photographers.

Adding to the evening's appeal, the lake itself is located directly behind the meeting venue, giving attendees the opportunity to step outside and explore the area for themselves after the presentation.

Founded by renowned nature photographer Les Campbell, the Quabbin Photo Group was created to celebrate the natural beauty of the Quabbin Region.

The group holds monthly meetings open to the public, offering educational

programs, guest speakers, and opportunities for photographers of all levels to share their work. Membership helps support QPG's mission of fostering appreciation for the region's landscapes and wildlife.

This free event welcomes everyone, whether you're an experienced photographer, a casual nature enthusiast,

or simply curious about one of Belchertown's hidden gems.

For more information about the program, contact Program Chair Ed Comeau at ecomeau@comeaphotography.com. To learn more about the Quabbin Photo Group, reach out to President Mark Lindhult at mlindhult@gmail.com.

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

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

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

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

Community Health Wellness Fair

SATURDAY August 23, 2025 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Baglio Sports and Fitness Center at Eagle Hill School

Join us at Eagle Hill School's Health & Wellness Fair, a free community event connecting neighbors with local resources that support whole-person well-being. Enjoy mini-sessions and demos while meeting local providers offering everything from yoga and massage to healthcare, local farm goods, the arts, and community services—come explore, connect, and bring a friend!

Vendors Include:

- Wholebeing Institute
- Hardwick Farmer's Guild
- East Quabbin Land Trust
- Balancing from Within
- Recovery Center of Hope
- Wellness 365
- Silhouettes on Main
- Holistic Integrated Manual Therapy
- The Centered Place Yoga Studio
- ... and many more!

Questions? Email Miranda LaCoste at mlacoste@eaglehill.school

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- opinion -



Cedar waxwing

My daughter, Paula and family enjoy watching a large flock of cedar waxwings by the bridge near Hardwick Pizza in Gilbertville. They also watch “tons” of bats leave the chimney of the old senior center each night at dusk. Some nights there must be about 50 of them. They fly out and then make big circles around the building while screeching. They do a great job of controlling the mosquitoes population.

The cedar waxwing is one of the few North American birds that specialize in eating fruit.

It can survive on fruit alone for several months. It is a silky smooth songbird with a black mask, tan head and breast, yellow belly and grayish brown under parts. The tail has a yellow band at the tip and some wing feathers have waxy red tips, hence the name waxwing.

Adults perch on high, exposed perches where they are easily seen and heard. They also have a prominent crest. During courtship males and females pass a small fruit or other item back and forth. The cedar waxwing is medium sized and sleek. Their crest often lies flat and droops over the back of the head. Waxwings are social birds and often seen in flocks year round. They sit in fruiting trees swallowing berries whole or pluck them I mid-air with a brief fluttering hover. They also course over water for insects, “flying like slightly, clumsy swallows.”

It takes the female about five to six days to build a

nest. They occasionally take nesting materials from other birds nests.

Helping birds

A reader from South Hadley suggested I include a section about ways to help birds. She even provided several tips for future columns. In hot weather and during dry periods, it is important for birds to have a clean, cool source of water. Even something as simple as putting out a bird bath and water dishes and keeping the water clean and cool during the summer heat will help birds.

Many people don't realize that birds get dehydrated and the bird baths help them keep cool but equally important, maintain the health of their feathers. A bird bath doesn't have to be fancy, even an old ceramic serving dish would work as long as the water isn't too deep. One reader, who sends emails quite frequently has a more elaborate system with a dripping water.

South Hadley birds

A South Hadley resident emailed she hears an owl in her neighborhood, but has never seen it. She reported seeing red tailed hawks and turkey vultures. When she sees road kill, she moves it to a safe spot away from traffic so that vultures don't get hit by cars.

Great blue heron at McDonalds

Saturday night my daughter, Paula, took the girls to the McDonald's in Ware just as it was getting dark. A great blue heron flew into the parking lot from the river across the street and tried to unsuccessfully land on top of a lamp post. When it couldn't, it flew just a few feet over their heads into the swamp in the back of the parking lot.

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.

This summer try freezing the harvest

Freezing fruits and vegetables is an easy way to preserve the harvest. More nutrients are retained by this method of food preservation than any other, and the color, flavor and texture are as close to fresh as you can get.

Freezing works by curbing the growth of organisms that cause food to spoil. The key to longevity is to use packaging that will keep out air and moisture. Thick plastic freezer bags, tight-fitting plastic containers (square make better use of freezer space than round), or boilable bags that are made for vacuum sealers are all great options for that purpose.

