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Newspaper

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Giving thanks

Community Food Collaborative distributes 150 turkeys

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – Over a dozen volunteers gathered behind North Brookfield Junior Senior High School last week to make sure that the people in the community truly had something to be grateful for.

A generous donation of 150 turkeys, as well as 360 mini pecan pies, were donated by C&S Wholesale Grocers to provide Thanksgiving meals to those facing food insecurity in North Brookfield and beyond.

“This was just a bonus,” said Karen Farrington, president of the North Brookfield Community Food Collaborative.

As volunteers unloaded the trucks, more volunteers arrived to sort the items into bags, and

load cars for delivery.

Farrington said the collaborative, which was formed this past July, receives a weekly donation of two pallets of frozen food from C&S Wholesale Grocers each Thursday. This is then distributed to approximately 120 families in need.

C&S Wholesale Grocers has also volunteered to provide a monthly donation of nonfrozen food items in the coming months, Farrington said.

Working with North Brookfield Public Schools, the collaborative has been able to utilize space at the school district’s two food pantries, and gets weekly help unloading donations from both the students and staff.

“Tim has generously allowed us to be here,” Farrington said

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Volunteers from the North Brookfield Community Food Collaborative and North Brookfield Junior Senior High School distributed 150 turkeys with all the fixings to families in need for Thanksgiving. TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE

Library hosted fall craft fair



The East Brookfield Public Library hosted its fall craft fair recently. These adorable dolls were handmade by library director Carolann MacMaster. TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

EAST BROOKFIELD – The East Brookfield Public Library hosted a fall craft fair recently as the season slowly transitions to winter.

Every year in the fall, the

library puts on a small and charming craft fair for guests to shop for various items and gifts. In addition to the craft fair, the library was hosting a small raffle with donations going directly to their playground fund.

Behind the East Brookfield Public Library is a playground

that has stood the test of time and is in need of repairs and a rebuild.

“Any donations are a huge help,” said Carolann MacMaster, the library director.

MacMaster kept busy trying to organize this year’s craft fair and had a booth of her

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STM approves article for new firetruck

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – The town hosted its Special Town Meeting on Nov. 19 inside the West Brookfield Elementary School cafeteria.

The highly anticipated vote was Article 4, the purchase of a firetruck. The article was writ-

ten as a vote to see if the town will raise and appropriate the amount of \$510,000 to borrow or transfer from available funds to purchase a new fire engine.

Board of Selectman Chair Eric von Bleicken spoke prior to the beginning of the Special Town Meeting to address the residents on what was at stake and how their votes matter in

See **STM** | PAGE 6

Selectmen appoint Highway Department superintendent

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Board of Selectmen unanimously voted to appoint Randy Morgan as the town’s permanent Highway Superintendent.

Morgan has been acting as superintendent since the departure of former Superintendent Jason Benoit.

“I think Randy’s been doing a fantastic job running things down there in the meantime since we haven’t had a super-

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- community -

CASA Project Worcester County hosted fundraising and awards event

CASA's 6th annual Champions for Children signature fundraiser brought in a record-breaking \$150,000 plus to support their mission to advocate for and support youth impacted by the foster care system in Worcester County.

The event was hosted for the second time at the Top of the Tower, Worcester's newest event venue located at 446 Main St., owned and managed by Synergy, a Boston-based real estate investment and services company. An evening to celebrate and sustain CASA's work, honor supporters, and share stories of impact, the event shattered last year's record of \$110,000 raised.

Champions for Children was held on Sept. 12, and featured several local restaurants and food vendors serving their unique multicultural cuisine, live entertainment, and a chance for guests to win a trip to Costa Rica. The event honored select members of the CASA community, thanking them for their important roles in advancing the work of the organization.

Honorees included District Attorney Joseph Early Jr.; Mary O'Coin, director of

the United Way of South Central MA; and long-time volunteers Deborah McDonnell and Elizabeth Young.

Under the leadership of executive director Julie Bowditch and event chairwoman and board member Liz Estabrooks, the event celebrates the diverse community of Worcester County and brings together supporters from all over the region. Attendees included city and state representatives such as Mayor Joe Petty, school committee member Molly McCullough, state senators Robyn Kennedy and Michael Moore, state representative David Lebeouf, and Governor's Councilor Paul DePalo, as well as business and community leaders in the region.

Lead sponsors included Top of the Tower, Lee Tesconi & Family, JoyGuru Humanitarian Services, Inc., Central MA Productions, Wednesday's Child, Plumb House, Carr Financial Group, and Peter Wyman & Family.

Bowditch said in a press release, "We are overwhelmed with gratitude. Each time I believe our community cannot outdo itself in

supporting the youth and families we serve, it does!"

During her remarks at the event, she challenged guests to remember a pivotal adult who positively changed their lives when they were growing up and reminded them that each of us has the power to fill that role for today's most vulnerable youth – as family members, neighbors, educators, mentors, and as part of the CASA community.

CASA Project Worcester County is a nonprofit organization appointed by juvenile court judges to the most challenging cases to provide best-interest, unbiased information to the court and amplify the needs and wishes of the youth on the cases. Court Appointed Special Advocates are carefully screened and trained community volunteers who support hundreds of foster-involved youth throughout the county each year.

CASA Project Worcester County is a member of the National CASA Association and the oldest and largest of seven programs of its kind in the state.

Learn more or get involved at www.the-casaproject.org.



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Better Business Bureau warns against scam texts and emails

You may be used to getting text messages and emails from your boss, which is why a recent texting scam is so effective.

Scammers find out where you work and pose as the CEO or other executive. Be on guard and don't share money or information – be it your own or your company's.

How the scam works

You receive a text from a number you don't recognize, claiming to be from your boss. The sender knows your name, where you work, and your boss's name. It seems so real.

The text message might read something like this: "Hi Chris, I'm tied up in a conference call right now but let me know if you get this text. Thanks [your boss' name]."

In a recent Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker report, a consumer shared this experience, "Text message posing as my boss, stuck in a meeting. Wanted me to get giftcards. Also texted people I know, posing as my boss as if they were texting me."

If you reply that you received the text, you'll be asked to do a quick task. This

could be purchasing gift cards for a client or wiring funds to another business.

In some cases, the scammer may ask you to send personal information to someone, often giving you a plausible reason to carry out the request.

In another BBB Scam Tracker report, a victim reported losing over \$1,000 in a gift card scam. "The scammer contacted me impersonating my boss telling me he needed an urgent task completed. He told me it needed to be a secret because he wanted to surprise employees for a good job last month with gift cards. He asked me to go to the nearest store and get five gift cards he asked for Apple and eBay cards but they did not have that so he told me to get five Vanilla Visa gift cards and load \$200 on each card. He said I would get reimbursed before the end of the day. I bought the cards using my personal money and was asked to send pictures of the receipt. I did that and then he asked me to send the front and back of the cards and I for some reason did that too. I only realized after contacting my boss that this was a scam. I was able to contact Vanilla and put a hold on the cards before any funds

were used. However, now the funds are frozen and in a gift card and I don't have access to the money for a possibly unknown amount of time. The scammer played to my need to be a good employee and it worked."

No matter how believable the reason sounds, always double-check before taking any action. Once you send the money, gift cards, or information, it will be in the hands of a con artist.

How to protect yourself

Don't trust unsolicited messages from unfamiliar numbers. If your boss regularly communicates with you via text message, save their number in your contact list.

Don't respond to potential impersonators reaching out from a different number.

Be wary of unusual requests. If your boss has never asked you to buy gift cards, even if the request comes from a number you've saved, think twice.

Scammers can potentially clone phone numbers and might have hijacked your boss' number to target employees.

Double-check with your boss personally. If a request comes from a strange

number or just doesn't sound right, call or email your boss first, using their real contact information, rather than replying to the message.

It's better to double-check than to rush into a scam. Plus, your boss will want to know if they are being impersonated, so they can warn their other employees.

If you suspect a scam, don't reply. If you're fairly certain you've been contacted by a scammer, don't reply to the text message.

Replying lets scammers know they have an active phone number and could leave you vulnerable to future attacks. Instead, block the number and delete the message.

For more information

Stay safe by reading the BBB's tips on how to spot fake text messages and how to avoid impostor scams. Also, read BBB's report about the rise of business email compromise scams.

If you've spotted a scam, whether or not you fell victim, report it at BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report helps expose scammers' tactics and boost consumer awareness.

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- community -

Christmas decorating and holiday events listed

NORTH BROOKFIELD – On Saturday, Nov. 30, volunteers from North Brookfield Decorate Our Town Committee will be gathered at the Town House at 9 a.m. to start the task of decorating the town for the Christmas holiday.

Wreaths and sprays will be hung on the windows and doors of all the buildings on Main Street, and the Town Park will be adorned with lights, wooden soldiers, a sleigh, Santa and much more.

