

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Quaboag Current
Newspaper

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A TURLEY PUBLICATION
www.turley.com

Volume 17, Number 2

Friday, December 8, 2023

White Christmas in West Brookfield

Annual event spreads holiday cheer throughout community

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD—As Sunday, December 3, dawned, it looked like the weekend of wet weather was continuing for the annual White Christmas in West Brookfield celebration.

No matter, the town has grown this 31-year tradition and a few (well, more than a few) drops of rain were not going to stop the day's festivities.

The Town Hall's Great Hall started the day with a concert for kids by the Toe Jam Puppet Band. Tom Poitras and Vinnie Lovegrove Brought Toe Jam up from New Bedford and the band was a hit with the younger set.

Also, for kids in the great hall, they could have pictures taken with Santa and decorate gingerbread houses.

Businesses and homes could put out flags signifying an open house, and many did. Moving east on Main Street, we entered West Brookfield Art and Frame presided over by its impresario, Rebecca Fay.

Art and Frame is, as its name implies, a center of artistic works and framing. Twen-

See HOLIDAY | PAGE 12



The tree is lit on the West Brookfield Common during the town's annual White Christmas celebration. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY



Aria Martin posed for a photo with Santa Claus, sporting her "crazy hat." Martin won second place in the Crazy Christmas Hat Contest. TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE

Santa Claus comes to town

BROOKFIELD — Santa Claus made his way to the Common on the back of a fire truck, his presence announced by a fanfare of flashing lights and sirens and paradegoers decked out in festive Christmas attire.

A number of parade participants sported their Crazy Christmas hats, as they joined the man in red at the gazebo to light the town's Christmas tree and sing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town".

See SANTA | PAGE 8

The Nutcracker: A Classic Tale for Modern Times

Barre Players and Next Step Studio team up for holiday performance

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

BARRE — The Barre Players Theater and Next Step Studio of the Performing Arts have teamed up to present one of the most beloved and cherished traditions of the holiday season, with a weekend full of performances of "The Nutcracker".

"The Nutcracker: A Classic Tale for Modern Times" will be performed at the Barre Players Theater, 64 Common St., for four performances. Dates include Friday, Dec. 8 at 7 p.m.;

Saturday, Dec. 9 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 10 at 2 p.m.

Both matinee performances are already sold out, so make sure to reserve your tickets for the evening performances by visiting barreplayerstheater.com. Tickets are \$17 each.

This is no ordinary performance of the classic Russian ballet; it features a modern and creative twist that is sure to entertain audience members of all ages.

Director and choreographer Hannah Hall said this is her fourth year leading the ballet, which features a mix of community members and dancers from her studio, Next Step Studio of the Performing Arts, which is located near the the-

See NUTCRACKER | PAGE 7

Church welcomes new pastor with open arms

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer

STURBRIDGE — The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale had a busy weekend and after hosting a wonderful Christmas craft fair, they welcomed and ordained their dear friend Pastor David Cote.

See PASTOR | PAGE 2

School district prepares to finalize strategic plan

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD — Superintendent Timothy McCormick provided an overview of the school district's strategic planning, which is set to start in 2024-2025 and run for three school years.

"We did this work now, so that by the end of this school year, our two building principals could take this infor-

mation, use this information, to work on their school plans so we're all on the same page working cohesively for the start of 2024-2025 school year," he said at the School Committee's Nov. 20 meeting.

McCormick said a committee of 18 people, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, School Committee members met for three planning sessions with the guidance of a leadership team.

See SCHOOL | PAGE 15



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- community -

Library to hold 'Feliz Naviduckie' soap making workshop

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Haston Free Public Library will be offering a “Feliz Naviduckie” soap making workshop for children ages 8+ on Saturday, Dec. 16 from 10-11 a.m., hosted by Gariné Arakelian of Kulina Folk Arts.

This event is free to attend. Participants will get to make their own soap creations using glycerin based soap and adding colors and scents, topped with an

adorable festive rubber ducky. These are perfect to give as gifts (or to keep for yourself).

Children must be 8 or older to participate and must be accompanied by an adult. No admission will be allowed after initial instructions are given, due to safety reasons.

Although this is primarily a children's workshop, adults are encouraged to sign up too.

Arakelian has developed youth art pro-

grams for the Worcester and Fitchburg art museums, and the Worcester Center for Crafts. She hosts many different creative workshops in the area including soap and candle making, painting, paper crafts, and skin care.

To register for this event, please call the library at 508-867-0208 or email Youth Services Librarian Brianna Lamb at blamb@cwmars.org. Space is limited.



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PASTOR | FROM PAGE 1

The American Baptist Churches of America joined the service to show their support for Cote and many denominations were represented including Methodist, Unitarian, and more.

Reverend Michael Harvey came to the podium to give advice and words of encouragement to Cote and the members of the church in this season of advent.

After lighting the hope candle, Harvey turned to Cote and said, “This is your challenge, David, to work with the people of the church to bring hope to this world.”

The service focused on the ideas of hope for the present and hope for the future as the congregation trusts in God and thanks Him for Cote's willingness to come forward in service to the congregation, as well as the community.

Cote's passion is to help the community, and the offering given at the service went to the newcomers to the town of Sturbridge to help support our newest neighbors.

“It's not the big things in this world that will make a difference,” Cote said. “But in the little things. Keep the hope, keep the faith, and love one another. I am looking forward to helping people



Pastor David Cote receives his certificate from Reverend Diane Badger. TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS

and making a difference in peoples' lives.”

The church opens its arms to all during this season, and beyond, and wants to be a place of hope, safety, and security to all who walk through its doors.

The congregation celebrated afterwards with food and fellowship at The Barn at Wight Farm, eating food, and looking forward to the future with hope.

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

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- community -

Peppermints, crafts and charity giving

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer

BROOKFIELD – The Quaboag Church hosted the Peppermint Christmas Vendor & Craft Fair, filled with creative artists with anything on their tables from Christmas ornaments to cups to crochet work to jewelry.

The church has held annual craft fairs for the past 13 years and Donna Bracken and Terri McIsaac have worked together to bring these fairs to life since year one.

“My favorite part is all the members of the church coming together,” McIsaac said. Every year, the church supplies food, and vendors donate one item from their tables towards a raffle.

At every craft fair, the church takes all proceeds (both from reserving a spot and the raffle) and donates the money to a charity. This year, the church selected St. Luke’s Guesthouse, located in Sturbridge.

The church loves the craft fairs, and loves the fellowship they get to have with the people who come in to get Christmas presents, and the vendors themselves.



Briera Busiere was busy covering her brother Bryson’s business selling maple products and candies with her friend, Grace Ward. TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS



Ronnie Newton is shown with his stunning leatherwork, featuring purses, bags, dragon hair holders and dragon keychains.



Nikki Smith, a returning vendor, sold her beautiful jewelry and hand-made treasures.