Fresh berries are easily frozen whole. I've been doing my share of that lately. Any blackberries we don't eat get popped on an aluminum pie tin to freeze, once frozen they are moved into freezer containers where I can easily take out just what I need.

Many people also freeze tomatoes whole, figuring that it's too hot to make sauce now, but it won't be in a couple of months. Thawing frozen whole tomatoes makes for easy skin removal.

Vegetables such as peas, yellow and green beans, broccoli and more are all easily frozen once you know the method.

Here is how you do it: Grab a pot from your cupboard to blanch your produce – this part of the process will help to retain the desirable characteristics that I mentioned above. You can blanch by steaming or boiling.

Reportedly, steaming is superior for nutrient preser-



va-tion.

While you wash and chop your veggies to bite-sized pieces, bring a few inches of water to a boil in a covered pot equipped with a steamer basket. When the water begins to boil hard insert a single layer of veggies into the basket and replace the lid (this part is critical). Blanch for 3-6 minutes, depending on thickness, for broccoli and 4 minutes for green or yellow beans.

Don't have a steamer pot? Try boil blanching instead. Bring a pot of water to a rapid boil then carefully immerse your vegetables to avoid splattering. When the water returns to a boil begin timing.

Broccoli will take 2-3 minutes using this method; beans need 3.

Once blanching is complete, you must cool down the produce as quickly as possible to stop the cooking process from going any further. This is accomplished by plunging the food into a waiting bath of ice water.

I remember reading somewhere that it should stay in the bath for about as long as it took to blanch it. Once cooling is complete, drain the veggies and allow them to air-dry on a clean towel.

This next step is a must if you are freezing in big bags rather than exact dinner-sized portions: Line a cookie sheet with freezer

or waxed paper. Arrange your dry produce in a single layer and pre-freeze for an hour or two, then fill your bag.

This way you will be able to grab exactly what you need when making a meal-pieces won't be frozen together in a big block.

Vacuum packers are great for freezing dinner-sized portions. Simply pack the bags with your blanched, air-dried veggies and seal. Without one you can do a good job of removing air from your freezer bags by simply squeezing out as you can manually then inserting a straw into an unsealed corner and inhaling to draw out what remains.

The kids will find this part of the preservation process to be a lot of fun! Be sure to label the contents with the date – most produce will keep for at least a year at zero degrees.

For a more detailed look at freezing and other types of food preservation consult these great books by Storey Publishing: “The Beginner's Guide to Preserving Food at Home” by Janet Chadwick and “The Big Book of Preserving the Harvest” by Carol W. Costenbader.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 32 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

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The terrifying Tripyramid Slide

By Julie Midura
Guest Columnist

When you're attempting to hike every trail in all six of the Federally Designated Wilderness areas in the White Mountains, you can't just skip a trail just because it takes you out of your comfort zone.

At 1,200 vertical feet in just half a mile, North Tripyramid Slide is known as one of the steepest trails in New England and is also on the New Hampshire Terrifying 25 hiking list. The granite slide requires hand-over-hand climbing using three points of contact on steep, exposed rock slabs and is not recommended for the descent.

There are actually three potential routes up the slide; left, middle, and right.

The far left route is not the actual slide, but appears to be very popular based on how well-worn the steep dirt path has become over the years. I'm guessing



that anyone with an ounce of self-preservation and a strong desire to hug trees chooses this route.

The far right route is clearly the least used – covered in slick moss, with no trees to grab onto and providing little in the way of traction. I would say this is the route you take when your brain hasn't fully developed yet. Which, “scientifically” speaking, is anyone under the age of 28.

And the space in between the left and the right? Well, that's the route for those

who want to experience the thrill of rock scrambling without the benefit of rope, while still feeling like Spider-Man on the way up.

When Tom and I reached the base of the slide, I told him I wanted to take the dirt path on the left.

My 68-year-old husband replied, “I came here to climb a rockslide, so I'm going to stay to the right.”

Now, at 60 years old, I fall somewhere in between the age at which brain cells become fully developed and the age at which they start to decline, so I was completely against taking the moss-covered route on the right.

I suggested we compromise and stay on the middle section, which is still part of the slide, but with far less moss, meaning far less chance of plunging to our death. However, Tom-who is usually the more rational one-was intent on taking the hardest route to the top. Unwilling to stray far from



Tom and Julie celebrated the completion of every trail of the Sandwich Wilderness.

my safety net, I reluctantly followed behind.

Until, that is, my feet began slipping on the wet moss, at which point, I found a small crevice in the granite and slowly worked

my way left until I was on the middle section. Tom, however, remained undeterred, and continued up the mountain a couple doz-

See **HIKING** PAGE 8

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- community -

TAPE ART FROM PAGE 1

Mondays is 14-year-old Molly Mahan of Charlton.