On Sunday afternoon, Dec. 1, Santa will be sitting in his favorite chair to

welcome those who wish to sit on his knee and whisper in his ear the present they hope Santa will bring on Christmas morning.

At the same time, the Haston Free Public Library will be hosting a series of festivities. A Tree Lighting Ceremony will take place at 6 p.m., followed by Christmas Caroling at the Congregational Church.

Tabby LeBlanc will be leading all in the caroling, and it is hoped that the Theatre Guild will sing a favorite Christmas song or two.

Tips to protect your lungs during active brush fires

As brush fires continue to burn across Massachusetts, the American Lung Association is providing essential tips to protect health from the serious hazards posed by wildfire smoke.

Wildfire smoke poses a serious health hazard to people living and working near fires, especially those with lung health issues and emergency responders.

Wildfire smoke can also travel thousands of miles and impacts the health of anyone who breathes it. Breathing this smoke places even healthy individuals at risk, and you should talk with your healthcare provider about how to prepare for this exposure, especially if you work outdoors, are pregnant, are under age 18 or over age 65, or have asthma, COPD or a lung disease, chronic heart disease or diabetes.

To help residents protect their health, the Lung Association has released the following health tips:

Stay indoors. People living close to the fire-stricken areas or in areas impacted by wildfire smoke should remain indoors when possible and avoid breathing smoke, ashes and other pollution in the area.

Protect the air in your home and car. Keep doors, windows and fireplace dampers shut, preferably with clean indoor air circulating through air conditioners on the recirculation setting. When driving your car in smoky areas, keep your windows and vents closed. Air conditioning should only be operated in the “recirculate” setting.

Keep an eye on symptoms. Higher levels of smoke in some areas can make breathing more difficult. If you are experiencing wheezing, shortness of breath,

difficulty taking a full breath, chest heaviness, lightheadedness, dizziness, a persistent cough or experience difficult or painful breathing, contact your healthcare provider. The first symptoms can appear as late as 24 to 48 hours after initial exposure.

Take precautions for kids. Extra precaution should be taken for children, who are more susceptible to smoke. Their lungs are still developing and they breathe in more air (and consequently more pollution) for their size than adults. Keep children inside as much as possible, and think about evacuating if they have trouble breathing or symptoms that do not get better.

Don't count on a dust mask. Ordinary dust masks, designed to filter out large particles, and cloth facial coverings still allow the more dangerous smaller particles to pass through. Masks with an N-95 or N-100 filter will filter out the damaging fine particles more effectively, although they do not fully protect anyone from harm. It is important to note that masks may not fit properly or work for everyone—they are not made for children, or for adults with facial hair, and are difficult for people with lung disease to use.

Ask for help. The American Lung Association's Lung Helpline at 1-800-LUNGUSA is staffed by nurses and respiratory therapists, and is a free resource to answer any questions about the lungs, lung disease and lung health, including how to protect yourself during wildfires and wildfire smoke events.

More information about wildfires and lung health can be found at Lung.org/wildfires.

The Centered Place hosts food drive fundraiser

WARREN – The Centered Place yoga studio in Warren is hosting a food drive and fundraiser to support The Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry in West Brookfield as well as two Massachusetts food banks.

Donations of food and household items for The Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry can be brought to The Centered Place at 286 Bridge St.

The most needed food items include non-perishable food such as regular sized canned proteins (meats or beans), dried beans, grains, peanut butter or other nut butters, cookies, crackers, breakfast cereals, coffee or decaf, and canned or packaged soups. Household items that are most needed include paper towels and toilet paper, soap and other cleaning supplies.

Alternatively, food and donations can be brought directly to the Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry on Wednesday mornings between 10-11:30 a.m. and Thursday evenings between 7-8 p.m.

Note that on the week of Thanksgiving, the pantry will be open Tuesday morning instead of Wednesday morning, and will be closed on Thanksgiving. The Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry is located at 36 North Main St., in the back of the First Congregational Church in West Brookfield.

Donations can also be mailed to:

The Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry, 36 North Main St., West Brookfield, MA 01585.

Each month The Centered Place hosts a fundraiser for a different charitable organization. The fundraiser for both November and December supports the Worcester County Food Bank, a non-profit organization that provides donated food to those who need it.

The Centered Place has a Facebook fundraiser where you can donate to the WCFB: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/1116376256580110/>. Donations can also be made directly to the Worcester County Food Bank website at <https://foodbank.org/>.

Another food bank that you can support is the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, which serves Hampshire, Hampden, Franklin and Berkshire counties. You can donate to this food bank online at <https://www.foodbankwma.org/>.

The Centered Place yoga studio has served the local area since 1988. It was founded by Nancy A Nowak, who co-directs and teaches along with her husband, Phil Milgrom. The studio was voted Best in Yoga by readers of the former Sturbridge Times.

The physical address of the studio is 286 Bridge St. in Warren. The web address is www.thecenteredplace.com.

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- opinion -



The last of the autumn questions for the Garden Lady

Lori, a reader of the column, wrote in with this question for the Garden Lady: "I put my garlic cloves in three weeks ago and they have sprouted! The variety is a German White hardneck. Will they come back in the spring?"

Thank you for your question! It is not uncommon for garlic to send up shoots when fall weather is warmer than normal, much like ours has been.

Typically, the shoots survive the winter just fine, and will resume growth come spring time. To be on the safe side, I would mulch around your plants with straw or chopped up leaves to provide some insulation.

Once spring arrives, pull back the mulch and provide some fertilizer that is nitrogen rich to give the shoots a boost. A sprinkling of blood meal, fish emulsion, or composted manure would all do the trick.

Push the mulch back in place; it will help to keep weeds down. Garlic hates competition in this arena.

Early on, ample water and nutrients make the big fists of garlic we all want to see at harvest.

Hardneck garlic is typically the garlic grown in our area. Unlike softneck garlic, it needs the cold to complete its life cycle. It has fewer, but larger cloves.

Cloves from hardneck garlic are more pungent than softneck, but don't last quite as long in storage. Softneck don't grow stiff scapes as stems but have leaves that at harvest can be braided together to make a nice kitchen decoration.

Often you will see these garlic braids for sale at craft shows or in catalogs.

Michele, who gardens in Ware, has a question about tidying up her hydrangea bushes.

"The flowers at the tips of the branches of my blue hydrangea bushes have all browned and look unappealing. Some of the leaves are hanging on too. Altogether it's not a pretty sight. Can I cut down the branches to the ground? In effect, cleaning up the plant by the easiest way possible? It will sprout again when spring arrives, of that I'm sure."

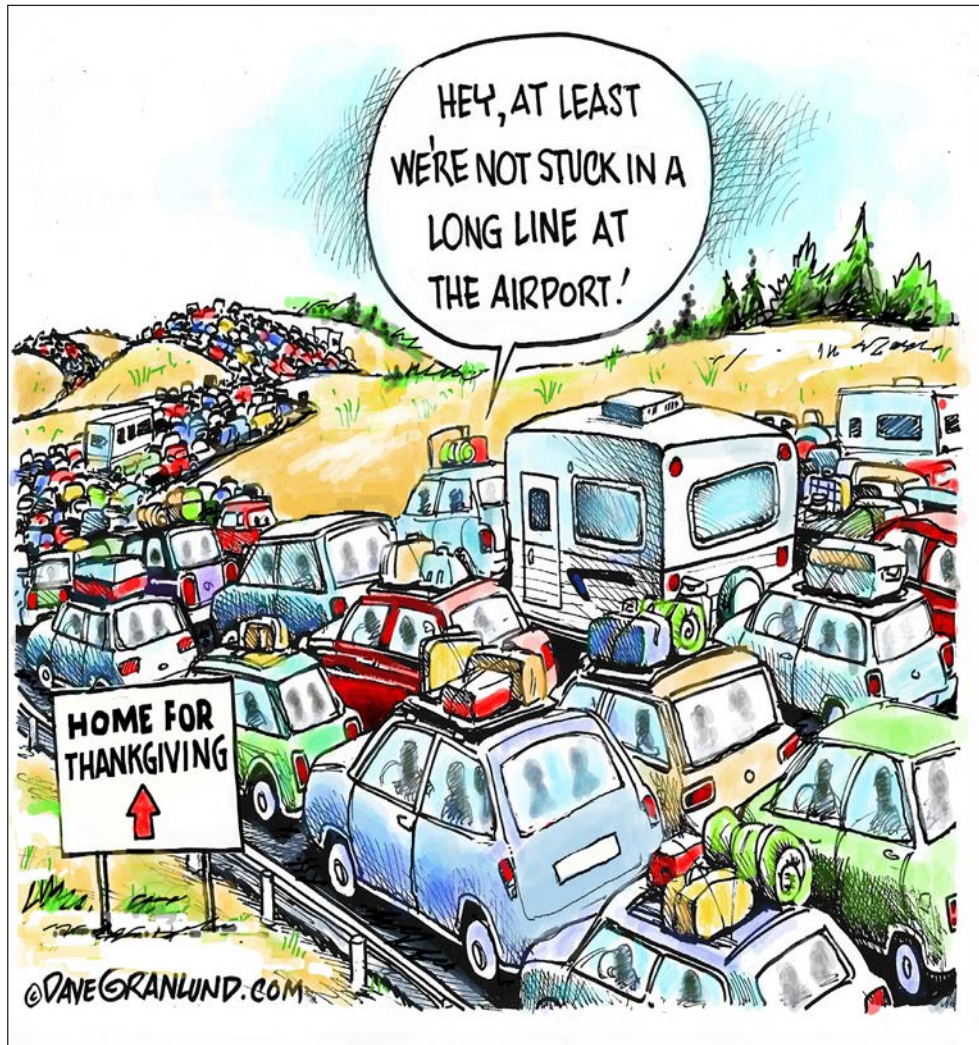
I know exactly what you are talking about. From where I am writing, I can see my own hydrangea and it looks just as "pretty" as yours sounds!

