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Volume 19, Number 52

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

Friday, December 12, 2025

White Christmas returned to West Brookfield

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – White Christmas 2025 would not be remembered for wintry weather.

True, a bit of snow did cover the ground, and it was not warm, but for early December it was not overly cold.

Besides, there would be other reasons to remember the day.

The Town of West Brookfield was observing the annual White Christmas celebration for the 33rd time. What had begun more than two decades ago is part of the town's fabric.

Upstairs in the Town Hall at 10 a.m. Santa was in a chair, and children could sit on his lap.

Entering from there into the Great Hall, a table was laid out with all the material necessary to decorate gingerbread houses. That was necessary as other tables contained 209 houses ready to be adorned.

The two people supervising, Amanda Wodyga, chairperson and Madalyne Chamberlain, committee member, were teased as they



Father Christmas visited the craft fair at the West Brookfield Elementary School.

were asked couldn't they make it to 210? They had a reply; the goal was 200 and thus they were overachievers. Well done.

The craft fairs also had a 10 a.m. start and the West Brookfield Elementary School was packed with

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The tree was lit on the common during the annual White Christmas celebration in West Brookfield, held this past Sunday.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY

Boards partner for fiber optics project

By Paula Ouimette
Editor

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STURBRIDGE – The Select Board voted to partner with the town of Holland on a joint application for the state's Community Compact IT Grant Program for fiscal year 2026 at its Dec. 1 meeting.

If approved, the grant would allow the town of Holland to connect to Sturbridge's existing fiber optic lines, saving about four miles of new fiber optics having to be installed.

Public hearing

A public hearing was held on an application for a liquor license for an Italian café and deli called Mangia Bene to be located at 139 Main St.

Representing Mangia Bene was James Hunter, who said they also currently have an Irish pub in Worcester and had previously owned the Grafton Inn.

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The reason for the season

Church hosted 16th nativity display

By Paula Ouimette
Editor

pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints hosted its 16th "Nativities From Around the World" display over four days this past week and weekend.

Featuring over 700 nativity

displays from church and community members, this free event brought warmth and a feeling of peace to all who experienced it.

Walking through the doors of the church, you were greeted by church members who directed you to the first of six rooms decorated with nativities.

The first two rooms featured the collection owned by the Alt family of Barre. Glen and Joyce have been participating in their church's "Nativities From

Around the World" for over 10 years, having started when their oldest daughter, Jessie, urged them to take part.

"We have like 250 on display and more at home," Glen said.

Joyce said her husband is more of the collector of nativities in their household, and that he always displays each one at least once before packing it up for this event. Glen said he gets most of his nativities from garage sales and thrift stores, and has also received many as gifts.

"Some were rescued from the trash," he said.

Joyce said one of their favorite nativities in their collection is one that they found at an estate sale at the home of a former doctor in their town. She said it was the second nativity their family ever bought.

"My asking for a nativity turned into this," Joyce said laughingly, gesturing to the display in the room.

Joyce said that each of the nativities displayed at "Nativities From Around

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TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

From left to right stands Carol Simpson, along with family members Brenda, Kathy, Sarah, Amanda and Dan, representing Carol's Creations at the 14th annual Peppermint Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair.

Peppermint Christmas Fair

14th annual craft & vendor fair held at Quaboag Church

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer

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BROOKFIELD – The Quaboag Church held its 14th annual Peppermint Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair this past week-

end.

This year's craft & vendor fair featured over 40 vendors, including a gift raffle and a 50/50 raffle to benefit the Springfield Rescue Mission. The goal of the Springfield Rescue Mission has been the same since 1892, meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the hungry, addicted and less fortunate by bringing hope and

light to the community.

Every year, the Quaboag Church chooses a different charity to support during the Peppermint Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair.

Donna Bracken, one of the leading organizers of this annual fair, shared a pamphlet titled

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Interim fire chiefs appointed at Board of Selectmen's meeting

By Paula Ouimette
Editor

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NORTH BROOKFIELD – Board of Selectmen Chair Jason Petraitis read the resignation letter of Fire Chief Darin Anderson, effective Nov. 18, at the Dec. 2 meeting.

"Thank you for the opportunity to lead the department," Anderson stated in the letter to the board.

The board members thanked Anderson for his years of service to the Fire Department.

Leadership changes

The board promoted the following Fire Department personnel for a six-month interim period: Keith Marshall, interim Fire Chief; Thomas Bessette, interim Deputy Chief; and Don Mailing, Assistant Fire Chief.