‘Creepy Christmas’ comes to West Brookfield with Jeff Belanger

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Thursday, Dec. 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library, 3 West Main St., join Jeff Belanger as he presents “Creepy Christmas”, which is based on Belanger’s New England Legends “Creepy Christmas” special that aired on PBS and his latest book “The Right Before Christmas”.

Remember the famous Christmas song which goes, “There’ll be scary ghost stories and tales of the glories of Christmases long, long ago”? So, what happened to the scary stories?

Belanger brings the spooky back to the yuletide time of year with Creepy Christmas. From the origins of the holiday to the monsters like Krampus, the Belsnickel, and Gryla, to the ghosts that lurk in the red and green shadows, Belanger will take you on a multi-media journey of this haunting holiday.

This program is not suitable for young children. Please stop by the library or call 508-867-1410 to register.

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- opinion -



Seventy-five years and going strong

I was opening the curtains in my bedroom this morning to find that my Babci's Christmas cactus had burst into bloom!

How exciting for an indoor plant to live for seven plus decades, never mind that the last two have been under my care. It's no secret that I am not an indoor plant aficionado, but I do have my favorites, and this is one of them.

Read on to learn about this beloved plant, straight from the archives.

One horticulture related Christmas memories involves my mother's Christmas cactus. I remember the arching, woody stemmed plant on an iron stand in her bedroom; before that it lived in my Babci's house.

Every year, just in time for the holiday, it would flower, putting on quite a show, beautiful and exotic in hot fuchsia-pink.

Today, only five original branches remain. But if you look closely within the base of the plant, you'll see lots of new growth.

Perhaps if I follow the advice, I have outlined below this heirloom will be blooming in the home of my future grandchildren!

The Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) is an epiphyte, native to South America where it happily grows hanging from trees in the jungle. Inside, it prefers a location with indirect light. Positioning it in front of a north or east facing window is best.

During the summer months many people prefer to move the plant outdoors. I have had good luck placing it under the shade of a tree; too much sun will burn its leaves.

When night temperatures begin to dip into the forties it is time to bring the Christmas cactus indoors. Gradually acclimatize the plant to its winter home by increasing the number of hours spent inside each day.

It is very important that the Christmas cactus be planted in a well-drained growing medium. For this reason, either coarse sand or perlite should be added to any homemade potting soil.

A recipe that combines equal parts of either of these along with garden loam and leaf mold or compost should work out just fine. Christmas cactus like to be somewhat pot bound, but if the plant has been growing in the same pot for several years its soil is likely exhausted of nutrients.

Repot by gently teasing away some of the soil from the plant's roots. Replace it with the new soil mixture. Choose a pot that is a single size bigger than the existing root ball, or reuse the old pot.

Many people hear "cactus" and think that the plant is drought tolerant. With the Christmas cactus this is only partly true.

Although its leaves are succulent and can retain a fair amount of water, it is not a true cactus. As a general rule you should water Christmas cactus when the potting soil is dry to the touch.

Adequate moisture is especially necessary during the spring when it begins its growth and once buds are set. A diluted amount of liquid fertilizer can be added then as well, especially if the soil hasn't been refreshed in many years.

When the plant is done flowering, it will go into a period of rest; almost no water is necessary for nearly two months. Just prior to bud set it will rest again but this time the soil shouldn't dry out completely.

See GARDEN | PAGE 5



Column

The community college option

By Eric Goodhart

This is the first of six articles that address the characteristics of the community colleges in western Massachusetts.

With the annual cost of private and state colleges costing in 2023 up to \$85,000 and \$39,000 respectively, families are looking at ways to save money. Community colleges are challenged to meet the need of those students, who are looking at the CC option.

Some do it better than others. The question is, which CC is better equipped to support and prepare a teenager through two years and matriculate with the transferable credits to qualify as a junior at a four-year institution, private or public?

Many people think of a community college as the next step in post high school education either to lead to training in a vocation requiring an Associate of Arts degree, a certification for a job or matriculation to a four-year state or private college. That, in fact, has been the case for thousands of Massachusetts students since 1960.

That was the year Berkshire Community College was opened. It was the very first CC in the Commonwealth.

One does not have to look far to find data ranking four-year colleges in the US. In fact, the pioneer of such research was the US News & World Report in 1983.

That turned into being a huge money maker for the publisher. So much so, that many other magazines got into the ranking business.

But because community colleges are largely drawing students from drivable distances there has been no such ranking for CCs.

This article and those that follow do not attempt to rank the colleges in the manner of the above mentioned. The focus is on identifying the academic strengths of each college, particularly the particular departments for

which they are well known.

I look at the percentage of students that matriculate in two years to four-year colleges, public and private. From Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner to the Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield; both do very good jobs in the areas I highlight below.

I counsel a number of students around the country. The rising cost of four-year private and public colleges in California has risen so high that what was once an "open-door" policy for high school graduates into a CC is no longer guaranteed for any program at most of the CCs in that state.

The cost of living in California has made CCs the most economical option for many. Nothing to be embarrassed about.

Providing the even lower cost of a CC becomes a good return on investment.

Commonwealth CCs have not closed their doors except for students looking at training and certification in various health care fields such as nursing. That is the case at Mount Wachusett Community College and Greenfield Community College.

That does not mean, however, a student with aspirations to become a nurse cannot start at a CC. A good CC advisor, like the two CCs mentioned above, should be able to design a course plan for that student to earn admittance to the over enrolled more academic selective programs providing he or she has a strong academic outcome in the core courses.

Some areas a student and parents should research before enrolling are these. Request a meeting with a counselor, who has at least four years' experience as an academic and career advisor at that college or elsewhere.

Most CCs have less than 30% of full-time students enrolled.

How long does it take to earn an AA or certificate in a particular vocational program?

See COLLEGE | PAGE 5



Greenfield Community College. PHOTO BY ERIC GOODHART

OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

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

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Quaboag Current Newspaper

COLLEGE | FROM PAGE 4

What are the transfer steps at the CC to make sure the courses taken are transferable?

If those basic steps are not satisfactory, check out another CC even if it means renting an apartment in that community. CCs should be able to suggest suitable, safe housing.

Living away from home while enrolled at a CC will help the student and parents see how ready he or she is to take on the responsibility to do the academic work in class; wash their clothes in a timely manner and even take on a part time job.

In a prior column I spoke about why college is so expensive. Besides starting a dollar cost average saving plan for college when the student is still in the womb, dual enrollment can be a very good option.

It will get the student out of the high school where in too many cases, the expectations and grade inflation have not truly prepared many high school graduates for college level work.

I once interviewed a Yale professor

who told me candidly that in the last 15 years, he could not understand how some of his students were admitted. They could not put a cogent paragraph together in class.

There are also excellent four-year colleges that offer online courses to anyone with a desire to learn. Hillsdale College is one of those colleges. Ideally, many colleges with the exception of the Ivy League and its ilk may give college credit for such courses.