Mahan enjoys being a library assistant and helping the library out during these events. Mahan also enjoys drawing for fun and crafted a canvas panel of her own.

Mahan will be starting her freshman year in high school at Shepherd Hill this upcoming school year.

In addition to the canvas tape art, kids also got to paint birdhouses. It was a beautiful Monday afternoon, and kids got to decorate their canvas

panels outside in front of the New Braintree Public Library. Six-year-old Graham arrived at the library with his family and began creating a canvas panel. Graham added colors such as orange, green, and some yellow.

After the paint dried,

artists removed the tape and saw the outcome of their artwork featuring various shapes and patterns. After the craft was done, kids get to take their canvas tape art home with them. All the supplies were provided by the New Braintree Public Library.

Second Chance to host low-cost pet vaccine clinic on Sept. 13

LEICESTER – Second Chance Animal Services is returning to the Leicester community with another low-cost pet vaccine clinic on Friday, Sept. 13, from 9 a.m.-noon at Endless Pawsabilities, 880 Pleasant St., Rochdale.

Dogs and cats from all towns are welcome.

Thanks to support from the Leicester Savings Bank Fund through the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and Petco Love, the Distemper/Parvo combo vaccine will be offered free of charge. Rabies vaccines will be available for \$12 for residents of Leicester, Rochdale, and Cherry Valley, and \$18 for residents of all other towns.

Microchipping will also be offered for just \$22.

“Vaccines are a critical tool in preventing the spread of dangerous and sometimes

deadly diseases in pets,” said Lindsay Doray, Chief Development Officer of Second Chance. “We’re proud to offer this clinic to help protect the health of pets and the people who love them.”

Parking is limited, and a limited number of walk-ins will be accepted until 10:30 a.m. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged to ensure availability.

Pet owners can register online at www.secondchanceanimals.org/scasconnect-worcester/ to reserve a spot and help ensure a smooth clinic experience. All dogs must be on leashes and cats in carriers for everyone’s safety.

For more information about Second Chance Animal Services and their mission to provide affordable veterinary care to help pets stay healthy and in their homes, visit www.secondchanceanimals.org.



The New Braintree Public Library hosted Creative Mondays featuring canvas tape art. These are some examples created by kids that worked on their artwork outside.



An example of canvas tape art created by Molly Mahan. Canvas Tape Art 3

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

Have you experienced a housing need?

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We want to address housing needs in our region with storytelling! If you have a story to share about your current housing situation, challenges with finding housing, or being unhoused, we want to hear your story. Housing stories will be used to build awareness about the housing challenges in the region to bring further change. Stories will be collected through an online form or video interview. Photos or videos will be used with permission, or you may ask to remain anonymous.



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\$50 compensation for those who share online or \$100 for recorded interviews

For any questions, please contact Nisha Humayun at nhumayun@townofware.com or (413) 207-7698



- community -



Isabelle Aberle shared watercolor paintings and hand grown flowers.



Locals were trying to use vintage typewriters and a rotary phone.



Fresh local veggies were provided by Wild Berry Acres of Brookfield.

AGRICULTURAL FAIR FROM PAGE 1

The Friends of Brookfield had a table as well to connect with community members. The Friends were looking to share ideas with residents to see what can help the Town of Brookfield in the future.

Aranelle Farm of Brookfield arrived at this year's Agricultural Fair and provided pony rides for children. Many kids lined up to experience the fun of getting to know horses and learning about agriculture at this year's fair.

Other family friendly activities include goat yoga, face painting, and bubble-making stations.

There were over 20 vendors providing various goods, including Wild Berry Acres Farm of Brookfield. Lea Moreau of Wild Berry Acres is on the Brookfield Agricultural Committee, and her booth had fresh local veggies available.

Moreau said Wild Berry Acres recently opened a farm store in town, located at 135 Town Farm Road. The store is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

This is the first year Wild

Berry Acres Farm is offering the store and will feature baked goods, farm items, locally sourced meats, and a farm kitchen.

Charlotte's Web Rabbitry of Spencer made it to this year's Agricultural Fair to "share some bunny love outside." Charlotte Schmidt of the rabbitry had many adorable rabbits to share, including a hopping demonstration.

Azeri is a one-and-a-half-year-old rabbit who demonstrated hopping over hurdles on Brookfield Common. Azeri will be featured in a national rabbit show in Indianapolis. Schmidt said they train rabbits every year to participate in this national show.

Many other adorable bunnies appeared to say hello to guests during the fair. Conrad was one of the big Rhinelander rabbits that originated in Germany.