Rest assured that the leaves will fall off. The flowers, on the other hand, will stick around awhile. Wind and wet weather will eventually cause them to degrade and fall away from the plant.

If you don't want to wait that long, feel free to cut the flower heads, and just the flower heads off. You see, most hydrangeas bloom on old wood.

Newer varieties – those bred in the last 20 years or so, often bloom on both new wood and old wood, so you'd never really want to cut them all the way down because you would be missing out on an opportunity for flowers to form. In case you don't follow my logic, flowers can form on the new growth the plant puts out in the spring, and the old growth from the previous year. Lots of gardeners remarked about what an amazing year it was for hydrangeas. So many flowers!

We attribute that to a mild winter last year and ample rainfall. I'm uncertain what the



Retiree asks about his Social Security



Dear Rusty

I retired with a (gross) \$4,600 per month Civil Service Retirement System annuity from the U.S. Postal Service in December 2022. I am 66 and will attain Full Retirement Age in November of this year.

I know at that point I will not be subject to the "earnings" test, but I will be affected by the dreaded "government offset." I have earned enough quarters and will be eligible for a small social security benefit.

First question: will my Social Security benefit just be reduced or will it be eliminated? Second: will it make a difference if I apply in November or when I turn 70? I am currently working part-time and paying Social Security FICA taxes.

Third: if my SS is being eliminated, do I even have to apply? Fourth and last: I am married, filing jointly and my wife is currently receiving SS benefits (only). Could I also be affected by the "windfall" provision if my wife predeceased me?

Thank you in advance for your service as a Social Security Advisor.

Signed: Upset to Offset and Downfall to Windfall

Dear Upset

You are correct that when you reach your Full Retirement Age in November you will no longer be subject to Social Security's "earnings test," which limits how much you can earn while collecting early benefits. But if you apply for your Social Security to start in November, your SS benefits will be affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision due to your non-covered CSRS pension because you didn't pay into SS while earning your CSRS pension.

As you may know, only those federal employees, who retired under CSRS are affected by WEP; newer Federal employees, who retire under the more recent Federal Employee Retirement Program pro-

gram are not affected.

Because of your CSRS pension, your Social Security benefit will be reduced, but not eliminated. The amount of reduction will be based on the number of years of non-government employment you had where you paid into Social Security. Usually, those who have spent a lifetime earning a pension without contributing to SS, but who have a separately earned SS pension, will see their SS benefit cut approximately in half.

To answer your second question, your benefit will, indeed, continue to grow if you wait until you are age 70 to claim Social Security.

Benefits taken after one's FRA earn "Delayed Retirement Credits," which add to your final benefit amount. Your benefit will still be reduced by WEP, but your final amount will be more because you waited longer to claim.

Regarding your third question, your SS benefit will only be reduced, not eliminated, so it's always worthwhile to apply. Otherwise, you are forfeiting Social Security money you are entitled to.

And lastly, if your wife dies before you, your CSRS pension will also cause another provision called the Government Pension Offset provision to apply. The GPO will reduce your surviving spouse benefits by 2/3rds of the amount of your government CSRS pension, which will likely eliminate any spousal benefit you are entitled to except the so-called "death benefit," which is a one-time lump sum \$255 benefit paid to a surviving spouse).

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

OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

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

Send opinions to:

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

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Quaboag Current Newspaper

- community -

Hurricane Helene in the Southern Appalachians

By Julie Midura
Guest Column

After months of anticipation and weeks of planning, we were finally on our way to western North Carolina to begin our 200-mile backpacking trip on the Appalachian Trail.

Our backcountry permits were safely stashed in our backpacks for the first 70 miles of trail that weave through the Great Smoky Mountains, and the resupply packages we had mailed to several trail towns would be waiting for us in some of the hostels and outfitters as we made our way north.

After the 800 mile drive from our home in Massachusetts, we dropped our car off at Mountain Harbour Hostel in Roan Mountain, Tennessee, where my sister met us so that she could shuttle us to Fontana Dam in North Carolina – the starting point of our 17-day backpacking trip. Our SUV would be waiting for us at the hostel.

At least, that was the plan.

But on Thursday evening, Sept. 26, just a few hours after arriving in Tennessee, we received an urgent email from Great Smoky Mountain headquarters imploring us to postpone our hike.

The hurricane that barreled into Florida was continuing inland without breaking stride...and was heading straight for the Southern Appalachians. Tom and I would be hiking right smack in the middle of it.

We considered delaying the start of our hike to Sunday, but the Appalachian Trail Conservancy soon issued a statement that the trail should be considered closed to hiking from the southern terminus in Georgia all the way to Rockfish Gap, Virginia. 860 miles of trail. This closure was unprecedented.

The unrelenting rain that fell – upwards of 30 inches in some areas – was creating perilous conditions in the mountains. Landslides were imminent and trees were falling like toothpicks.

As the mountains became overrun with moisture, historic amounts of water rushed down the creeks and into the rivers, which resulted in the highest river levels ever observed across the region.

The monumental force of the flood waters widened the rivers beyond what the riverbanks could con-



Julie and Tom embarked on a 200-mile backpacking trip on the Appalachian Trail prior to the arrival of Hurricane Helene. SUBMITTED PHOTO

tain, rerouting the water directly into the towns. The angry water carved a path deeply into the earth and swallowed everything in its path, including trees, cars, homes and highways.

Tractor trailers were picked up by the catastrophic flooding and crushed like matchbox cars. Highways were washed away, concrete bridges collapsed and entire towns were underwater. Hundreds of lives were lost.

What remained were towns, homes and businesses buried in mud and looking more like war zones. The magnitude of the storm has made Hurricane Helene

one of the most impactful weather events the Appalachians has ever seen.

Thankfully, Tom and I were taken in by family members who live in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, which was spared significant damage. While there, we learned that all roads into Roan Mountain – where we had left our SUV – were inaccessible.

Power and cell service were nonexistent. We looked on the hostel's Facebook page to see if there were any updates on how they had fared, and were shocked to see a video taken by the owners during the height of the storm.

The entire property we had dropped our car off just three days prior had become unrecognizable. What was once a gravel parking lot was now a raging river. We watched the video as our SUV was inundated by the flood waters.

But we are the lucky ones. Had we already been on the trail when the storm hit, it could have easily been our lives we lost and not simply our car.

A few days later, we rented a car and began the long drive home, feeling heartbroken. Our heartbreak had nothing to do with our flooded SUV.

Little to do with the lost backpacking trip that we had been looking forward to for so long. Rather, it had everything to do with the devastation we witnessed and the people who had lost homes, livelihoods and loved ones.

We arrived back home two weeks earlier than we planned to, and went through the motions of unpacking, doing laundry and going through the mail, all while feeling as though we were in a fog.

Tom shared that it felt strange to be back home so soon. Like we weren't supposed to be there.

Both of us were experiencing the kind of sadness that creeps into your bones and settles there.

So we took a day to regroup, then crammed our overnight backpacks and hiking gear into our tiny 2010 Honda Fit with 200,000 miles on the odometer, and headed to the White Mountains of NH. We prayed that our beat up old car would make it through the rough and rutted dirt roads that lead to some of the trailheads.

When we reached the trailhead at 5 p.m., we threw our heavy packs over our shoulders and headed into the woods to find a place to set up our tent for the night. It was our hope that spending a few days away from it all would allow us to process the devastation we saw in Tennessee and North Carolina.

We spent the next few days walking the trails, climbing the mountains and inhaling serenity in the wild places of New Hampshire. As we gazed out at the vast Pemigewasset Wilderness from a rock ledge on Zeacliff while waiting for the sun to set, it truly felt like a balm for our souls.

See you in the wild places, my friends!

GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

droughty fall will do, if anything, to next year's show.