College Level Examination Program is another often forgotten option. At the very least it will demonstrate to the college admissions committee, that the student has taken the initiative and has the "intellectual curiosity" to do more than meet the basic requirements to graduate. More specifics on each of the Commonwealth's western CCs will come beginning next week.

Editor's note: People may email questions to edowner@turley.com.

GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

Two environmental factors are responsible for coaxing a plant into bloom. The first is temperature and the second is light.

If temperatures at night range between 55 and 60 degrees for a six week period, the plant will set buds regardless of day length. If temperatures run higher than that, thirteen hours of uninterrupted darkness will bring about buds.

Simply put the plant to bed each night from 6 p.m.-8a.m. until buds form. My luck has been temperature related; because I leave the plants outside until early fall its temperature requirements are met and I am delighted with blooms come Christmas time.

If your plant sets buds and then drops them prior to full bloom it is likely due to overwatering or exposure. For this reason, keep it away from drafty

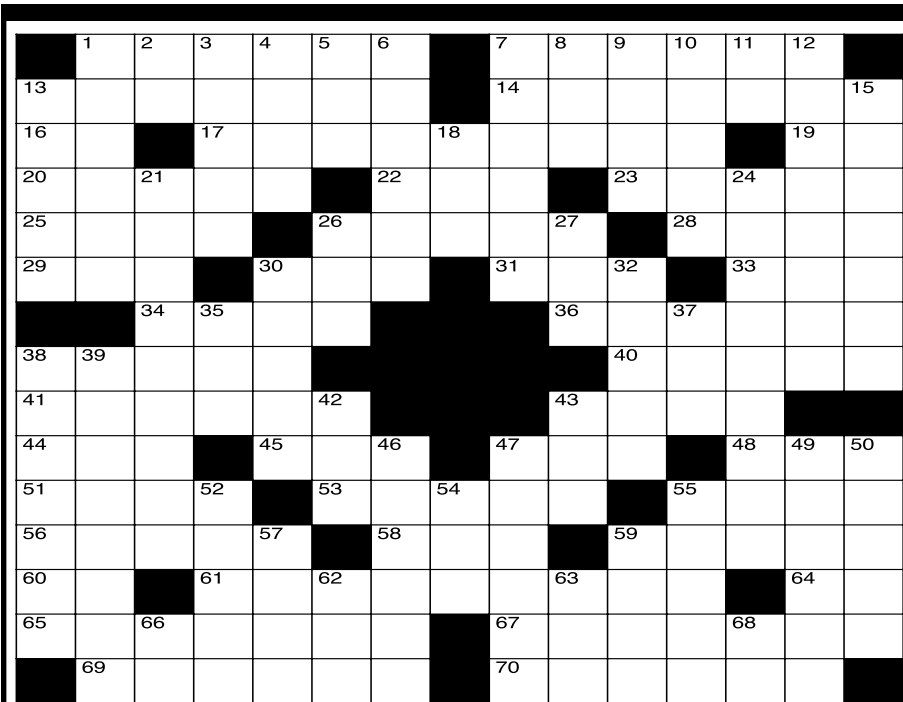
windows, doorways or radiators.

If you don't already own Christmas cactus, consider purchasing one this holiday. Better yet, start a plant.

Simply get a leaf - no longer than two or three segments, from a friend. They are easy to root in regular potting soil.

Two or three of these per four inch pot is perfect. By year two you should be delighted with some beautiful flowers and maybe the start of your own family tradition.

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



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Spiritual leaders
- 7. Salt
- 13. Fortified wine
- 14. Edible mollusk
- 16. It begins with them
- 17. A way to compare
- 19. Governmentt lawyer
- 20. Back parts
- 22. 8th month (abbr.)
- 23. Very willing
- 25. ___ ex machina
- 26. Satisfies
- 28. Quebec river
- 29. A doctrine
- 30. Popular pickup truck
- 31. Dekagram
- 33. Naturally occurring solid material
- 34. Company officer
- 36. Villains
- 38. Cricket frogs
- 40. German founder of psychology
- 41. Endured
- 43. A female domestic

CLUES DOWN

- 44. A "place" to avoid
- 45. Cigarette (slang)
- 47. Canadian politician Josephine
- 48. French ballet/ acting dynasty
- 51. Employee stock ownership plan
- 53. Belonging to the bottom
- 55. Sound
- 56. Yankees' slugger Judge
- 58. Dickens character
- 59. More wise
- 60. Flash memory card
- 61. Exposing human vice or folly to ridicule
- 64. Atomic #79
- 65. Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
- 67. Humor
- 69. Shawl
- 70. Preliminary assessment of patients

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Animal disease
- 2. Commercial
- 3. Craft supply
- 4. Storage units
- 5. Investment vehicle
- 6. Colorado Heisman winner
- 7. In a way, sank
- 8. Post-birth brain damage (abbr.)
- 9. Lay about
- 10. Intestinal
- 11. The opposite of yes
- 12. Caused to be loved
- 13. Messianic in Islamic eschatology
- 15. Showing since conviction
- 18. Not safe
- 21. The number above the line in a fraction
- 24. Yard invader
- 26. Pouch
- 27. Swedish krona
- 30. Start anew
- 32. While white or

- yellow flower
- 35. Fourteen
- 37. Graphical user interface
- 38. Up-to-date on the news
- 39. Campaigns
- 42. Touch softly
- 43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
- 46. Violent seizure of property
- 47. One who supports the Pope
- 49. Anxiety
- 50. Body fluid
- 52. Phony person
- 54. Title of respect
- 55. Chilean city
- 57. City in central Japan
- 59. Silk garment
- 62. Draw from
- 63. Automobile
- 66. Man
- 68. Legal bigwig (abbr.)



This holiday season, protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID & the FLU!

Holiday gatherings are starting up, which means it's time to prevent the spread of germs by getting vaccinated!

The Flu and Covid vaccines are safe and effective for ages six months and older, and can help protect you from serious illness.

Healthy Quaboag is here to remind you to take care of yourself and those around you by getting vaccinated ahead of the holiday season, because YOU MATTER!

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- sturbridge -

Federated Church held annual Holly Berry Fair

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer

STURBRIDGE – The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale held its annual Holly Berry Fair with many crafters both a part of the church, the senior center, and more.

Nancy Castendyk and Janet Rae-Sinanian ran the fair this year, and they loved every minute of it. Both are members of the church and sing in the choir; their love for people and their church inspiring them.

“The best part is getting to know the vendors and

showing off what they make is wonderful,” Castendyk said. “We have a lot of returning vendors.”

Castendyk creates early American dolls which she sells to Old Sturbridge Village and has been making and selling them for 25 years now.

Bonnie Fancy has been attending the fair for the past five years (with the exception of 2020 at the beginning of COVID) out of the 11 years the church has hosted them.

The church will continue to host more and more of these fairs in the years to come.



Bonnie Fancy shows her beautifully created sweaters, scarves and more at the Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale's Holly Berry Fair. TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS



Natasha Lester and her business, “Beads by Tea,” sold her beautiful jewelry.