For art and flowers, Isabelle Aberle had watercolor paintings and hand grown flowers to share. Aberle recently graduated from Quaboag Regional Middle High School and has been involved with artwork for the last three years. Her main



Pony rides were provided by Aranelle Farms.

art medium is watercolor and Aberle had various bookmarks and prints of her artwork.

One unique art piece Aberle had was a stain glass art piece of a lighthouse she made in high school. In addition to her art, Aberle also had hand grown flowers available. Aberle keeps busy presenting her art and flowers at local fairs and at Oakholm Farm and Brewery.

A lot of history was highlighted during the 2nd Annual Agricultural Fair. The Brookfield Library presented an exhibition on the town's

agricultural ties in a new exhibit. A lot of this history was saved from local households and farms. During the recent Town Meeting, it was decided that the town wanted to add a museum to the charter.

Since Brookfield is a big farming community, it was necessary to add an agriculture exhibit to the Library Annex that is next door to the Merrick Public Library. There was merchandise saved highlighting the Maple Crest Dairy Farm, with milk bottles and signs. One big sign was displayed out-

side the front of the Library Annex.

There was a model of a house called the "Caring Hearts & Gentle Hands Dog Clinic" in one of the rooms of the Library Annex. The barn behind the Annex is currently under renovation to become a space for programs and meetings. T

The Library Annex will be open during library hours and is located at 18 Common St. in Brookfield. Giving tours of the new exhibit was Library Director, Brenda Metterville.

Other history was dis-

played on the common as well. There was a carriage from Elm Hill Farm, that was once a 1300-acre farm that operated in Brookfield. Elsie the Cow was a popular mascot who came from Elm Hill Farm.

Other educational highlights included a wool spinning demonstration and an herbalist from Domesticated Wild Child, shared expertise on plant-based remedies and had many products, Central Mass Grown offered resources to support local farms, and local co-op, Tip-Top, discussed sustainable food system opportunities.

Hill thought this year's fair was a great success and helped strengthen community ties and support for local agriculture.

"The Brookfield Agricultural Commission extends our heartfelt thanks to our amazing community, vendors, and dedicated volunteers for making this year's fair a tremendous success," Hill said.

The commission looks forward to another year of celebrating agriculture in their community. Next year's fair will be held on Saturday, Aug. 8, 2026.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO

STURBRIDGE FROM PAGE 1

past with the gypsy moths, too," she said. "So just trying to figure out if there's anything that we can do...working with the state, working with other municipalities...we're looking into doing some different options with some of the forestry groups local in the area to see if there might be some options for tree donation and tree replanting to try to mitigate some of this loss that we're having."

Vivier said the impact of the tremendous drought this past year is becoming apparent and will continue to have effects in the future.

Town Planner report

Town Planner Jean Bubon presented her biannual report for the town's Planning Department. She said in the past six months, her staff has supported 37 meetings, which is more than double its average at this time.

"It's a pretty busy year in our department," she said.

She attributes this to ongoing projects with the Historical Commission and the Affordable Housing Trust,

as well as the usual Planning Board, Zoning Board and Design Review Committee meetings.

Bubon highlighted some of the major projects her department is working on; including the surveying and cataloging of properties around the town's ponds.

"It will give us the history of the area," she said.

Bubon said she was able to secure a grant through DLTA for Historic Register nominations. She said the Historical Commission selected the Samuel and Lucy Hobbs house at 23 Hall Road and the Samuel and Mary Morse house at 47 Farquar Road.

"Both property owners were thrilled actually to get this work done free of charge," she said.

Bubon said she is working with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission and the property owners to complete and submit paperwork to be nominated on the Historic Register.

Bubon said her department is still working with the Department of Transporta-

tion regarding the signalized intersection on Route 20 at the Noble Energy location. She said the plans are still not completely approved, but she is hopeful this will occur in the next couple of months.

A Housing Forum is planned to be held on Tuesday, Sept. 16 and Saturday, Sept. 20 to roll out the Affordable Housing Trust's housing programs. She said the forums will be attended by local banks and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We also have a lot of educational materials we can get out to people," Bubon said.

Bubon said another big focus of her department is related to the commonwealth's changes in requiring expedited permitting for wind, solar and battery storage facilities. She said small systems (25 megawatts or less) would be reviewed by the town and large systems would go through the state without local oversight.

"We should all be a little concerned that we're going to once again have to react to something that I think could have significant impacts on

communities," Bubon said.

New Police Department hires

Police Chief Earl Dessert recommended Benjamin Grasso to be hired as a full-time police officer with the department.