I also wonder if hydrangeas put on a banner year one year, if the following year will be sparser because they are in recovery mode? I know it happens that way for fruit trees, my Asian pears for example, but not certain if it works the same way with flowering shrubs.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

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- community -

Weir River Jazz performs 'Frosty's Favorites' Dec. 1

HARDWICK – Weir River Jazz will present “Frosty’s Favorites,” a big band concert in the sanctuary of the Stone Church Cultural Center, 283 Main St. (Route 32) in Gilbertville on Sunday, Dec. 1, at 2 p.m.

Come join the musicians to hear the great sounds of a traditional Big Band playing your favorite seasonal

melodies. This concert is open to the public and there is no charge for admission.

This concert is sponsored in part by the Mass Cultural Council and Country Bank for Savings. Donations to the Friends of the Stone Church are always appreciated.

Annual Stuff a Cruiser toy drive is Dec. 8

HARDWICK – The South Barre Rod and Gun Club, 2626 Barre Road (Route 32), will host the annual Stuff a Cruiser event to benefit the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department’s Christmas for Kids Program on Sunday, Dec. 8 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

This event helps give kids in the Hardwick and New Braintree communities a wonderful Christmas holiday.

Holiday Festival and tree lighting this Sunday

NEW BRAINTREE – The New Braintree Holiday Festival will be held on Sunday, Dec. 1 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at 20 Memorial Drive.

There will be activities, wagon rides, hot chocolate, tree lighting, visit with Santa, an open house at the Historical Society and more.

STM | FROM PAGE 1

the decision to approve Article 4 as it pertains what the town needs moving forward. Von Bleicken believes this purchase of a firetruck is a need for the town and its fire department.

“We want to spend our money wisely,” von Bleicken said.

More about the firetruck article was explained by Fire Chief Rich Lapierre. Lapierre would then discuss the purpose of Article 4 and the current conditions of the fire department and its equipment.

The biggest barrier the fire department has is one of the engine replacements. One of their fire engines is 31 years old. As for mechanics, the department has no certified mechanic to help with the upkeep of the engine.

Lapierre believes upgrading their equipment including the fire engine is essential for the department and the Town.

“Best to serve the community,” Lapierre said.

In the presentation, the Fire Chief explained how the age of their equipment is much older compared to other nearby communities. Lapierre said the number one goal is safety and the fire department want to do their job the best they can.

However, the fire engine they have is not up to the safety standards. The engine has not passed a pump test in years.

“We have to get to the point where we can take care of our community,”

Lapierre said.

The department has priced out a lot of trucks and have looked online for the best possible option. New and pre-owned trucks have come up and the fire department has come up with a solution to help pay for the fire engine that they need that best serves the town.

Lapierre explained that the town wants to use the Fire Truck Stabilization Account and use \$162,000 in addition to borrowing the \$510,000, the town will be able to have the fire truck paid off in 10 years.

Earlier in the meeting, the town voted and approved Article 3, which was to transfer a sum of money from the Fire Truck Stabilization Account to assist in providing funding for the purchase of fire engine #1 pump replacement. The purpose of this article is to utilize funds in the Fire Stabilization Account to offset the costs of borrowing for the purchase of the new fire engine.

The vote on Article 4 would pass by way of a two-thirds majority vote, but the decision will not be official until the next annual town meeting, which will be held in May. The article would have to be passed twice.

Article 1

The first article for the Special Town Meeting was proposed by the Board of Selectmen. The article was for supplemental appropriations.

The purpose of this article is to

supplement line items in the current fiscal year’s budget to fund a number of additional expenses associated with various town departments. The sum of money involved in this article total \$12,750.

The article passed.

Article 2

Article 2 was for a transfer to the Fire Truck Stabilization Account. The Town would vote to transfer the sum of \$45,750 to the Fire Truck Stabilization Account.

SELECTMEN | FROM PAGE 1

intendent,” Board of Selectmen Clerk Vaughn Schlegel said at the Nov. 19 meeting. “He’s been there for quite a while now, he knows the ins and outs, he knows everybody that works there, and he’s really been getting a lot of projects rolling and I’m happy to see that and I know a lot of people in town are too.”

Board of Selectmen Chair Jason Pe-traitis said Morgan went into the interim position with “quite a lot of enthusiasm,” and has done an excellent job.

Morgan thanked the board for the opportunity and accepted the permanent position.

STM warrant

A special town meeting will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. at the North Brookfield Senior Center, 29 Forest St.

There are four articles on the warrant: Article 1, to see if the town will vote to rescind a portion of the vote of the Nov. 15, 2024, special town meeting, Article 1, that raised and appropriated \$66,564 to Group Health; Article 2, to see if the town will vote to transfer the sum of \$7,180 from Fire Assistant Chief Salary to Fire Supplies; Article 3, to see if the town will vote to transfer the sum of \$7,000 from Police Career Incentive to Police Overtime; and Article 4, to see if the town will vote to transfer the sum of \$100,000 from Stabilization to Capital Stabilization.

Administrative Assistant Ashley Barre said the Capital Improvement Planning Committee made the request to include Article 4 on the warrant, but that it is up to the board to include it now or wait until the spring town meeting.

Schlegel moved to approve the warrant without Article 4, and wait until the spring town meeting when the town would have a better idea of what the fiscal year 2026 budget will look like.

Jamie Gilman, chair of the Capital Improvement Planning Committee, said its members are trying to get ahead of any capital spending requests that may come before them in the future. He said they have not received any requests at this time.

“It’s not a matter of ‘if,’ it’s of matter of ‘when,’” Gilman said.

Barre said there is slightly over \$1 million in the town’s Stabilization account. The Capital Stabilization account has just over \$100,000 in it currently.

The purpose of this article is to return these funds voted under Article 6 of the June 6, 2023 Special Town Meeting.

Lapierre explained that this money will be saved just in case the town was awarded a grant. The article also read that this amount would be transferred from the account for the 5% grant match towards a new pumper/tanker truck, contingent upon receiving the FY 2022 Assistance to Firefighters Grant.

The voter approved Article 2.

Schlegel’s motion failed to pass and after further discussion, Canada moved to approve Article 4, but reduced the amount requested to \$50,000.

The board voted unanimously to approve the special town meeting warrant with the amended article.

First Night event

Parks and Recreation Committee Chair Brandon Avery said they did not have enough time to organize the Thanksgiving 5K run/walk this year, but they are focusing on First Night activities to be held on Tuesday, Dec. 31 in the early afternoon or evening.

The First Night event will be held in the downtown area and will offer family-friendly activities.

“We’ll have more details when we see who we can get involved,” he said. “We certainly look for involvement from the community...or anybody who wants to jump in and make suggestions to have some sort of activity and help out.”

Tax classification hearing

Board of Assessors Chair Sheila Buzzell said the town’s residential taxpayers make up 87% of the town’s tax base and she recommended the board keep its single tax rate. She said the commercial and industrial taxpayers would pay a much higher rate if the town adopted a split tax rate.

The board voted to retain a single tax rate for the coming year.

Buzzell said the tax rate will be determined in the coming weeks.

Resignation

The board accepted Patrick Gustafson’s resignation from the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. His position, along with two alternate positions, will be posted and interested residents can submit letters of interest to seek appointments.

FY 26 budgeting calendar

The board approved a draft letter detailing the fiscal year 2026 budgeting calendar to be sent to all town departments.

Tree removal bids

Morgan said he received three bids for tree removal on the Water Department property. The low bid for the project was from Jim Rust and will be paid from available American Rescue Plan Act funds.

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- community -

New Braintree Library to hold Story Time

NEW BRAINTREE – The New Braintree Public Library, 45 Memorial Drive, is offering a Story Time program for preschoolers on Monday, Dec. 2 beginning at 9 a.m. The program’s focus is on the coming winter season with readings from Eric Carle. The readings will include

“The Very Hungry Caterpillar’s First Winter” and “Dream Snow.” This reading and crafts program is held at the library. Parental supervision is required. People may call the library at 508-867-7650 during regular business hours for more information.

Alternative criteria for lung cancer screening

BOSTON – A researcher at VA Boston, Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine and Boston Medical Center helped develop alternative lung cancer screening criteria to identify people who would benefit significantly from screening, but are excluded by current criteria, according to research published Aug. 20, in “Annals of Internal Medicine”.

“We found these high-benefit groups include those who smoked for a long duration, but at a lower intensity, those with heavy smoking who quit more than 15 years ago, and those from some racial and ethnic minority groups,” said Dr. Lauren Kearney, lead author of the study, research fellow at VA Boston’s Center for Healthcare Organization & Implementation Research, pulmonary and critical care fellow at Boston Medical Center, and instructor at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine.

Researchers used responses to the National Health Interview Survey from more than 58 million smoking adults from 1997 to 2018, to study whether alternative criteria could better identify high-benefit persons and whom this would include. They used fast and frugal tree algorithms to develop an alternative set of simple criteria.