"We'll work with them to

make sure that they're good with everything that's going on and they can cover comfortably their new duties," Petraitis said.

Citation for mutual aid

The board received a citation and a letter from the town of Amherst, thanking the Fire Department for its "immediate response and exceptional assistance" during a fire at the Olympia Drive Apartments on Nov. 7.

The fire burned one

building under construction, and an adjoining occupied apartment building. This fire displayed 236 residents, almost all of which are students at UMass Amherst.

No human lives were lost and no injuries were reported by residents or first responders. A total of 32 municipalities responded with mutual aid.

"Your efforts in this coordinated response undoubtedly prevented a far worse

outcome," the letter stated. "It was true testament to the strength of regional cooperation...the dedication, skill and preparedness of your emergency responders were crucial to fighting the conflagration. We commend the calm demeanor, expertise and selflessness displayed by all the personnel on the scene. The entire town of Amherst is humbled by the kindness and unwavering commitment to serving and

protecting our communities that was demonstrated by your team."

"Top Dog" contest

The Town Clerk, Animal Control Officer and Police Department are holding a "Top Dog" contest to gather necessary supplies and materials to improve the town pound.

Items needed include

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- community -

Santa Parade held during Christmas in Barre event

BARRE – After a fresh dusting of snow, the Santa Parade made its way from Ruggles Lane Elementary School to the town common this past Saturday, one of the highlights of the annual Christmas in Barre event.

While Santa Claus was unable to break away from his busy North Pole workshop this year, Mrs. Claus arrived and happily heard the Christmas wishes of children. She even had a special, huggable gift for each child to take home.

Mrs. Claus was joined in the Santa Parade by elves, town officials and public safety personnel, as well as local organizations and businesses.



Quabbin Regional High School's band marched in the parade and played festive holiday songs.



Get Up and Dance Studio's Tim and Sarah Nydam tossed candy from the back of a truck driven by Devon Wentworth.



Dancers from Gilbertville's Get Up and Dance Studio waved to people from the float.



Members of Barre Assembly #114, International Order of the Rainbow for Girls, held a banner representing the Barre Masonic Family. The Rainbow Girls were also joined by members of Gardner DeMolay.



Quabbin Regional High School's NJROTC's honor guard carried flags in the Christmas in Barre Santa Parade.

'A Charles Dickens Christmas' with Bill Thierfelder

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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Libraries throughout Massachusetts shared the virtual presentation of "A Charles Dickens Christmas" with Dr. Bill Thierfelder.

Introducing Thierfelder was Beth Dalal, the Adult Programs Coordinator at the Groton Public Library. This program is presented in partnership with the Groton Public Library and in cooperation with a variety of other area libraries, made possible, in part, by the Groton Public Library Endowment Trust. This zoom presentation was shared through various libraries in the state of Massachusetts, including the Woods Memorial Library in Barre.

Thierfelder is a retired Professor of Arts and Humanities, who offers various inciteful programs on a virtual platform. His lecture program, "Learning From Home," are virtual programs for libraries and other organizations.

For this month, with the holidays just beginning, Thierfelder presented "A Charles Dickens Christmas," a detailed history on the Victorian-era English writer and journalist.

Thierfelder reminded his virtual audience that Dickens has written more Christmas stories besides his famous tale "A Christmas Carol". There are five Christmas books written by Dickens in the 1840s, followed by over 20 Christmas stories that were written between 1850 and 1867.

In many biographies,

Dickens is known as "the man who invented Christmas," which Thierfelder knows is not the case, but knows Dickens' work made an impact on how the holiday is celebrated to this day.

This presentation allowed viewers to explore other stories written by Dickens, with a heavier focus on the five novellas. Thierfelder encouraged his virtual audience to explore his website, which lists additional sources and information about Dickens and his work.

Dickens was born on Feb. 7, 1812, and was one of eight children. At a young age Dickens was already an avid reader.

His first published story was called "Dinner at Poplar Walk", which appears in Monthly Magazine. During the Victorian Era, many

novels would get published in a weekly or monthly installments.

The first of his Christmas books was "A Christmas Carol" (1843), a story that remains especially popular and inspires adaptations in every artistic genre.

The book was first released in December of 1843. To this day, the world continues to talk about "A Christmas Carol", but that wasn't the end of Dickens' Christmas themed stories.