"Mr. Grasso has served as a dispatcher with our department for nearly two years and has consistently demonstrated professionalism, dedication and strong commitment to public safety," Dessert said. "His work ethic and loyalty to the Sturbridge Police Department have been commendable."

Dessert said Grasso has a bachelor's degree in art and music theory from the University of New Haven and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout from Scouting America. He is enrolled in a program to receive his EMT certification and will begin his master's degree in public administration at Anna Maria College.

Grasso will enter the Recruit Officer Academy for training in late August.

Dessert also recommended Nicholas Newman to serve as a full-time police of-

ficer.

Newman is a graduate of Tantasqua Regional High School and has served as a patrol officer for the North Brookfield Police Department since July 2020.

Resignations

Full-time Sergeant Hillary Murray has resigned from her position, and accepted a part-time position on the department. Murray has decided to pursue a career in the field of education.

Dessert thanked Murray for her service and recommended her appointment as a part-time police officer.

"Sergeant Murray has had a distinguished and impactful career with the department," Dessert said. "Sergeant Murray also holds the distinction of being the first female officer in the history of the Sturbridge Police Department to be promoted to the rank of sergeant."

The Select Board also accepted the resignation of Paul Guerin from the Police Department.

Town Administrator's update

Town Administrator Rob-in Grimm said she met with

the Department of Transportation's Adopt a Spot program representatives and they have been granted permission to place one more mound for plants on each of the three triangles on Route 20.

She is also speaking with the Sturbridge Tourist Association about the beautification of the area across from the State Police barracks.

Grimm said a survey has been placed in the town's hotels asking visitors about their trail usage.

Letters of support

The Select Board approved and signed draft letters of support for the town of Oakham opposing the installation of a 180 megawatt lithium battery energy storage system within the Ware River Watershed and Bill HD 4557, an act requiring local approval for battery storage.

Donation

The Select Board accepted the donation of an Altair 4 XR Mutligas Detector valued at \$2,500 from Photon Scientific, Inc.

Secondary Education. "This is an important investment in our secondary students."

Literacy, particularly early literacy, is a priority for the administration. Healey created Literacy Launch, a multiyear strategy to promote high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction so our youngest students can read and read well.

Through her Fair Share supplemental budget, Healey also expanded high dosage early literacy tutoring to help students in kindergarten through third grade build foundational reading skills. This school year, 272 schools in Massachusetts will receive free, high-dosage early literacy tutoring.

LITERACY GRANT FROM PAGE 1

students across all grade levels struggling to read. The Healey-Driscoll Administration continues to maximize every opportunity to promote evidence-based literacy teaching and learning, from Literacy Launch to our new high dosage tutoring initiative. The PRISM III grants build on these efforts, investing in the literacy skills of older students," said Education Secretary Dr. Patrick Tutwiler.

"The PRISM III grants are designed to help districts build sustainable structures to make lasting improvements in literacy success for secondary students," said Pedro Martinez, Commissioner of Elementary and

Glenda's

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Summer Warriors head for finals

WILBRAHAM – Tantasqua’s region has often entered teams in the Spec Pond Summer Basketball League, this year being no different. The 5-6 Girls Summer Warriors scored a victory over the Lady Mig’s A and B teams to reach the finals of the summer playoffs. Tantasqua went 7-3 in the regular season and was scheduled to face Play MKJ in the finals. Highlights from that matchup will be in next week’s edition.



Courtney Canane looks to shoot.



Maya Bellofatto shoots from the free throw line.



Kathryn Daaboul passes away from the paint.



Olivia Sugden reaches out for the jump ball.

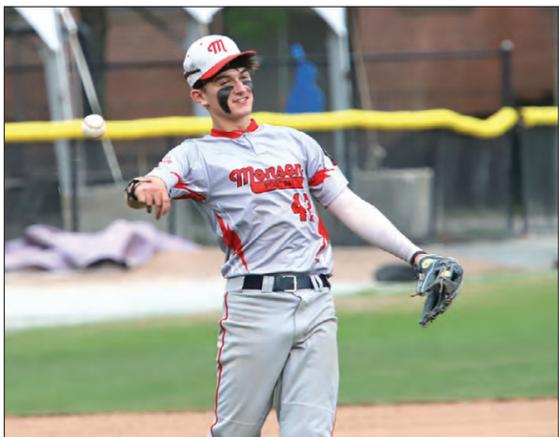


URLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Annebelle Creelman shoots on the run.



Brianna Nason heads down the court.

Season ends for Post 241 in state playoffs



Brayden Mega sends a throw to first.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SOIBELLI



Emerson Boronski makes the catch in center field

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WORCESTER—Less than 24 hours after defeating Wilbraham in an elimination game, the Monson Post 241 run in the Legion state playoffs came to an end against Lowell Post 87. Monson, who was the

visiting team, had a golden opportunity to take an early lead, but they left the bases loaded in the first inning.