Mother and daughter pair, Dee Wilson and Mona Rudolph with their adorable handmade Christmas décor.

Coming events at Joshua Hyde Public Library

STURBRIDGE – There is a lot going on in the Joshua Hyde Public Library.

Construction has begun to replace the HVAC system, however, the building is still open and staff are available to help you find whatever it is you might need. Stop in or call the library at 508-347-2512 with questions.

December Book Groups and Events:

Monday, Dec. 11, at 7 p.m. - Virtual ~ Holiday Romance Book Recommendations with Booklist Reviewer John Charles.

John Charles will give us his “best of” list of 2023 that will have everyone’s TBR pile tipping over and the holidays spent cozying up to a good book. A list of titles will be sent out after the session.

This program is sponsored and being shared by the Friends of the Ashland Public Library. Registration is required.

Afternoon Book Group - Tuesday, Dec. 12, at 1 p.m. at the Town Hall - Julian Room. Exploring the importance of place. This month’s book is “Small Things Like These” by Claire Keegan.

Please go to the library’s website at sturbridgeli-brary.org for more details about events and updates on the HVAC construction project.

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NUTCRACKER | FROM PAGE 1

ater.
 “It’s been really nice,” Hall said of directing and choreographing “The Nutcracker”.

Hall has been a dancer since 2004 and began teaching in 2010, later opening her own dance studio in Barre.

Being able to combine performers from the community and her dance troupe in one production is something “kind of rare,” Hall said, adding that it has been a wonderful experience.

“The dance company has worked very hard on their techniques,” Hall said. “The ballet leads have been studying ballet for years. It takes a ton of time and effort to get en pointe.”

Performing “The Nutcracker” can be a challenge, Hall said, as it doesn’t have a script, and she’s had to read the story and talk the dancers through the plot to help them bring their characters to life on stage.

Taking on the lead role of Clara is Anna Metcalf of New Braintree. A freshman at Quabbin Regional High School, Metcalf has been dancing at Next Step Studio of the Performing Arts since the studio first opened 10 years ago.

Metcalf’s interest in dance was piqued after taking a class at the Listening Wellness Center, and now she takes classes with Hall four days a week, covering almost all genres. Metcalf is also in her fourth year on Next Step’s competition team.

This is Metcalf’s second time performing in “The Nutcracker” and she is “really excited” to play the role of Clara.

“To be able to do such a big role feels really amazing,” Metcalf said. “It’s a lot more acting than I’ve been doing in past dances.”

Joining Metcalf as a lead is Fred Schaaf of Wheelwright as The Nutcracker Prince. A junior at Quabbin Regional High School, Schaaf has been dancing since he was 8 years old, starting at Next Step the first year the studio opened.

Schaaf said he likes to “try everything once,” and that applies to dance technique.

“Hip hop is my favorite type of dance,” Schaaf said.

This isn’t Schaaf first major role in a performance of “The Nutcracker”, having previously played the role of Fritz, Clara’s troublesome brother.

In playing the role of The Nutcracker Prince, Schaaf has discovered a newfound love for ballet, a genre of dance that he once considered to be a little boring.

“It’s a good way to express my new skills,” Schaaf said of his role. “I get to interact with a lot of characters.”

Playing the role of The Nutcracker Prince is a departure for many of Schaaf’s roles as a dancer, and he’s enjoyed exploring his character’s development.

“It’s a strong male character, which I don’t really have a lot of in dance. It’s also very militant,” Schaaf said. “I’m in ROTC and I get to do some of the steps on stage.”

Metcalf and Schaaf



Anna Metcalf and Fred Schaaf dance as Clara and The Nutcracker Prince in a recent performance of “The Nutcracker” at Hardwick Elementary School. A troupe of dancers toured the Quabbin Regional School District, performing in four of the elementary schools. TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA QUIMETTE



The Nutcracker Prince prepares to battle an army of mice.

both bring their theater experience to their roles in “The Nutcracker”, having performed in a number of stage productions.

Schaaf has been acting since he was 6 years old and has been in quite a few shows, and Metcalf had her start acting in The Gilbert Players production of “Matilda” as well as Quabbin’s productions of “Cinderella” and “The Wizard of Oz”.

Prior to the Thanksgiving break, 20 dancers from the cast of “The Nutcracker” toured four elementary schools across the Quabbin Regional School District, giving students an exclusive glimpse of some of the highlights of the ballet.

“It was really fun,” Metcalf said. “All of the children were so excited and that was probably my favorite part.”

Hall said bringing “The Nutcracker” to the students was a way to show them what the performing arts have to offer. Dance, theater and music all help children to work together collaboratively to solve problems, and it’s also a break from our technology driven world.

Metcalf said the arts also give children a safe environment just to be themselves.

“It’s finding a community beyond their home...its their second family,” Metcalf said. “It’s also a great way to express yourself and it just builds character in general.”

Schaaf said performing ballets such as “The Nutcracker” is a way to preserve history, and keep the stories alive.

“A lot of the arts have evolved and descended through history,” he said.

Schaaf and Metcalf encouraged everyone to come and see “The Nutcracker”, and enjoy the high level of talent the area has to offer at an affordable, community theater price.



The Sugar Plum Fairy dances en pointe.



The Nutcracker Prince and his toy soldiers use their hip hop moves to fight the Mouse King and his army.

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SANTA | FROM PAGE 1

After singing and grabbing a cup of hot chocolate and some cookies, children and adults lined up to share their Christmas wishes with Santa Claus, and receive a special treat.

Winners of the Brookfield Cultural Council's Crazy Christmas Hat Contest were announced, with first place going to Elsy Walton; second place, Aria Martin; and third place, Jeanne Lytle.

Next up for the Cultural Council is

the Holiday House Decorating Contest. Categories include White Lights, Multicolor Lights, Doorway, and Go Big or Don't Decorate Your Home! (which means anything goes).

You must enter by emailing your name, address and category to lytlej1234@gmail.com no later than Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 6 p.m. Judging will begin at 5 p.m., on Sunday, Dec. 17.



Maryellen Swanson and Aiden Swanson met with Santa Claus on the Brookfield Common to share their Christmas wishes. *TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE*



Children enjoyed hot chocolate and visiting with Santa Claus.



Richard and Susan Silva paid a visit to the North Pole's jolliest elf.



Santa Claus gets ready to light the Christmas tree on the Brookfield Common, while Jeanne Lytle sports her third place-winning Crazy Christmas hat.



Brookfield Fire Department's forestry truck was decked out in Christmas decorations to escort Santa Claus during the parade this past Sunday.



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SPORTS

Panthers preparing for regular season



BARRE – Last week, Quabbin girls basketball prepared for their regular season opener. The Panthers are set to begin playing on Monday, Dec. 11 against Worcester Tech. The game is home at 6:30 p.m. Quabbin also had a pair of scrimmages last week against Nashoba and Palmer.