His next novella was called "The Chimes" (1844). This story is about Toby "Trotty" Veck, a poor ticket porter who loses faith in humanity.

The story explores themes of social injustice, the importance of compassion, and the cyclical nature of hardship, ultimately suggesting that hope and positive

change can be found even in the bleakest circumstances. The story ends with a dreamlike scene where the bells ring in the new year and the leading character achieves positive change.

Dickens achieved great success while writing these holiday novellas and would share his work with the public. According to Thierfelder, "Dickens was a great self-promoter", and described him as a "real showman" when it came to him doing live readings of his work.

In the 1850s, Dickens began giving public readings of his own works as he experienced continued success. Thierfelder shared a story on how he purchased a house forever known

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Wreaths Across America ceremony is Dec. 13

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Saturday, Dec. 13 at noon on the Common, a ceremony to recognize Wreaths Across America Day will be held.

Sponsor a wreath to remember and honor a West Brookfield veteran. Wreaths will be placed on all of West Brookfield veterans' graves at Pine Grove and Sacred Heart Cemeteries following the ceremony.

Last year, 400 wreaths were placed on veterans graves in West Brookfield. For more info, contact Nadine Morin at 774-200-3396 or Joanne Dorman at 508-867-2524.

Santa and the Grinch visit library Dec. 18

EAST BROOKFIELD – Santa and the Grinch will be coming to the East Brookfield Public Library, 122 Connie Mack Drive, on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 10:45 a.m.

Come to the library and bring your camera to take pictures with Santa and the Grinch. All ages are welcome and also well-behaved dogs.

Story time starts at 10:30 a.m. and is for ages 6 months to 6 years followed by the visit from Santa and the Grinch. Caregivers must stay with children and one caregiver is required for every two children.

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- community -

EQLT held Gratitude Friday event

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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HARDWICK – The East Quabbin Land Trust hosted a Gratitude Friday event last week at its office at 120 Ridge Road.

Visitors got to explore the natural beauty of the Forest Play Trail that is in the backyard of the East Quabbin Land Trust's main office. The event began with visitors meeting land trust member Caren Caljouw, who guided visitors on a tree identification walk on the forest play trail.

On this walk, kids and adults learned about the different species of trees and played Fall Forest Bingo during the walk. Members of the Land Trust handed out bingo cards for guests to play while walking on the trail.

Guests would also learn about the history of the land and see the stations on the trail.

Joining on the tree identification walk was Ellie Shea from TerraCorps who is a Youth Education Coordinator at the East Quabbin Land Trust. Shea has been working with the East Quabbin Land Trust since September and was excited to help out during Gratitude Friday.



Ellie Shea, left, introduced Caren Caljouw prior to the tree identification walk during the East Quabbin Land Trust's Gratitude Friday event.

Prior to the tree identification walk Shea shared some exciting information regarding the expansion of the existing trail.

"We're building an expansion of the existing Forest Play Trail," Shea said.

Michael Bellefleur also comes from TerraCorps and attended Gratitude Friday at the East Quabbin Land Trust.

Executive Director of the East Quabbin Land Trust

Cynthia Henshaw said the land trust is fortunate to have these members and have them organize these fun events and educate the public.

"Keep them engaged," Henshaw said.

Shea will be working on getting a grant for the land trust to help support the expansion of the existing trail. This additional work will help to maintain the trail and make it more accessible.

These adjustments would make the trail Americans with Disabilities Act compliant and new additions would live up to the vision of the East Quabbin Land Trust. The vision is to have families feel they can come to the trail and is a good space for all ages.

During the walk, Caljouw asked guests why trees are important to have. One guest stated the fact that trees serve as homes for various animals, especially birds.

Caljouw is a wildlife biologist that has been doing these walks for the East Quabbin Land Trust. Caljouw feels the land trust consists of a great group of people who care about the land.

Along the trail are various species of trees, some which have been on the land for years.

One of the largest trees on the property is a white oak with one long branch near-



Caren Caljouw described the qualities on this oak tree that is on the Forest Play Trail just outside the East Quabbin Land Trust office in Hardwick.



East Quabbin Land Trust Executive Director Cynthia Henshaw made hot chocolate for guests to enjoy.

ly touching the lawn. There is also an invasive species known as bittersweet, which was introduced to Hardwick back in the 1800s.

After the walk, guests made their way inside the East Quabbin Land Trust office for refreshments and crafts. Kids lined up to draw and soon paint their own kindness rocks. On the Forest Play Trail there is a station where guests can leave their kindness rocks for visitors to see.