Lowell responded by scoring three runs in the bottom half of the opening frame. They added two more runs in the second inning enroute to an 8-0 shut-out victory at Fitton Field

located on the College of the Holy Cross campus on July 21.

“I thought we had turned the corner following our win against Wilbraham yesterday,” said Monson manager Steve Tripp. “We loaded the bases in the first inning, but we just couldn’t score. We’ve struggled offensively all season. We also made a couple of costly mistakes defensively.”

Monson finished the regular season in sixth place in the zone 3 standings with a 7-6 record. They went 1-2 in the state playoffs.

“In the old format, every team in zone 3 qualified for the playoffs,” Tripp said. “The format was a little bit different this year. We were



Miguel Velazquez puts a good swing on.

See POST 241 PAGE 8



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
West Side Sports Shop won the Women’s Title this year in the Pioneer Valley Summer Soccer League.

West Side wins Women’s PVSSL Championship

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—Back in the middle of July, Olivia Crespo and her New England Mutiny teammates lost in the United Women’s Soccer League finals for the second year in a row.

On Friday, Aug. 2, Crespo guided the third-seeded Westside Sport Shop to a 5-0 shutout victory over top-seeded Here for Beer in the women’s finals of the Pioneer Valley Summer Soccer League at Lusitano Stadium in Ludlow.

“It was a little bit frustrating coming up a little bit short in the National Finals once again this year,” said Crespo, who graduated from Ludlow High School. “I had a lot of confidence coming into tonight’s championship match and I knew that we would be able to do it.”



Kenzie Pastreck of Wilbraham minds the goal for Here for Beer.

Crespo, who scored four goals and had an assist against Here for Beer, was selected as the M.V.P. following the match.

“My teammates deserve a lot of credit,” Crespo said. “They helped set up my goals. I wouldn’t have been

able to do it without them.” Last fall, Crespo was a member of the women’s soccer team at Franklin Pierce University, which captured the NE 10 conference championship ti-

See WEST SIDE PAGE 8

- obituary -

Paul T. McQuaid, 84

NORTH BROOKFIELD - Paul T. McQuaid, 84, of North Brookfield, passed away peacefully on Saturday, August 9, 2025, surrounded by his loving daughters.

Born and raised in Ware, Massachusetts, he was the son of the late John L. and Agnes C. (Lynch) McQuaid. Paul was predeceased by his beloved wife of 38 years, Claire M. (Mallon) McQuaid, who passed in 2001.

He is survived by his daughters, Carleen A. McQuaid and her husband Martin Standrowicz of North Brookfield, and Paula McQuaid of Nantucket. He was a proud grandfather to Jacob, Joseph, and Joshua Standrowicz, and leaves behind many cherished nieces and nephews. He leaves behind his beloved companion of 19 years, Suzanne Zisk, whose unwavering love and support were greatly appreciated.

A veteran of the United States Coast Guard, Paul continued his service to the community through a 30-year career as a union commercial bricklayer, followed by work as a custodian for the North Brookfield Public Schools. He was a dedicated member of the Sawyer-Matthieu Kearns American Legion Post #41 and the Knights of Columbus Cardinal Gibbons Council #2381. Paul will be remembered



DEATH NOTICE

McQuaid, Paul T.
Died Aug. 9, 2025
Services Aug. 22, 2025

for his warm sense of humor, the twinkle in his eye, and his quick wit. He was always the first one in your corner - celebrating your wins or standing beside you when the going got tough. A devoted family man and loyal friend, he was affectionately known as "Grumpy" by his grandchildren - a nickname that captured his playful and loving spirit. He took great pride in keeping his yard immaculate and found joy in riding his tractor.

A graveside service with Military Honors will be held on Friday, August 22 at 11:00 AM in St. Joseph Cemetery, Bell Street, North Brookfield.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to: Sawyer-Matthieu Kearns American Legion Post #41 P.O. Box 142 North Brookfield, MA 01535

Varnum Funeral Home, 43 East Main St., in West Brookfield is assisting his family with his arrangements. An online tribute page is available at varnumfuneralhome.com

- community -

HIKING FROM PAGE 4

en feet to the right of me.

Although I was relieved to be on dry rock, the middle part of the slope was no less steep. I managed to scramble upward on all fours for about 25 feet, until the angle of the slope became so perilously steep that it was impossible to continue upward.