The researchers then compared the alternative criteria with U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, or USPSTF, criteria, evaluating their ability to identify high-benefit people. They also looked for where the selected populations overlapped and where the alternative

criteria overcame USPSTF criteria limitations.

Results suggest that the alternative criteria have higher sensitivity and specificity in identifying high-benefit people, and is substantially more sensitive in identifying high-benefit people in racial and ethnic minority populations than the USPSTF criteria. Analysis showed inequity in current USPSTF criteria, which has poor sensitivity for identifying high-benefit Black people for lung cancer screening.

The researchers also believe that, beyond the lung cancer screening context, their approach could be useful for other cancer screening and prevention modalities.

“The alternative criteria produced more effective screening, led to better support of ethical risk management, and substantially reduced racial disparities in lung cancer screening eligibility,” explained Kearney. “The alternative criteria are also easy to remember and represent a feasible way to improve current lung cancer screening eligibility criteria.”

The research is available at <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-3250>.

Beware of health care cons during open enrollment

If you are adding or changing your Medicare or Healthcare.gov coverage during open enrollment, watch out for unsolicited calls claiming to “help” you find the best deal.

Unfortunately, scammers see this open enrollment period as a chance to trick people out of money and personal information.

Open enrollment for Medicare runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7; Medicare Advantage open enrollment is from Jan. 1 to March 31 or within three months of getting Medicare; Healthcare.gov open enrollment begins Nov. 1 with Dec. 15 as the last day to enroll or change plans for coverage starting Jan. 1, and Jan. 15 as the last day to enroll for coverage starting Feb. 1.

How this scam works

The Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker frequently receives reports of scam calls and texts pretending to be from Medicare.

In one report, the target reported that a caller pretended to be an agent “asking if I got a new updated Medicare card in the mail. He then verified my name and mailing address. Then he wanted me to get my old card and read off info to him, such as the date on the lower right side of the card. When he asked me to read my card number, I told him I cannot.”

Another consumer reported being targeted through a text message and shared the following: “I received a text saying that my health benefits were about to expire, and I needed to call the number to renew. Then, the representative told me I had to pay, and my bank had to verify with them...That’s when I knew it was a scam.”

If you stay on the line, these callers allege they can enroll you in a better plan than what you currently have, according to Scam Tracker reports.

This new plan is cheaper, and you can keep all the same services. To get started, all you need to do is provide

some personal information, such as your Medicare ID number and your Social Security number.

No matter how good the deal sounds and how convincing the caller seems, don’t do it. The call is a scam, and sharing personal information will expose you to identity theft.

How to avoid similar scams

Be wary of anyone who contacts you out of the blue. Healthcare.gov and Medicare provide legitimate help for determining which plan is right for you.

These people – sometimes called Navigators or Assistants – cannot charge for their support. If someone asks you for payment, it’s a scam.

You will also need to contact them on your own. They will not call you first.

Be wary of free gifts and “health screenings.” Keep a healthy level of skepticism any time a broker offers you free gifts or other special deals.

Never sign up with a broker who offers you an expensive sign-up gift in exchange for providing your Medicare ID number or additional personally identifiable information. Other times, brokers offer free “health screenings” to weed out people who are less healthy.

This technique is called “cherry picking” and is against Medicare rules.

Guard your government-issued numbers. Never offer your Medicare ID number, Social Security number, health plan info, or banking information to anyone you don’t know.

Go directly to official websites. If you want to make changes to your health-care plan, go directly to Medicare.gov, Healthcare.gov, or your employer’s health insurance provider. Don’t click on links in suspicious messages.

Contact your employer directly. If you receive an unexpected email about benefits policies, ask your employer about it before you click on anything to make sure it’s legitimate.

Find more consumer tips at BBB.org.

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- sturbridge -

Federated Church announces Holly Berry Fair vendors

STURBRIDGE – The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale will hold its annual Holly Berry Fair on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the church’s Fellowship Hall at 8 Maple St.

Holly Berry Fair co-chairs, Nancy Castendyk and Janet-Rae Sinanian say this year’s fair promises to deliver something for everyone on your holiday shopping list.

“We’ve assembled quite an assortment of really unique and interesting artists this year,” says Castendyk. “This popular fair will offer something for everyone, from hand-crafted pottery to folk art and hand-knitted items, and Koinonia, the Federated Church women’s group will also be offering a va-

riety of baked goods and other items for sale.”

Featured local artisans include Penny Adams (Violet Hummingbird), Charles Batterby (Sunset Leatherworks), Benjamin Brigham (Brigham Crafting), Nancy Castendyk (The Penny Wooden Doll), Bonnie Fancy (Fancy Knits), Collette Gage (Emma’s Acres Alpacas), and Kimberly Hachey (Simply Soaps).

The fair will also feature Roger Hall (My Shop), Gary Jesz (G&J Woodworking), Koinonia (Handicrafts), Nartarsha Lester (Beads by Tea), Barbara L’heureux (Pen & Ink Drawings), Janet Rae-Sinianian (T & Roses), Debra Rooney (Making Memories), Shree Weaver (Shree’s Handmade Pottery),

and Dee Wilson (Handmade by Dee).

For additional information about the Holly Berry Fair or other upcoming events, please visit the Church website at sturfed.org, visit the Church’s Facebook page @FederatedChurchSturbridgeFiskdale, or contact the Church office by calling 774-304-1021 or emailing churchoffice@sturfed.org.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ’s presence and God’s grace in our lives. Members of the community are welcome and invited to join in worship on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. Services are also live-streamed on the church’s Facebook page.

Federated Church announces holiday service schedule

STURBRIDGE – The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale will host this year’s annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service on Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 7 p.m.

All members of the community, regardless of faith, are invited to attend this special service, according to Federated Church Pastor Rev. David Cote.

This year’s participating churches include Holy Trinity Church, Southbridge; Elm Street Congregational Church UCC, Southbridge; Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Sturbridge; First United Methodist Church, Southbridge; and St. Anne/St. Patrick Catholic Church, Fiskdale. Together, they will join in a collaborative service to give thanks for the blessings of the past year and to encourage a sense of community through shared worship.

According to Cote, pastor of the Federated Church, “The Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service gives us a chance to reflect on the blessings we share and to celebrate the unity that ties us all together. This service is a great example of how faith can go beyond individual churches, bringing us together as one grateful and grace-filled community.”

For more information about the event, please visit the church website at sturfed.org or contact the church office by calling 774-304-1021 or by emailing churchoffice@sturfed.org.

TURKEYS | FROM PAGE 1

of Superintendent Tim McCormick.

McCormick said the school district’s food pantries have benefited from the collaborative to ensure that students have access to food, and that donations for the schools’ pantries are always accepted from the community both after and during school hours. Monetary donations can also be sent to the school district and donations can remain anonymous.

Area farms and restaurants have also provided fresh produce and baked goods to the collaborative to distribute, and freshly cooked meals to deliver to the town’s senior citizens. Two local restaurants generously donate up to 70 meals each Wednesday to senior citizens.

Connect Restaurant, which opened its second location in North Brookfield this summer, offers senior citizens six different dinner options to choose from.

Farrington said the senior citizens often can get more than one meal out of these weekly dinners, and even share them with their neighbors.

She said the senior citizens have expressed their appreciation for these dinners, saying they are getting to enjoy “real people food.”

“It shows how hard food security is for the community and beyond,” Farrington said.

In just a short time, the collaborative has been able to form a network of volunteers and donors to ensure that no-

body goes without access to nutritious food.

“It’s really wonderful just having everything coming together,” Farrington said.

Food is distributed to the senior housing complexes in town each Thursday, and Farrington said the complexes’ residents have helped make the process smooth and efficient, even helping to set up tables and break down empty cardboard boxes.

“It’s like an assembly line,” Farrington said.

Farrington said these weekly visits have helped the collaborative volunteers form relationships with the senior citizens, who eagerly await the donation truck to offer their help.

“They’re proud now,” Farrington said of the senior citizens. “It gives them a purpose. The whole community has just come together.”

The collaborative is working with area churches, including the First Congregational Church of North Brookfield, to reach more people in need. The collaborative has also teamed up with the day program from the Seven Hills Foundation in Worcester to provide prepared Thanksgiving meals for the homeless.

Anyone who would like to help the collaborative fight food insecurity, can mail donations to Coalition for a Healthy North Brookfield, P.O. Box 98, North Brookfield, MA 01535.



Students and staff from North Brookfield Junior Senior High School helped carry turkeys to be delivered. TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA QUIMETTE



Thanksgiving bags filled with side dishes and pecan pies accompanied the turkeys.



Volunteers unload turkeys from the donation truck.



Volunteers smiled while sorting the donated food.

SPORTS

Cougars fall in state tournament



Lauren Grover heads the ball forward.



Olive Moulton heads the ball into the offensive end of the field.