Outside the office, members of the land trust were starting a campfire.

Gratitude Friday was an exciting experience for both members of the East Quabbin Land Trust and guests who got to learn about the land that is part of their community.

For more exciting events and activities visit eqlt.org. To experience the Forest Play Trail, visit the land trust's office at 120 Ridge Road.



Hikers gathered to hear about the largest tree on the property explained by Caren Caljouw.

Library holds holiday raffle and mitten tree

EAST BROOKFIELD – The East Brookfield Public Library, 122 Connie Mack Drive, is raffling off a hand stitched holiday tree skirt or a hand crocheted blanket.

Tickets are two for \$5. Proceeds from the raffle go toward the library's adult programs.

Mitten Tree
The library's Mitten Tree is now up. The library collects hats, mittens, scarves,

gloves, socks for adults and children, ChapStick and new sweaters for all ages and sizes.

If you or anyone you know needs any of these items, please come to the library and visit our Mitten Tree.

Library Wish List
The library is in need of cheap paper plates – the kind that you must use more than one or your food will spill off, Playdough,

bubbles, large crayons, ribbon, card stock (all colors), purple glue sticks, crepe paper, small bags of chips, sandwich bags, large zip lock bags, cookies, juice, coloring books, construction paper, googly eyes and feathers.

Holiday closures
The library will be closed on Dec. 25, Jan. 1 and 19 and Feb. 16. The library is also closed if the school is closed.

Advent Interlude rescheduled to Dec. 15

WEST BROOKFIELD – First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC, 36 North Main St., will be hosting a new event, Advent Interlude, on Monday, Dec. 15 at 7 p.m.

This event was rescheduled due to inclement weather on the original date.

Open to the community, Advent Interlude is an hour of inspiring readings, short video presentations, and lively music offerings designed to help folks reflect upon, and be inspired by, the true meaning of the Advent season, in preparation for the Christmas celebra-

tion of the birth of Jesus. All are welcome and invited to come for a time of joy and then go out inspired by the true meaning of the season in which we prepare for the birth of the Christ child. For more information call the church at 508-867-7078.

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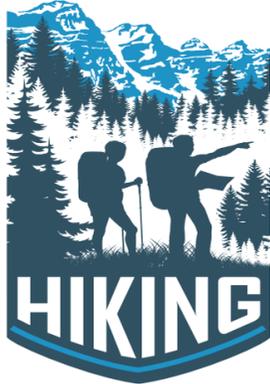
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- opinion -

Not all mountains we climb are the same



When life and mountains meet

By Julie Midura

With wind chills in the negative single digits, it was a blustery and viewless day on Mt. Pierce in the White Mountains of New Hampshire last Saturday.

But our hike wasn't about the views.

It was about rising to meet the mountain. Feeling our legs burn and our hearts race. Experiencing a rush of adrenaline as we fought the intense wind above tree line. Finding our way to the very top in a cloud so dense that the snowy ground and white sky seemed as one.

Last weekend was about allowing ourselves a distraction in the face of unimaginable pain. Accepting the peace and strength that the mountains impart. Granting ourselves permission to feel joy...and not feel guilty for doing so.

It was a weekend of letting go. Allowing the mountain peaks to captivate us. Inspire us. Humble us.

After Saturday's adrenaline-racing adventure on Mt. Pierce, I was excited to see snow in the forecast for our hike on Sunday. For someone who will never stop believing that snow is magical, I felt like an excited 6-year old.

Which is why I was disappointed when we awoke



on Sunday morning, looked out the window of the motel room, and saw rain rather than snow.

"Maybe it will stop raining by the time we get to the trailhead," I said hopefully.

There was a heavy overcast when we arrived at the trailhead, but at least it had stopped raining. With no illusions that we'd get a view from the summit of Mt. Cube, upward we went. And as expected, the summit was encased in a cloud. No matter. At least it wasn't raining.

We had just started making our way down from the summit when Tom said, "Well it looks like you're getting your wish!"

I was so focused on foot placement as I carefully navigated the steep, ice-covered ledges, that I didn't notice it had started snowing! I stopped, looked up to the heavens, and felt the soft cold kisses of dozens of snowflakes landing on my upturned face.

Intent on lingering, Tom and I found a relatively flat ledge and laid out our sit pad.

For half an hour, we sat with our legs stretched out on the wet granite, sipping steaming hot cider from our old green Stanley thermos. Staring at the snow and ice-covered trees against the

backdrop of a ghostly sky.