Hannah Baxter sets the pick as Mia Ducos drives toward the basket. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RAY DUFFY



Riley Bassett reaches for the rebound with Hannah Baxter behind her.



Brooke Austin wrestles for the ball with Christiana Dunn looking on in the background.



Liana Leger with a jump shot.



Meg Doyle looks for an opening to pass inside the paint.

PVSOA presents year-end awards

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—The Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association (PVSOA), which was formed in 1946, held its annual banquet at the Polish American Citizens Club in Ludlow on Dec. 1.

One of the highlights of the evening was the buffet catered by Tony & Penny's Restaurant.

There was also an awards ceremony.

Ludlow junior Thomas Wadas is the 2023 George E. Russell Award (Boys Large School MCP award) winner.

“Thomas falls in line with all our former Ludlow players who have



Pathfinder's Riley Sanderson was the Small School MVP. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

Pathfinders boys basketball looks to season ahead



They faced Paulo Freire in last year's tournament.

PALMER – Pathfinder boys basketball continued preseason practices last week. The Pioneers had a scrimmage earlier this week and are scheduled to open up with Pioneer Valley Christian on Dec. 7. Their home opener is on Friday, Dec. 15 against Ludlow. Last year's team went 11-9 overall. They faced Paulo Freire, a team that no longer exists, in the state tournament last year. They were defeated by 71-36. Pathfinder hopes for another run in this year's state tournament as well as a shot at Western Mass.



Pathfinder has another week of practice before opening up the regular season.



Coach Zac Button gives his team some direction. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



The boys went 11-9 last year and made the state tournament.

won the George Russell Award,” said longtime Ludlow boys soccer coach Greg Kolodziej, who won his 200th career game this fall. “He’s a very talented player who has worked extremely hard to get what he has achieved.”

Wadas is the 24th Ludlow boys’ soccer player to receive the Russell award, which is named in memory of the former Ludlow High School principal, since 1965. The first Ludlow boys’ soccer player to win the prestigious award was Bob Duarte.

Wadas, who’s a three-year varsity starter, didn’t attend this year’s PVSOA banquet because the Ludlow High School soccer banquet was held on the same night.

In his first three seasons as a member of the varsity soccer team, Wadas, who’s a midfielder, scored 15 goals and 15 assists. He also helped the Lions (18-2-2) capture the Western Mass. Class A title for the third consecutive year. The Lions also competed in the Division 1 state tournament.

Pathfinder Tech senior Riley Sanderson received the Henry O. Holly/Dave Grieve (Boys Small School MVP award).

Quaboag 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Monday, Dec. 11	Home	Oxford	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 18	Away	Uxbridge	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 22	Away	Ayer Shirley	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Home	Bartlett	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6	Away	Mahar	1 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 8	Away	David Prouty	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Away	Southbridge	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Home	Douglas	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	Oxford	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Home	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 25	Away	Bartlett	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Away	Northbridge	6:30 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 4	Home	Ware	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Away	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Home	David Prouty	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Home	Southbridge	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 14	Home	Advance Math & Science	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 16	Away	University Park	6:30 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Thursday, Dec. 7	Away	Marlborough	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 9	Away	TBD	TBD
Monday, Dec. 11	Away	Oxford	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 18	Home	Uxbridge	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Away	TBD	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	Mahar	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 8	Away	David Prouty	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Home	South Hadley	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Home	Southbridge	6 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 18	Home	Oxford	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Away	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Home	Northbridge	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Away	Auburn	6:30 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 4	Home	Ware	1 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Home	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Home	David Prouty	7 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Away	Southbridge	6 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 19	Home	Millis	6:30 p.m.

Indoor Track (meets at Tantasqua)

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Away	Meet 1	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Away	Meet 2	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Away	Meet 3	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Away	Meet 4	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Meet 5	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Meet 6	5:30 p.m.

Pathfinder 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Thursday, Dec. 7	Away	Pioneer Valley Christian	7 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 11	Away	Mt. Everett	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Home	Ludlow	7 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Away	Gateway	7 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 28	Home	Palmer	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 2	Home	Smith Vocational	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Away	Hampden Charter	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Home	PVCIC	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Away	St. Mary's	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 18	Home	Pioneer Valley Christian	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Away	Duggan	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Away	Monson	7 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Home	Gateway	7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1	Away	Smith Vocational	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 5	Home	Hampden Charter	7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Away	PVCIC	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 13	Home	St. Mary's	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Monday, Dec. 11	Away	Baystate Academy	6 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 14	Home	Duggan	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Away	Smith Academy	6 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Away	Gateway	4 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	Mohawk	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Away	St. Mary's	6 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Home	Westfield Technical	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 8	Home	Hampden Charter	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Away	Sci-Tech	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Home	Hampden Charter	5:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	PVCIC	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Away	Duggan	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 25	Home	Smith Academy	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	Home	Gateway	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Home	St. Mary's	5:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 9	Away	Hampden Charter	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 13	Home	Sci-Tech	5 p.m.

Wrestling

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Away	Smith Vocational	6 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Home	Frontier	6:45 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Away	Northampton	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Away	Mohawk	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Gateway	7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 20	Away	Granby	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Duggan	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31	Away	Mahar	7 p.m.

Tantasqua 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Friday, Dec. 8	Home	Holyoke	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 11	Away	Auburn	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Home	Doherty	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 18	Home	Millbury	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Home	Minnechaug	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	Shepherd Hill	11:30 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Away	Grafton	3:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Away	Northbridge	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Home	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Home	Auburn	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Away	Millbury	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 25	Home	Grafton	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	Away	South	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Away	Belchertown	7 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 5	Home	Arlington	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Home	Northbridge	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Away	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 15	Away	Nashoba	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Friday, Dec. 8	Away	Holyoke	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 11	Home	Auburn	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 14	Away	South	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 18	Away	Millbury	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 22	Home	Chicopee Comprehensive	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Away	Minnechaug	12:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Home	Grafton	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 8	Home	Northbridge	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Away	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Home	Leominster	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	Auburn	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Home	Millbury	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Away	Grafton	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29	Away	Notre Dame Academy	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Home	Longmeadow	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Away	Northbridge	6:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Home	Leicester	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 15	Home	Shepherd Hill	5:30 p.m.

Indoor Track (all meets at Tantasqua)

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Meet 1	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Home	Meet 2	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Home	Meet 3	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Home	Meet 4	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Home	Meet 5	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Home	Meet 6	5 p.m.

Swimming

Friday, Dec. 8	Away	Gardner	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Bromfield	4 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 18	Away	Tyngsborough	6 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Home	Westborough	4 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Home	Grafton	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Away	Wachusett	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Home	Advanced Math & Science	4 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 13	Away	Nashoba	2 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Home	Shrewsbury	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	Doherty	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Home	Algonquin	4 p.m.