I scanned the smooth granite to the left and right of me, looking for something, anything, to grab onto. I saw nothing. With my toes balancing on a mere half-inch lip in the rock, I didn't have enough momentum to hurl myself upwards. And there was no possibility of down-climbing. I clung to the rock, unable to move in any direction, paralyzed with fear.

The sound of my racing heart assaulted my ears and my arms began shaking. My entire body became drenched in perspiration. Sweat dripped down my face, stinging my eyes, but I dared not pull one hand away from the rock to wipe it away. All rational thought evaporated, and panic surged within me with every ragged breath.

Tom attempted to encourage me from his own precarious position. "There's a slight projection on your left," he said. "Trust your trail runners. You got this!"

It was fight or flight, and



Tom tackled the granite slide.

there was no way to flee. I extended my left hand as far as I could to feel for the slight protrusion Tom was referring to.

Once my fingers found it, I took a deep breath, then used every ounce of strength I had in my quaking arms to haul myself up onto a slight depression in the rock above me. I grabbed onto the trunk of a nearby shrub and clung to it in a death-grip while waiting for my heart rate to settle back into a normal rhythm.

Tom, in the meantime, was facing his own set of challenges just 20 feet to my right. He was unable to

move upward himself due to how steep the slide had become.

However, unlike me, he has no fear of steep, open rock slabs. He felt the rock below his hands until he found a small split and used the very tips of his fingers to work his way over to me.

Thankfully, the trail soon turned from large, open slabs to loose boulders and gravel. No less physically challenging, but somewhat less mentally demanding. I find that taking a step upward and feeling the mountain slide down below my feet is far less terrifying than scrambling on

all fours on a smooth slab of granite.

When we finally reached the top of the slide, Tom and I heaved a sigh of relief. I was filled with jubilation, not only for having completed every trail in the Sandwich Wilderness, but also for making it up the single most terrifying trail we had ever attempted. I did not feel brave, rather, empowered.

I had not overcome my fears, rather I had charged into them with shaking arms and quaking legs. In doing so, I learned that sometimes the fear does not go away, so you just need to do it afraid. And perhaps, just perhaps, that is where courage begins.

See you in the wild places, my friends!



Tom and Julie reached the top of the trail.

POST 241 FROM PAGE 7

lucky enough to be one of the seven teams from our zone to make the state playoffs. It was a very good accomplishment."

Each team who qualified for the state playoffs was put into a pod with three other teams.

The other teams in Monson's pod were Wilbraham, Lowell Post 87, and Shrewsbury Post 297, who hosted the pod held at Holy Cross.

"Playing a game at a col-

lege field is an experience that these players will never forget," Tripp said. "I really enjoyed coaching this year's team. They're a bunch of great kids. I'm looking forward to coaching this team again next year."

The four Monson players who'll be ineligible to play for the Post 241 squad next year are Nate Kaczuwka (Ware High School), Jason Mumper (Ware High School), Hunter Griswold (Pathfinder Tech), and Miguel Velasquez (Pathfinder

Tech).

Grayson Griswold, who also attends Pathfinder Tech, was Monson's starting pitcher against Lowell.

While Griswold allowed five runs on only two hits in 1 1/3 innings.

"Grayson is going to be a sophomore at Pathfinder and he's going to be an outstanding baseball player during the next couple of years," Tripp said. "He just needs to keep improving his skills."

Lowell righthander Liam

Conley got off to a shaky start.

Monson third baseman Brayden Mega, who graduated from Pathfinder Tech in June, began the game by hitting a ground ball double down the left field line. Then catcher Kyle Kaczuwka and Designated hitter Nate Kaczuwka were both hit with pitches, which loaded the bases with two outs. Conley, who only allowed three hits during the first six innings, escaped the jam with a strikeout.

Lowell took a 3-0 lead with the benefit of only one hit in the bottom of the first.

Righty Austin Meacham, who attends Monson High School, replaced Griswold on the mound with two outs in the second inning. Meacham, who hadn't pitched in a couple of weeks, allowed two inherited runs to score before settling down. He gave up a run in the fourth and two more in the fifth.

Monson, who only had two men on base between

the second and fifth innings, loaded the bases again with one-out in the sixth.

Velasquez, who started at second base, reached first base after getting hit with a pitch. Then Nate Kaczuwka beat out an infield hit, and Mumper, who started in centerfield, drew a walk.

Just like he did in the opening frame, Conley got out of the jam with a pair of strikeouts.

Monson went down in order in the seventh inning ending their season.



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WEST SIDE FROM PAGE 7

tle. Her college soccer team played in the NCAA Division 2 Final Four.

"It was a really special season," she said. "We're looking forward to having another successful season this fall.