Watching the snow swirl and dance with each gust of wind. Feeling cold flakes lick our eyelashes. Hearing the faint whisper of flakes landing on snow-laden branches.

This moment was in stark contrast to the adrenaline rush we had experienced on Mt. Pierce the previous day... when the wind raged angrily in ragged gusts and the cold was so harsh it stung.

This was softer. Calmer.

It was a reminder that, in life, we are handed both. The smooth and the rough. The quiet and the loud. The raging and the calm. And each one can hold sadness and joy at exactly the same time.

If I'm being honest, it feels wrong to find joy in these mountains when our 2-year-old granddaughter is in the fight of her life against the single deadliest form of pediatric brain cancer. But sometimes we need time to exhale. To physically distance ourselves from the pain... while still holding it in our hearts.

We're living in a season of extremes. Of conflicting emotions that are confusing to process. From the highest of highs to the lowest of lows. And it's hard to validate one, at what seems like the expense of the other.

But if this cancer journey is teaching me anything, it's that a heart can hold deep despair - and equally-deep joy at precisely the same moment.

I can be crippled by sadness one minute and smiling with joy the next. I can be consumed with fear one minute and filled with hope the next. And I'm learning that that's okay.

I'm learning to accept that peace can exist in the middle of chaos. We just need to open our eyes wide enough to find it.

For those who have asked about Charlotte, thank you. The monthly immunotherapy treatments are keeping her tumor stable. She is fighting like a warrior, and we are grateful for every precious moment that we get to be with her.

Onward.

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

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



Christmas decoration trivia

Last week I provided you with a few tips on how to make a simple evergreen swag and wreath. Hopefully you gave it a try.

For this column I thought it would be fun to share some fun facts with you, many of which I just learned today. You see, I will be working with a group of students tomorrow and wanted to have some cool trivia up my sleeve.

I'll be bringing in all the Christmas greens I talked about a week ago and will pass them around to each student: juniper, hemlock, fir, white pine and more materials, including rose hips, pine cones and holly. Read on to see if what I share is new to you, too!

For example, did you know that the Easter White Pine (Pinus strobus) is the tallest tree in the northeast? It also goes by the name "the Great Tree of Peace," due to the fact that five Native American tribes formed an alliance under a tall white pine; a neat correlation because the needles that are attached to the twigs are in groups of five.

This tree also has a history of being used to make ship masts, and for awhile the trees were reserved for "the Crown." The great "Pine Tree Riot" was an act of defiance that led up to the American Revolution!

One other point of interest is that pine needles are edible and contain vitamin C.

Other materials that often shows up in Christmas decorations are pine cones. What I learned today is that the correct terminology is to generically call them "cones," since they are only pine cones if they come from a pine tree! Logical point!

The hard cones we use for decorating are female and their main purpose is to keep the naked seeds inside safe. They will open and close to maintain proper humidity levels.

Some close so tight that they need the heat of a wild fire to have them open enough to drop their seeds! Cones can stay on a tree up to 10 years without falling off.

The kids will find it funny that dinosaurs even ate pine cones, the Parasaurolophus, to be exact! These trees belong to a group of plants called Gymnosperms, that have indeed been around since prehistoric times.

Many of our favorite Christmas trees are Fir trees (Abies spp.), with

the Balsam Fir being one of the most common. Firs have needles that are soft and flat, and attached to twigs one by one, versus the pine that we learned attach in clusters.

An average, it takes about seven years to grow a decent size Christmas tree. According to my research, the first Christmas tree was in Latvia in the year 1510.

By the early 1800's German and Irish immigrants had brought the custom to America but it still took some time for it to catch hold.

Juniper (Juniperus spp.) is another evergreen that often makes its way into our Christmas wreaths and arrangements. The species can produce greenery that is either smooth or picky.

One of the biggest draws to using juniper is that it smells nice and often has attractive waxy looking berries along with the foliage. It was interesting to learn that these berries are actually cones.

The seeds are protected well within the tough outer coating and can pass through an animal's digestive tract intact. That way the seeds can be dispersed far and wide - wherever the animal is traveling, I guess!

I've done complete articles on Holly (Ilex spp.) before, but I did learn a few new interesting tidbits with this most recent bout of research. The plant has a unique defense mechanism.