North Brookfield 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Parker Charter	4 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Home	Bethany Christian	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Away	South Lancaster	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5	Away	Monson	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Home	Immaculate Heart of Mary	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Home	Murdock	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Immaculate Heart of Mary	6:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Home	Sizer	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Trivium	5:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Away	Bethany Christian	6 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1	Home	South Lancaster	7 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Home	Trivium	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 5	Home	Abby Kelley	7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	Away	Abby Kelley	6 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 9	Away	Sizer	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Away	Bromfield	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Parker Charter	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Home	Bethany Christian	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21	Home	Blackstone-Millville	5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Away	South Lancaster	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Home	Immaculate Heart of Mary	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	Home	Murdock	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Immaculate Heart of Mary	5 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Home	Sizer	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 22	Away	Abby Kelley	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Trivium	4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Away	Bethany Christian	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1	Home	South Lancaster	5:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Home	Trivium	4 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 5	Home	Abby Kelley	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Feb. 12	Away	Bromfield	5 p.m.

- sports -

Quabbin 2023-2024 winter varsity schedule

Boys Basketball

Monday, Dec. 11	Away	Murdock	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 13	Away	Narragansett	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Home	Hudson	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Away	Clinton	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 22	Home	Maynard	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Away	Oakmont	7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Away	Lunenburg	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Away	Tyngsborough	6 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	Away	Gardner	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Home	Littleton	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Away	Hudson	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Home	Clinton	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Away	Maynard	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	Home	Lunenburg	7 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	Home	Tyngsborough	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Home	Gardner	7 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 9	Away	Littleton	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 13	Home	Belchertown	7 p.m.

Girls Basketball

Monday, Dec. 11	Home	Worcester Tech	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 13	Home	Narragansett	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	Away	Hudson	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 19	Home	Clinton	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 22	Away	Maynard	7 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 27	Home	Oakmont	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29	Away	Groton-Dunstable	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4	Home	Lunenburg	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 9	Home	Tyngsborough	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 16	Away	Littleton	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 19	Home	Hudson	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 23	Away	Clinton	7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 26	Home	Maynard	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	Away	Lunenburg	7 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1	Away	Tyngsborough	6 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 6	Away	Notre Dame Academy	6 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 9	Home	Littleton	7 p.m.
Tuesday, Feb. 13	Home	Belchertown	6:30 p.m.

Indoor Track (meets at Wachusett)

Wednesday, Dec. 13	Away	Meet 1	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Away	Meet 2	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Away	Meet 3	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Meet 4	5 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Away	Meet 5	5 p.m.

Wrestling

Saturday, Dec. 9	Away	Saint John's	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 13	Away	Shepherd Hill	6 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 20	Home	North Middlesex	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 28	Away	Phil Tomkiel Tournament	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3	Home	Marlborough	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6	Away	Tri-County	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 10	Away	Algonquin	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 13	Home	TBD	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 17	Away	Nashoba	6 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 20	Away	Granby	9 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 24	Home	Leominster	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 27	Away	Whitinsville Christian	10 a.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31	Away	Tyngsborough	6 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3	Away	Triton	9 a.m.



Pathfinder boys soccer also received the Small School Sportsmanship Award. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

AWARDS | FROM PAGE 9

"I received an email from my soccer coach (David Wilson) telling me that I had been selected for the MVP award for small schools," said Sanderson, who led his team with 11 assists this past fall. "We weren't able to win any banners this year, but this is a nice way to cap off my high school soccer career."

Sanderson, who missed his junior season due to an injury, also scored 11 goals as a senior.

"Riley has an outstanding right foot, and he could've taken a lot more shots on goal for us, but he would always pass the ball to one of his teammates," Wilson said. "He always plays the game very hard and I'm very proud of him."

Junior Evan Costa led the Pioneers with 34 goals.

The Pioneers, who qualified for the vocational, Western Mass. Class C. and Division 5 state tournaments, finished the 2023 campaign with a 15-5 overall record.

The only other boys' soccer player from Pathfinder Tech to receive the MVP award was Josh Sikorski in 2010.

Minnechaug senior Kylie Ray received the John Kalloch Award (Girls Large School MVP award).

"This is a very special award, especially from the referee's association," said Ray, who'll be playing college soccer at Seton Hall University next year. "I was teammates with Reighan Demers, who received this award last year. It's nice to join her and the other previous MVP award winners from Minnechaug."

Ray is the seventh Minnechaug girls' soccer player coached by Nundi Goncalves to be selected for the MVP award since 2005.

"I've been fortunate to coach many talented soccer players at Minnechaug," Goncalves said. "Kylie is one of them."

The Lady Falcons, who qualified for the Western Mass. and state tournaments, finished their season with a 13-5-2 overall record.

Pope Francis senior Isabella Meadows, who didn't attend the banquet, received the Robert C. Smith/ Stan Bernatowicz Award (Girls Small School MVP award).

Minnechaug Regional also received the Bob McIntyre Sportsmanship Award (Girls Large School).

The Lady Falcons have only received two yellow cards during the past two seasons.

"It always feels good when your teams gets recognized for doing something well," said Minnechaug sophomore Ava Kearney. "Coach Goncalves never wants us to get a yellow card during the game."

Palmer High School received the John Kurty/Benny Santos Sportsmanship Award (Girls Small School)

"It feels very nice to receive the sportsmanship award from the referees," said Palmer senior Grace Burke. "We're always very respectful to the referees and to our opponents."

Burke attended the banquet with teammates Nyela Dupre, Vaness Baer, and Jordan Bigda, who are also members of the senior class.

It was the first time that the Palmer girls' soccer team has received the sportsmanship award.

"I was very surprised when I was informed that my soccer team has been selected for the sportsmanship award," said Palmer head coach Celso Sandoval. "We only had a couple of yellow cards this season and I'm very happy that the soccer officials recognized us. We had a great season and I'm looking forward to doing it all over again next year."

The Lady Panthers (12-8-1) defeated Granby, 3-1, in the Western Mass. Class D finals.

The Pathfinder boys' squad, which co-ops with Palmer, received the Carl Erickson Sportsmanship Award (Boys Small School).

The Bruno Rumpal Sportsmanship Award (Boys Large School) was given to Westfield High School.

The MISOA PVSOA inductee is Alex Goncalves, who's from Ludlow.

The Paul Bogan Service Award was given to Peter Manolakis, who's from Wilbraham.

The Jimmie Downie Award recipient is Tomasz Ludkiewicz, who lives in Granby.

The Larry E. Briggs Award winner is John Voight, who currently lives in East Longmeadow, but grew up in Hampden. He graduated from Minnechaug Regional.

Former Ludlow girls' varsity soccer coach Jose Anselmo, along with Chris and Diane Kolodziej, who do an outstanding job of running the Pioneer Valley Summer Soccer League, received Letters of Commendations.