WARREN – Earlier this month, Quaboag girls soccer suffered from a long layoff as they were shut out in their only state playoff game. The Cougars faced Granby and lost 2-0 on Nov. 6. Granby would advance in the tournament while Quaboag's season ended with a 7-10-1 record. The Cougars did face Granby in an independent game near the end of the regular season, falling 1-0.



Maddie Potvin tries to get to the ball before an opponent.



Brielle Gerulaitis clears the ball ahead of pressure. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Madelyn Bagg heads toward the right sideline as she crosses midfield.

Deep playoff run for Quabbin ends in quarterfinals



Maria Hamm passes up the field. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

UXBRIDGE – On Saturday, Nov. 9, the Quabbin Regional High School field hockey team traveled to Uxbridge for the quarterfinals of the Division 4 state tournament. Unfortunately, the Panthers were facing the defending three-time state champions. Uxbridge didn't disappoint, winning a 6-0 decision on a sun-splashed morning on their high school turf. Quabbin's season finished with an overall record of 10-9-2.



Ellie Poulin fights to stay in possession.



Haley Ayer passes up to Maria Hamm.



Veanna Salvadore attempts to clear the ball away.

- sports -

Offense scores big in Week 10 win over North Middlesex

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

BARRE—After falling behind early in a non-playoff loss at Marlborough High School six days earlier, Quabbin football coach Wayne Page certainly didn't want to see a repeat performance in the final home game of the season.

The Panthers, who built a 24-0 halftime lead, coasted to a 48-20 victory over the North Middlesex Patriots in another non-playoff game held at Alumni Field, last Thursday night.

"We didn't start out very well in last week's game at Marlborough and they took it to us," Page said. "We really wanted to start a lot faster in tonight's game. We took control of the game early in the first quarter, and we never took our foot off the gas until late in the fourth quarter."

It was the first meeting on the gridiron between the two teams since the Panthers squeaked out a 40-35 road victory during the 2016 season.

Last Thursday's home win improved the Panthers season record to 7-3, which tied the 2016 squad for the most wins in the history of the football program.

"These kids have worked very hard, and they deserve to have this record," Page said. "I'm very proud of them."

Quabbin senior Bryce Venne set the tone by returning the game's opening kickoff to the Patriots 14-yard line.

Following two short runs by senior Luke Salvatore and junior Chase Talbot, senior quarterback Jaxon Warburton called his own



Jaxon Warburton shovels a pass to Wes Sanderson. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

number in the huddle. He scrambled 11 yards up the middle into the end zone less than two minutes into the opening quarter.

Salvatore made the score 8-0 by scoring another rushing touchdown on the two-point conversion play.

The Panthers offense got the ball right back when Venne recovered a fumble on a lateral pass at the Patriots 36.

Eleven plays later, Salvatore plowed his way into the endzone on a fourth and goal play from the two with 3:33 left in the opening quarter. Warburton also ran into the endzone on the conversion play.

Quabbin entered the second stanza holding a 16-0 lead.

Following another fumble recovery by senior Ryan Wreschinsky, Talbot scored the Panthers third rushing touchdown of the game following a 68-yard scamper with 11:29 remaining in the first half.

Salvatore scored again on the conversion play.

The Patriots offense did move the ball down to the Panthers six-yard

line before back-to-back 15-yard personal foul penalties pushed them back 30 yards. That drive ended following a 34-yard missed field goal.

After Quabbin was forced to punt for the first time, Talbot intercepted a pass, and he returned it about 20 yards to the Panthers 38.

The home team failed to score during that series, and they held a 24-0 halftime lead.

The visitors from Townsend did get on the scoreboard when senior John Kelley returned the second half kickoff 70 yards down the left sideline for a touchdown.

Any hopes that the Patriots might have had about making a comeback didn't last very long.

With 9:30 remaining in the third quarter, the Panthers took a 32-6 lead when Salvatore sprinted into the endzone on a 29-yard run. Warburton scored on the conversion play.

Then Quabbin junior Wes Sanderson intercepted a pass and returned it 25 yards for his team's fifth touchdown of the game. He also caught a shuttle pass on the two-point play for another TD.

"We probably don't win tonight's

game without the turnovers. I thought the defense played an awesome game," Page said. "Coach (Mike) Besaw did a very good job of putting together a very good defensive game plan."

While Besaw is the Panthers defensive coordinator, Page, who was a quarterback at Grafton High School, calls the offensive plays.

Another key defensive player for Quabbin is senior Cole Wilson, who has made more than 80 tackles this season which broke the team record.

Late in the third quarter, North Middlesex sophomore QB Colin Taylor completed a 3-yard touchdown pass to senior Brady Reardon. The duo hooked up again for another touchdown late in the fourth quarter.

Quabbin's final touchdown of the game was a 34-yard run by Warburton with 7:27 left in regulation.

Because the Panthers were leading by 34 points at the point, the scoreboard clock was kept running the rest of the game.

The Panthers will be looking to break the school record for wins in a season when they travel to Gardner High School on Thanksgiving morning.



Jaxon Warburton launches a long pass attempt.



Luke Salvatore attempts a run for the Panthers.



Bryce Venne returns the ball on a kickoff.



The offensive line blocks for Quabbin.

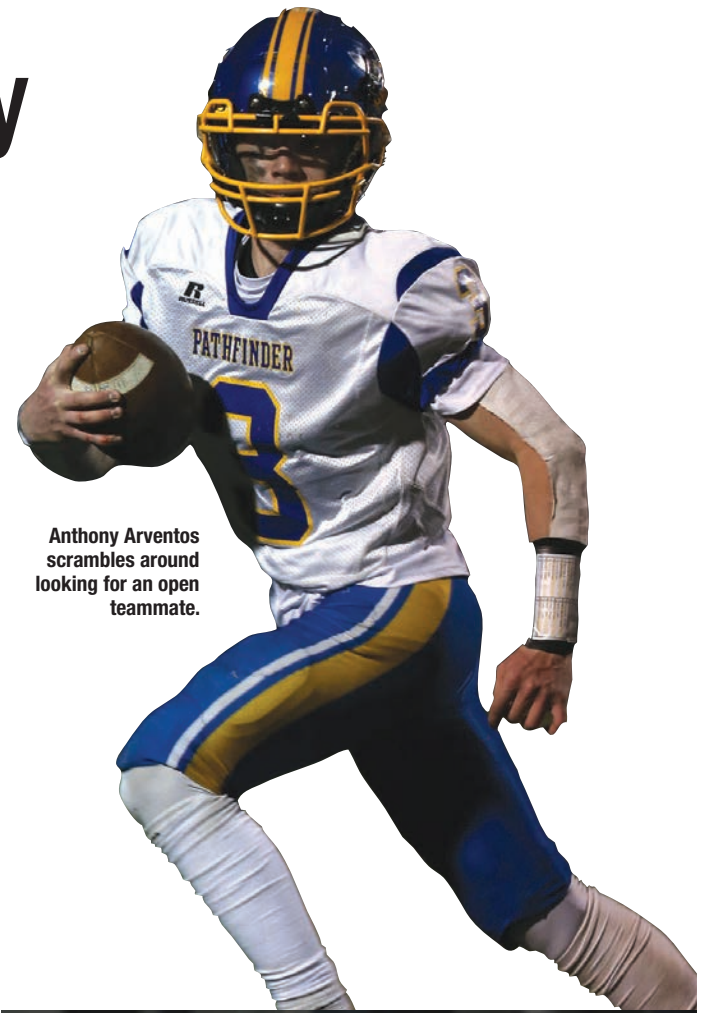
- sports -

Pioneers fall to South Hadley



Tyler Rondeau heads on a run. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

SOUTH HADLEY – In non-playoff action for Week 10, South Hadley football defeated Pathfinder 27-9. The Pioneers would actually score first with an Anthony Arventos 15-yard run. In between that score and a safety in the third quarter, South Hadley scored 27 points. Julius Hebenth had two touchdown runs for the Tigers. Chase Pecia and Lincoln Belsky also had scores. South Hadley faced Holyoke on Thanksgiving while Pathfinder hosted Belcher-town.



Anthony Arventos scrambles around looking for an open teammate.



Brandyn Wilson makes a block for the Pioneers.



Jarrett Skowrya heads toward the sideline while carrying the ball.



Jacob Kokoski goes for a tackle.

MIAA seeks to throw out judge's decision

Subhead: Minnechaug, Monson unaffected by appeals

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

Minnechaug Regional High School and Monson High School filed injunctions at the beginning of the month with the Hampden Court Superior Court.

The schools were appealing a ruling from the MIAA that forced the schools to take forfeits for Western Mass. tournament games because of a procedural issue that was not followed by Minnechaug, Monson, Pathfinder Regional, and several other schools in the region.

According to information sent by the MIAA to member schools, they were supposed to input games to their schedule on the Arbiter website used to track results and formulate tournament data.