Westside Sport Shop (9-2-1) won the championship title for the third time since Crespo has been a member of the team. They beat sixth-seeded Heat, 2-1 in overtime in the quarterfinals before squeaking out a 3-2 win over the second seeded Monson Mustangs in the semifinals.

Here For Beer, who defeated Westside Sport Shop

in last year's finals, won the regular season match-up between the two squads. They entered the 2025 playoffs with an 11-1-0 record and earned a quarterfinal bye. They advanced into the finals after defeating the fourth-seeded Lusitano Women, 2-1, in the semifinals.

"Westside is a very good team this year," said Here for Beer player/coach Cassie Ashwell "If we were going to lose to anyone, I'm okay losing to them."

Longtime Minnechaug Regional girls' varsity soccer coach Nundi Goncalves attended the championship match. Several of his former players were playing on both sides.

The former Lady Falcons players wearing Westside uniforms were Emily Howard, Rhiann Ryan, Claire Poindexter, Gaby Williams, Lylah Jeannotte, and Chapin Jeannotte.

The Jeannotte sisters weren't teammates when they were in high school.

"We missed playing on the same soccer team at Minnechaug by only one year, but we've been playing together on this team for the past couple of years, which has been a lot of fun," said Lylah Jeannotte, who was a starting defender. "It feels awesome winning a championship together."

Here For Beer goalie Kenzie Pastreck also played soccer at Minnechaug Regional.

The other players listed on the Westside roster from

the Turley Publications coverage area are Reese Carey (South Hadley), Gabriella Fiahlo, Sydney Mercier (South Hadley), and Maya Tellier (Belchertown).

Here For Beer also had several players from the Turley Publications coverage area. They are Macie Bolton (Belchertown), Taryn Cariveau (Chicopee), Katie Gilhooly (Chicopee), Gwen Duggan (Palmer), and Lauren Marjanski (South Hadley), who didn't play in the finals.

Westside Sport Shop scored a pair of goals during the first ten minutes of the match.

Crespo, who's entering her senior season at Franklin Pierce, gave her team a 1-0 lead in the fourth minute after firing a low shot into the back of the net.

A couple of minutes later, Crespo delivered a crossing pass from the right side of the box to Natalie Matz, who poked a shot into the net past Pastreck.

Westside had several shots on goal during the final 30 minutes of the first half, but the score was still 2-0 at the break.

Crespo scored three more goals during the second half. Crespo's first goal after halftime was unassisted, while Matz and Julianna Beaulieu were given the assists on her final two goals.

Sara Avery, who was Westside's starting goalie, and Chloe Laizer, who also played for the Mutiny, combined to post the shutout.

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COMMUNITY GARDEN FROM PAGE 1

with one reserved for the Jubilee Ministries to grow food for its clients, and another for the food policy council. This would leave the remaining beds available for members of the community. **Community garden partners** Joining the Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council in planning the community garden is the East Quabbin Land Trust, which oversees its own community garden in the town of North Brookfield; Trinity Episcopal Church; the Hardwick

Farmers Co-Op in Gilbertville, and the Ware Grange #164. East Quabbin Land Trust's Executive Director Cynthia Henshaw suggested that the garden beds be measured at 10 feet by 10 feet, and she spoke about the success of the community garden in North Brookfield. "We're happy to share our learning and knowledge," she said. "It's a great way to get people engaged in the land." Steve Gould, manager at the Hardwick Farmers Co-Op, said he and his staff are

looking forward to working with the Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council to move this project ahead. "I think it will be a great project to have and I'm looking forward to being a part of it," Gould said. Gould and his staff also offered to donate tools, organic fertilizer and materials needed to create and maintain the community garden. John Carter, a member of the Ware Grange # 164, also offered his organization's support and knowledge for the community garden, as well as potential assistance

through the Grange's grant program. "This actually aligns with the Grange's mission," Carter said. "We would love to find a way to partner with you." Carter suggested the Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council set up an informational booth at the Grange Fair to be held on Aug. 22-23. He said once the community garden gets established, local growers would be welcomed to exhibit their crops in future fairs as well. **How to get involved** All are welcome to join

the community garden task force through the Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council, and regular attendance at meetings is not required. Community members interested in joining the council or the task force can email Blake at sblake@townof-ware.com. **About QVFPC** The Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council is overseen by Healthy Quaboag, and is funded through a grant received by the Town of Ware in partnership with Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation,

covering the towns of Ware, Belchertown, Palmer, Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield, Warren, Brookfield, West Brookfield, North Brookfield and East Brookfield. The council is open to all, and everyone is welcome to join in the discussion. The full results of the Community Food Access Assessment are available online. To view the comprehensive report and learn more about the findings, visit healthyquaboag.org/food-policycouncil.

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