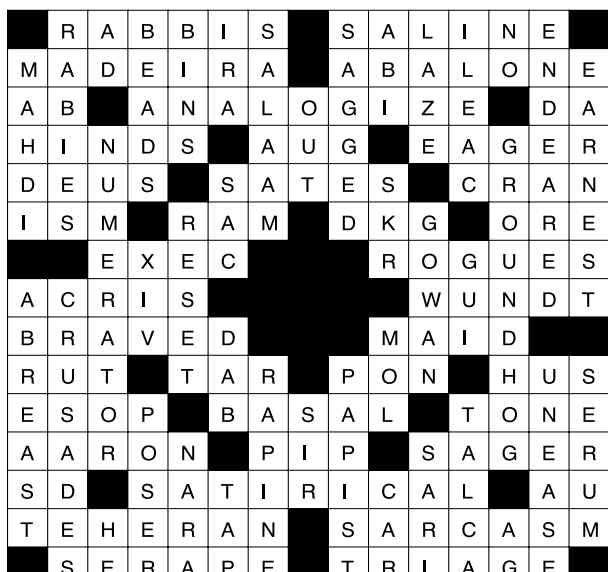
The association is always looking for new referees.

UMass hosting Pioneer Valley Tip-Off

AMHERST – The Pioneer Valley Tip-Off is a student-run high school basketball showcase featuring some of the best talent in Central and Western Massachusetts. The PVTO was started in 2011 by Scott Moses and Pat Salle, both students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and it continues to be entirely student-run by the McCormack Student Leaders Club today. The PVTO is held each December on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus, where we strive to create a professional environment for fans and players alike. This year's event will be held on Dec. 9 and 10 and will feature teams from throughout the region. A schedule is online at www.pioneervalleytip-off.com. All games will be held at the Mullins Center on the UMass-Amherst campus.

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Follow Turley Sports on Instagram

Turley Publications sports department has recently joined Instagram. You can find our account by searching "turleysports." We will regularly feature samples of photos that you will see in our publications on a weekly basis. Please follow and share with your friends and loved ones. We will be featuring photos from all 11 of our sports sections, but as always, you can see all the photos that appear by subscribing to your local paper or picking up a copy in your community.

HOLIDAY | FROM PAGE 1

ty-two local artists are featured, and full-service custom framing is available.

Continuing east, Joy of Beans is next door, and is presided over by coffee entrepreneur Joy Hinton. Though early in the day, customers were coming into Joy of Beans as it's a local meeting place.

Then again, why not, as caffeine is associated with the morning.

Joy of Beans has expanded, and Hinton showed me the new room where local baker, Tamsin of the Bread Box, had set up with her lovely breads and pastries. Meanwhile, back at the coffee bar, Hinton's staff members, Liz Blake and McKenna were serving the growing line of customers.

Most of White Christmas took place indoors, but the day saw a special breed of folks who were meeting the public outside under tents that could shed the rain but not the cold

The Lake Wickaboag Council Grove Homeowners Association represents a neighborhood with roads not maintained by the town and were raising funds for their streets. Two residents were selling raffle tickets for road rehabilitation.

Next to them, Hardwick Winery was having a tasting, which considering the weather did not seem a bad idea as Jerry served the beverages.

On the Common the local Boy Scouts were serving some much-appreciated hot chocolate and the horse and carriage rides around the common were braving the elements.

Across from the common was the tent run by the adult leadership of Quaboag Panthers Youth Football, with everyone agreeing Maurice or "Coach Mo" being the man to answer questions.

As usual the town's three churches welcomed visitors.

The First Congregational Church welcomed us, and we spoke with Church Moderator Dee Blanton who was supervising the raffle as she has been for six years.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was serving sandwiches, chowder and chili, and was like the others, holding a raffle run by the sodality members Michele and Maureen.

Across the street at George Whitefield United Methodist, Church Heidi Jeldres commented that the turnout was not at all bad in spite of the weather.

The craft venues were busy all afternoon.

The several vendors at Hitchcock Tavern saw a steady flow of attendees. On entering the main hall on the left there was Beth Johnson Photography.

Johnson had a variety of magnets, many featuring the town's iconic fountain. Johnson admits to being obsessed with the subject and has much knowledge of the structure.

The West Brookfield Elementary School hosted rooms and halls of crafts including the Elves are Us shop for the students.

How were the vendors doing? If parking being at a premium was any indication, probably not bad.

As daylight waned, the vendors began to pack up, but White Christmas was not over.

A good-sized crowd gathered around the spruce tree on the common that is yearly strung with lights and at 5:45 p.m. it was lit to the cheers of all in attendance.

A half hour later at the Great Hall there would be the last event of the day, a concert scheduled for 6:15 p.m.

White Christmas this year was dedicated to the late Richard John Rossman who was a distinguished citizen of the town. He was known for many activities, one of them being a founding member of the White Christmas Committee.

State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume presented Dick's wife, Barbara, with a tribute from the Great and General Court.

The annual concert in the Great Hall is the last event of White Christmas and the accomplished quartet known as Indigo would cap the day with renditions of a variety of Christmas music from carols and hymns to songs that the audience could sing along to.

Indigo is registered as a Barbershop Quartet and appears on the competitive stage. Though Barbershop may have been considered a male genre, times change, and the four singers harmonized wonderfully.

Eric von Bleicken, who directed the Quaboag Choral Society until last year would be part of the concert, reading to the children "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and joining Indigo in singing the final number, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas".

Thus ended the 2023 edition of White Christmas in West Brookfield.

The people of the town and those who came from elsewhere owe a debt of gratitude to the committee members who organized the event: Amanda Wodyga, chairperson; Melanie Waugh, treasurer; Heather Gough, secretary; Chelsey Mathieson; Christin Girouard; Mary Anne Matys-Rohde; and Mariel Galarza.

Well done.



Quaboag Panthers Youth Football leadership team was at White Christmas. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY



Eric von Bleicken reads "Twas the Night Before Christmas".



Screaming Eagle Industries is veteran-owned specializing in laser engraving.



The S.O.N.G (Supporting Orphans Nationally & Globally) table at Our Lady of The Sacred Heart staffed by Michele and Maureen.



Tamsin of the Bread Box offers her baked goods at the Joy of Beans.



Cold Spring Soapery was cleaning up at the Craft and Vendor Fair.



Joy of Beans crew Liz Blake, Joy Hinton and McKenna.



Shown is Dee Blanton, church moderator of the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield.



Beth Johnson Photography displayed scenes from the area at the Hitchcock Tavern.



Holly Rutkowski is back again at the Hitchcock Tavern.



Sir Barks a Lot dog treats from Belchertown.



Martha and Tom of Bucket List Maple Syrup were set up at the library.

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Haston library lists adult programs for December

NORTH BROOKFIELD – On Monday, Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m. Jeff Belanger presents “The Fright Before Christmas” at the Haston Free Public Library, 161 North Main St.

Remember the famous Christmas song which goes, “There’ll be scary ghost stories and tales of the glories of Christmases long, long ago”? So, what happened to the scary stories?