Those games, which were not yet known due to the how the schedule is structured, were simply supposed to feature the school and opponents TBA (to be announced). Those fillers in the schedule would eventually be filled with Western Mass. tournament games, or nonplayoff games if teams did not qualify.

Those filler games were supposed to be on team schedules by mid-September. Because the procedure was not followed, the MIAA imposed forfeits on the schools that did not follow the rule. Under the MIAA's ruling, Minnechaug and Monson, which had soccer teams in the Western Mass. tournaments, would have to take

losses affecting their standing for the state tournament. If the schools won, they were still able to advance in the tournaments. Monson girls soccer reached the Western Mass. finals. Pathfinder boys soccer did as well. Minnechaug girls soccer made it to the semifinals.

An injunction was filed by Monson and Minnechaug, seeking to not have the athletes punished for an administrative issue. Judge Tracy Duncan granted the injunction, and both schools had their forfeits changed to whatever their actual results were.

Minnechaug boys soccer benefited the most from the change, securing the No. 5 seed in the Division 2 state tournament. The changes had the ability to affect schools such as Agawam, Ludlow, Holyoke, and Chicopee Comprehensive in Division 2. Monson's injunction affected seedings for schools such as Granby, Quaboag, Palmer, and Pathfinder.

Pathfinder did not appeal to a court, and was defeated on the road in the first round of the tournament.

The injunctions also led to delays in the state tournament starting in the case of field hockey and girls volleyball.

Northampton and Pioneer Valley Regional also won injunctions, though the MIAA is appealing those rulings. They are appealing despite the fact the tournaments have already concluded. The MIAA is not commenting on the court cases.

No schools from Western Massachusetts made it to the state finals in boys soccer, girls soccer, or field hockey.

Tough start hurts Railers in loss

PORTLAND, ME – Worcester was outshot in a fateful and fatal first period, 21-1, and outscored by the Maine Mariner 4-0, on the way to a 5-2 defeat.

Lincoln Hatten and Cole Donhauser had the Railers goals. It was the first ECHL goal for Hatten, the first in a Worcester uniform for Donhauser. It was also shorthanded.

Drew Bavaro, Patrick Guay, Bennett Stockdale, Wyllum Deveaux and Evan Vierling had the Portland goals. Former Railers forward Jimmy Lambert had three assists for the winners.

Hatten scored from in close at 3:35 of the second period to make it a 4-1 game, Donhauser assisting. Donhauser scored unassisted with a wrist shot from the right wing at 19:29 of the third period to make it 5-2. He was plus-2 for the night.

Henrik Tikkanen made 33 saves for Worcester. Ryan Bischel had 27 for the Mariners.

Bavaro opened the scoring with a power play goal at 6:30 of the first period, just before the Railers would have gotten Jordan Kaplan out of the penalty box. He snapped a 40-foot wrist home from above the circles.

Guay made it 2-0 at 9:02. He finished off a 2 on 1 break, converting a pass from Lambert. Stockdale scored a little more than a minute later with a shot from the left circle. Deveaux scored on a deflection at 16:23 to make it 4-0 on the scoreboard.

The Railers actually won the last 40 minutes, 2-1. Vierling had the only Maine goal in that span, scoring on the power play at 16:40 of the third period, but there was no way Worcester could climb out of its early hole.



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Turley Editorial Coverage Policies

CALENDAR

This section is intended to promote "free" events or ones that directly affect a volunteer-driven organization that benefits the entire community. Paid events that are not deemed fund-raisers or benefits do not qualify. Non-charitable events that charge the public for profit are not allowed as we consider that paid advertising. Deadlines vary with each individual newspaper, look inside for your deadline. We usually print one week in advance of an event, and the listings should be brief, with only time, date, location, brief activity explanation, and contact info. The best thing to do is emulate a calendar listing you like that already appeared in the paper. Each editor directly manages and edits all of the calendar entries. Artwork or photos to compliment your calendar listings are always welcomed.

EDUCATION

We try to be inside our public schools on a weekly basis, both in terms of sports coverage and classroom features. Our education and sports sections run 52 weeks per year. We feel school coverage is probably the single largest reflection of the communities we serve, so this paper is committed to having a strong presence there. We devote more staff and space to these sections than any other editorial realm. We do print free courtesy stories, briefs and photos submitted by teachers, sports teams and students, as we cannot possibly be at every event. If you have a photo you want to run, please include a photo caption identifying those in the image from left to right and a description of the event. Please call or e-mail the editor directly with your school event coverage requests at least three days in advance. If we can't attend, you are always encouraged to send in your own write-up and photos.

NEWS & FEATURES

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

BUSINESS

Turley Publications is liberal with regard to its business coverage policies, but we do have some standards folks need to understand. First, local businesses and merchants are just as much institutions in our towns as the library and schools. Without them, there are no towns.

We will feature coverage of local businesses that are new, have a major expansion, moving, closing, under new management or ownership, celebrating a milestone anniversary, or have been thrust into the news realm. Merchants can request that coverage through the editor, or for our existing advertising clients, through their ad representatives.

OPINION

We love letters to the editor and guest columns. It is what the soul of this newspaper is all about. However, we don't print what we can't prove. All letters and columns must be signed and confirmed by us prior to publication. If you are alleging things that we cannot prove, we will consider that a news tip and look into it. We always encourage readers to celebrate their communities versus just slamming them. We also pen a weekly "editorial." Some readers confuse editorials with being objective "news." Our unsigned editorials are opinions formed after doing the research, or com-

plied through our reporters' stories and other means. We then write opinions, which do take a definitive side on issues. Editorials are not meant to be balanced to both sides like our news stories should. They are intended to opine around the facts and take a position. That's the whole point of the "opinion" page.

PEOPLE/MILESTONE NEWS

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

SPORTS

Our sports editor and his reporters and photographers cover select varsity school games weekly as well as youth and adult sports leagues. Our team tries to be fair and spread the coverage around to all the teams, but as playoffs approach, teams making the playoffs take more precedence. We have tried hard this year to expand our coverage of youth sports, but we need coaches and players to send in their photos and write-ups.



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FAIR | FROM PAGE 1

own. The booth consisted of handmade dolls, covers, aprons, and clothing protectors for adults and kids.

MacMaster has been crafting dolls for over 40 years and it is a hobby she enjoys.

"It's been my niche for a long time," MacMaster said.

The library has a fun story time program on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. where kids get stories read to them by MacMaster herself. Story time also features an additional reading session at 11:30 a.m. and the library will have a few stories and at least one craft designed for the next age up.

The library has a lot in store for the holidays, including the mitten tree. The library will once again collect new mittens, hats, gloves, and scarves.

The library also collects non-perishable food and personal items. Please bring new, unexpired items to the library during their regular hours. Personal items can include items such as shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap,

laundry detergent, toilet paper, diapers, wipes, deodorant, barrettes, hair ties, socks, reusable plastic containers for food, aluminum foil, plastic wrap, trash bags, dish soap, and more. The collected items will be distributed to local families and individuals in need.

The East Brookfield Public Library puts out a new newsletter every three months. The next newsletter will be released in December. The library offers a wide range of books, audiobooks, movies and programs. Visit the East Brookfield Public Library at 122 Connie Mack Drive.

Santa Claus will pay a visit to the library on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 10:30 a.m. Be sure to bring your own camera to have your picture taken with Santa Claus.

For more, visit the Facebook page of the East Brookfield Public Library. Library hours are Monday from 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Tuesday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Thursday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.



Carolann MacMaster, right, is shown alongside Mia during the craft fair. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



Clothing protectors with all themes and sizes were available at the library's craft fair.



This beautifully designed quilt hangs above the front desk of the East Brookfield Public Library.



Raffle prizes and a donation box to help support the library's playground fund.



BABY'S FIRST CHRISTMAS



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January 25, 2023
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Deadline for photos and forms is Monday, December 16, 2024

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Long piece of squared timber
5. Emaciation
10. "Bewitched" boss Larry
14. Combining form meaning "different"
15. Current unit equal to 10 amperes
16. Older
17. Large, stocky lizard
18. Ringworm
19. Actor Pitt
20. Indian hand clash cymbals
22. Data at rest
23. Jeweled headdress
24. Indicators of when stories were written
27. Check
30. Cigarette (slang)
31. Arctic explorers (abbr.)
32. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
35. Delivered a speech
37. A place to bathe
38. Postmen deliver it
39. Surface in geometry

CLUES DOWN

41. ___ and Venzetti
42. Exclamation at the end of a prayer
43. Hawaiian dish
44. Aggressively proud men
45. Fellow
46. Mark Wahlberg comedy
47. Mock
48. When you expect to get somewhere
49. Songs
52. Pair of small hand drums
55. Play
56. Sword
60. Evergreens and shrubs genus
61. Filmed
63. Italian Seaport
64. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
65. Pores in a leaf
66. U. of Miami mascot is one
67. Snake-like fishes
68. Pretended to be
69. Body part

CLUES DOWN

1. Piece of felted material
2. Ancient Greek City
3. Aquatic plant
4. Potentially harmful fungus (Brit. sp.)
5. Body art (slang)
6. One who follows the rules
7. Ordinary
8. Honorably retired from assigned duties and retaining one's title
9. Relaxing space
10. Japanese socks
11. Indian city
12. Rip
13. Icelandic book
21. Satisfies
23. Where golfers begin
25. Small amount
26. Snag
27. Determine the sum of
28. A distinctive smell
29. Exposed to view
32. Stain or blemish
33. Small loop in embroidery
34. River herring genus

CLUES DOWN

36. Large beer
37. Deep, red-brown sea bream
38. Partner to cheese
40. At a deliberate pace
41. Gurus
43. Of each
44. Angry
46. Popular beverage
47. Flower cluster
49. Blocks
50. Those who benefitted from efforts of relatives (slang)
51. Polio vaccine developer
52. A (usually) large and scholarly book
53. Popular soap ingredient
54. NBAer Bradley
57. Popular movie about a pig
58. Musician Clapton
59. Not a sure thing
61. Recipe measurement (abbr.)
62. Father

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- public safety -

'Operation Safe Campus' aims to keep students safe from alcohol-related harm

BOSTON – The Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission, under the direction of State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg, implemented Operation Safe Campus in September.

The annual program is designed to target underage drinking on college campuses and in surrounding communities when students return to colleges and universities throughout Massachusetts. The goal of the program is to keep alcoholic beverages out of the hands of underage students and prevent tragedies.

"Operation Safe Campus helps to start the school year right. It is important to remind college students, servers, and sellers alike the true danger of underage drinking," said Goldberg, who oversees the ABCC. "We want to increase awareness and avoid tragedies before they happen while protecting minors and their families from experiencing serious consequences."

During the run of the program, approximately 157 cases of beer and 153 bottles of alcohol were confiscated by Investigators, preventing delivery to an estimated 2,100 underage individuals. Operation Safe Campus enforcement efforts found:

- 302 minors in possession, transporting or attempting to purchase alcoholic beverages,
- 21 adults procuring alcohol for minors, and
- 108 individuals in possession of false identification.

"This operation focuses on the immediate safety of Massachusetts college students and the surrounding communities while drawing attention to the dangers of underage drinking," said Jean Lorizio, chairperson of the ABCC. "We want to make sure that underage people are aware that drinking alcohol can have devastating consequences upon them and those they love."

Enforcement efforts focus primarily

on the parking lots and surrounding streets of liquor stores and bars that have had significant problems with underage individuals purchasing alcoholic beverages with false identification or through adults buying alcoholic beverages for them. In Worcester, ABCC Investigators worked in partnership with the Worcester Police Department's Alcohol Enforcement Unit.

Several bars and liquor stores will face charges related to the sale to, or possession of, alcoholic beverages by individuals under the age of 21. The businesses include McGovern's Package Store, Broadway Wine & Liquors, Creed, Ju's and White Eagle of Worcester; Teele Square Liquors and The Pub of Somerville; Uptown Tap & Grille of Amherst, Scott's Fine Wines & Spirits of Easton; Chansky's, Quick Pick Convenience, Bijou and Two Saints of Boston.

Annually, approximately 1,519 college students between the ages of 18 to 24 die from alcohol-related injuries, including motor vehicle crashes, 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking, and 14 percent of college students meet the criteria for an alcohol use disorder. In Massachusetts alone, the overall annual cost of alcohol abuse by youth is estimated at \$1.4 billion.

In addition, Massachusetts IM-PACT impaired driving data shows that 10% of all traffic fatalities involve drivers under the age of 21.

Massachusetts is among the top ten states for binge drinking, with more than 1 in 4 (27.75%) adults ages 18 or older reporting they binged on alcohol in 2020.

Among young people ages 12 to 20, 20.77% reported alcohol use in the past month and 11.81% reported binge alcohol use in the past month in Massachusetts. The national averages were 17.32% and 10.14%, respectively.

East Brookfield Police Log

During the week of Sept. 30-Oct. 12, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 193 building/property checks, 71 directed area patrols, 18 traffic controls, eight radar assignments, 15 emergency 911 calls, 20 citizen assists, 12 assist other agencies, four fires, two investigations, one motor vehicle investigation, one trespass, two complaints, four motor vehicle accidents, one larceny/theft/shoplifting, one harassment, two animal calls and 25 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, Sept. 30

- 9:29 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Written Warning
- 11:11 a.m. Radar, East Main Street, Citation Issued
- 1:56 p.m. Fire/Illegal Burn, Podunk Road, Extinguished
- 2:22 p.m. Assist Citizen, Podunk Road, Officer Handled

Tuesday, Oct. 1

- 1:04 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Route 49, Officer Handled
- 3:27 p.m. Assist Citizen, East Main Street, Services Rendered
- 5:35 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
- 6:02 p.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, East Main Street, Officer Handled
- 7:04 p.m. Assist Citizen, Howe Street, Officer Handled

Wednesday, Oct. 2

- 7:01 a.m. Investigation, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
- 8:12 a.m. 911 Fire Alarm, East Main Street, Services Rendered
- 12:25 p.m. Assist Citizen, Hodgkins Drive, Services Rendered
- 1:52 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Podunk Road, Officer Handled
- 3:45 p.m. Assist Citizen, Route 49, Officer Handled
- 4:24 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident, West Main Street, Report Taken
- 6:23 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Unknown Location, Merge

Thursday, Oct. 3

- 9:02 a.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, Unknown Location, Officer Handled
- 9:13 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Blaine Avenue, Officer Handled
- 10:09 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Route 49, Officer Handled
- 1:16 p.m. 911 Animal Call, West Sturbridge Road, Officer Handled
- 1:35 p.m. Assist Citizen, Unknown Location, Dispatch Handled
- 2:55 p.m. Assist Other Agency, East Main Street, Officer Handled
- 9:32 p.m. Assist Citizen, East Main Street, Services Rendered

Friday, Oct. 4

- 11 a.m. Assist Citizen, Hodgkins Drive, Officer Handled
- 1:15 p.m. Assist Citizen, Hodgkins Drive, Negative Contact
- 2:29 p.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Route 9, Negative Contact
- 4:33 p.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Spoken To
- 4:57 p.m. Assist Citizen, Hodgkins Drive, Services Rendered
- 4:59 p.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Services Rendered
- 5:23 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Haywood Drive, Officer Handled

9:57 p.m. 911 Disabled Motor Vehicle, Adams Road, Verbal Only

Saturday, Oct. 5

- 10:16 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
- 4:59 p.m. Investigation, West Main Street, Officer Handled
- 9:14 p.m. Complaint, Dunn Brook Road, Services Rendered

Sunday, Oct. 6

- 12:42 p.m. Assist Citizen, West Sturbridge Road, Officer Handled
- 1:56 p.m. 911 Fire/Illegal Burn, East Main Street, Extinguished
- 6:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued

Monday, Oct. 7

- 2:41 p.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, North Brookfield Road, Transported to Hospital
- 4:31 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
- 5:06 p.m. Utility Issues, East Main Street, Services Rendered
- 5:43 p.m. 911 Welfare Check, West Main Street, Transported to Hospital

Tuesday, Oct. 8

- 5:46 p.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, West Main Street, Report Taken
- 9:28 a.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Services Rendered
- 11:40 a.m. Larceny/Theft/Shoplifting, Blaine Avenue, Services Rendered
- 2:27 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Dispatch Handled
- 8:19 p.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Peace Restored
- 8:44 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Podunk Road, Transported to Hospital

Wednesday, Oct. 9

- 8:12 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Faith Drive, Transported to Hospital
- 12:18 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Voice Message Left
- 2:40 p.m. Investigation, West Main Street, Services Rendered
- 4:15 p.m. Trespass, Rail Trail, Served in Hand
- 8:11 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Howe Street, Transported to Hospital

Thursday, Oct. 10

- 6:19 a.m. Assist Other Agency, East Main Street, Officer Handled
- 12:35 p.m. Harassment, Connie Mack Drive, Report Taken
- 4:04 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Spoken To
- 5:59 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Written Warning
- 10:39 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled

Friday, Oct. 11

- 3:26 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, North Street, Transported to Hospital
- 3:27 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Out of Town, Dispatch Handled
- 6:30 p.m. 911 Fire/Auto, Route 49, Transported to Hospital

Saturday, Oct. 12

- 12:01 a.m. Assist Other Agency, East Main Street, Negative Contact
- 10:59 a.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Services Rendered
- 2:56 p.m. 911 Fire/Other, Podunk Road, Services Rendered

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- 1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

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Volume 18, Number 1

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