Belanger brings the spooky back to the yuletide time of year with Creepy Christmas. From the origins of the holiday to the monsters and ghosts that lurk in its shadows, Belanger will take you on a multi-media jour-

ney of this haunting holiday.

Based on his “Creepy Christmas” PBS special and his latest book “The Fright Before Christmas”, this night may just save Christmas. This program is not for young children.

On Thursday, Dec. 14 at 6 p.m. the library will host a Craft Night for Adults: Book Page Ornaments. Join library staff for this fun up-cycled craft, using scraps of discarded books to make a fun and festive ornament

Please register for these programs by calling the library at 508-867-0208 or by emailing hastonfreepubliclibrary@gmail.com.

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of Nov. 27-Dec. 4, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 10 building/property checks, 28 directed/area patrols, nine traffic controls, two radar assignments, two safety hazards, one trespass, two emergency 911 calls and two animal calls in the town of New Braintree.

Tuesday, Nov. 28

5:20 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Barre Road, Transported to Hospital

6:27 a.m. Safety Hazard, West Brookfield Road, Taken/ Referred to Other Agency

12:53 p.m. Safety Hazard, Gilbertville Road, Removed Hazard

Thursday, Nov. 30

5:28 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Hardwick Road, Transported to Hospital

Saturday, Dec. 2

12:27 p.m. Trespass, Moore Road, Officer Handled

Monday, Dec. 4

6:10 a.m. 911 Misdial, Hardwick Road, No Action Required

SCHOOL | FROM PAGE 1

“Our next steps...is to drill down to the detailed actions, how this is going to actually work, how we’re going to hold ourselves accountable and what we can share with not only the school board, but the general public,” he said.

He said objectives outlined in the strategic plan include curriculum instruction enhancement, meeting the needs of all students and fostering a culture of belonging. There are five initiatives for each of these objectives, that are action steps.

“I’m very excited where we’re at,” McCormick said. He said once the plan is finalized, it will be shared with the School Committee.

“I think that this is going to be kind of a roadmap for our success for the next three years,” McCormick said.

Superintendent’s report

McCormick said the school district applied for and received the Project 351’s Playbook Initiative program, partnering with the Boston Celtics.

“This was a fairly competitive and rigorous process,” McCormick said. “I’m happy to say we were selected.”

He said they will be working with districts from across the commonwealth.

“The two students who were selected will become trainers,” McCormick said. “They’ll come back and share information with other students and staff in the building. Essentially what this work entails is working through conflict, working through social issues that happen... we really are excited for our student leaders and the training they’ll receive.”

McCormick said the program will help to foster a better sense of belonging to students and staff.

The school district also received a \$10,000 Safe and Supportive Schools Grant, to continue work with diversity and inclusion, as well as instruction.

On Nov. 9, the PTO hosted the annu-

al Veterans Day breakfast, recognizing over 30 veterans and featuring a number of guest speakers. Students in grades one through six, as well as High School students, all participated through poetry readings, songs, or making cards.

“It’s just a small token of our appreciation to all veterans. This year’s turnout was the best it’s been in several years,” he said, thanking all involved to make it possible.

McCormick said the bleacher installation has been completed in the High School gym. He said an event is being planned in the future to recognize and honor all donors.

Recognitions

McCormick recognized the school district’s John and Abigail Adams Scholarship recipients. This scholarship gives qualifying students a reduced tuition rate at state universities.

“We’re very excited for these students,” McCormick said.

Students include Anthony Sheard, Jacob Lamy, Jake Standrowicz, Tyler Warner and Olivia Giangrande.

McCormick also recognized students who decorated the walls leading to the gym. Students who contributed a lot of time and talent to the project include Nadia Sukharev and Claudia White.

McCormick also recognized a former North Brookfield Public School’s student (now a student at Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School), Joe Standrowicz, who built a gaga pit at the school for his Eagle School project. Standrowicz had first played the game while at Nature’s Classroom with his sixth grade class.

“Joe did this over several weekends,” McCormick said. “I just want to thank and congratulate Joe for his efforts for his project.”

The gaga pit is located before the tennis court.

McCormick also announced that the field hockey team made the state tour-

namment, which they have for several years in a row.

“This one team has shown tremendous promise and growth the last couple of years,” McCormick said, thanking Coach Leblanc and the athletes.

McCormick spoke about the success of the Cook Kids Choir concert held recently, which he said was “fantastic.”

Regionalization update

School Committee Chair Ron Ryel said he has no update regarding the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee, and he has reached out to the chairman of that committee several times.

Ryel said the school district’s attorney reviewed a draft of the agreement, which he submitted to the RAAC in September to be reviewed by the committee’s attorney.

“We have not gotten a response back yet, as far as I know,” Ryel said.

Ryel said the town will not be able to move forward with a town meeting vote until the School Committee votes on the final draft of the agreement once they receive it back from the RAAC’s attorney.

Administrators’ reports

Interim Director of Student Services Ann Knapp said the Special Education Department met earlier that day, and covered topics such as interpreting assessment results, special education services criteria, progress report guidelines, staff schedules and how to make a determination for reevaluation for special education eligibility without always using a psychological assessment.

“It was a great discussion,” Knapp said.

She said the out-of-district student spreadsheet has been updated and contains all information for fiscal tracking and state recording.

Child Find notifications will be sent out soon.

High School Principal John Diorio

said the afterschool homework club for students in grades seven through 12 is “going strong” on Tuesdays and Thursdays. He said the club is open to any students in those grades.

Diorio said the last math lesson study was held, and the studies have been helpful in improving student-centered instruction in the High School. He said they go to observe a classroom, then debrief afterward with all of the math teachers, then create action steps to use in the classroom.

He said two math teachers and an English teacher visited another high school to collaborate and share teaching strategies with each other.

Diorio said a number of students were recognized at an assembly for their high academic achievement, growth, good citizenship and perfect attendance.

Diorio also welcomed the new administrative assistant, Theresa Sherman.

Student Council update

Student Representative Oliva Giangrande said Halloween room decorating took place the week before Halloween, with each grade level decorating their advisor’s classroom. A Halloween dance was held for students in grades seven-12.

A family conference night was held Nov. 13 and Student Council members helped run some tables.

Giangrande said the fall conference was recently held at Tantasqua Regional High School.

The annual Giving Turkey was held the first few weeks of November, with donations going to the school’s food pantry. Giangrande said the Student Council is now accepting gifts for the annual Giving Tree in December.

She said the Christmas in North Brookfield event will be held free for the community on Saturday, Dec. 9 from noon-2 p.m.

EARLY DEADLINE For All Advertising & CLASSIFIEDS

<p>All Papers Will Deadline Thursday, Dec. 21 at Noon for Publication Dec. 25-29</p>	<p>⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮ ⋮</p>	<p>All Papers Will Deadline Thursday, Dec. 28 at Noon for Publication Jan. 1-5</p>
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Happy Holidays!

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Volume 17, Number 2

Friday, December 8, 2023

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