Lower foliage is extra spiny to reduce deer from browsing. Upper foliage is not nearly as spiny. There are chemicals in holly berries that make the berries unpalatable to birds and other wildlife at first, but as winter goes on they begin to taste a little better.

Still the birds only eat a few at a time thereby dispersing seeds at various rates and locales. I think all of this is so interesting and so carefully orchestrated to continue the species!

Well, I hope my research has been entertaining, and I do hope that the students enjoy my show and tell tomorrow!

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.

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.

For more information on news or community features for the Quaboag Current, please email pouimette@turley.com.



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- community -

Quabbin students receive awards and recognition

From Quabbin Regional School District Superintendent Colleen Mucha

BARRE – It is always a great time to celebrate students and recently Quabbin Regional School District students receive a number of awards and recognition.

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship is a merit-based program that provides a credit toward tuition for up to eight semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts state college or university. For this scholarship, merit is based on student scores on the 10th grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.

Recipients are Tyler Belden, Aaron Bodine, Owen Breuer, Tricia Bruso, Micah Cerezo, Annabella DiMartino, Kalina Dyer, Garrett Erickson, Aiden Fuller, Michael Geelan, Adelaide Harmon, Alex Holden, Emma Kahlau, Elizabeth Lambert, Anthony Landry, Jacob LaValley, Collin Lindley, Madelyn Malcolmson, Milo Malcolmson, Elizabeth Matheson, Hunter McQueston, Sam O'Brien, Parker Proulx, Aaron Rowell, Lindsay Ryan, Eric Serano, Madelyn Stauder, Cameran Vega, Andrew Warfield and Jin Xi Zou.

Also each year, one



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Recipients of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarships. They are front row from left, Hunter McQueston, Emma Kahlau, Adelaide Harmon, Kalina Dyer, Elizabeth Lambert and Micah Cerezo; middle row from left, Madalyn Malcolmson, Elizabeth Matheson, Tricia Bruso, Andrew Warfield, Alex Holden, Eric Serrano and Parker Proulx and back row from left, Anthony Landry, Sam O'Brien, Tyler Belden, Madelyn Stauder, Annabella DiMartino, Owen Breuer, Jin Xi Zou, Garrett Erickson, Aaron Rowell. Recipients not pictured are Aaron Bodine, Aiden Fuller, Michael Geelan, Jacob LaValley, Collin Lindley, Milo Malcolmson, Lindsey Ryan and Cameran Vega.

eight grader from each of the five member towns is chosen to become a Project 351 Ambassador. These ambassadors are part of a youth-led service project. Students are selected for their strong leadership and passion for service. These 351 Ambassadors convene together in a statewide network where they receive leadership training and engage in teamwork.

This year Quabbin is proud to announce the following Project 351 Ambassadors: Sebastian Palomera-Espinoza - Gil-

bertville, Olivia Vanoudenhove - Oakham, Benjamin Fisher - Hardwick, Pele Johnson - Hubbardston, Winter Boyea - Barre and Lily Ryan - New Braintree.

On Monday, Nov. 16, the National Honor Society Excelsior Chapter held its annual Induction Ceremony at Quabbin Regional High School. The NHS program helps students develop their knowledge and skills to become leaders within the school and community.

NHS recognizes excellence in four key areas: scholarship, leadership,

service and character. The Chapter seeks to identify students, who are involved in their communities and those who have strong values and integrity.

National Honor Society advisor, Lauren Hirschkind, facilitated a special evening for the students and families. One they won't soon forget. Assistant Principal Jason Gilmartin was the keynote speaker for the event and he sent a unique and powerful message to the students. He spoke of the struggle to feel as if one may need to maintain perfection and then he

challenged students to instead embrace the idea of valuing what is unique and at times "imperfect" about themselves.

New inductees were Jacob Bassett, Madeleine Boissell, Mackenzie Casey, Isabel Doty, Tess Dunphy, Brody Faucher, Anna Hautala, Sadie Kennan, Audrey Laursen, Anna Metcalf, Mia Miville, Ella Reeves, Grace Vanoudenhove, and Leanna Zou.

Current NHS members welcomed the new inductees and their families. Current members include: Owen

Breuer, Mia Ducos, Garrett Erickson, Emma Kahlau, Collin Lindley, Grace Manana, Elizabeth Matheson, Hunter McQueston, Andrew Warfield, Bianca Wilder, Hannah Zereski and Jin Xi Zou.

Kalina Dyer, President, spoke about the pillar of scholarship and character. Micah Cerezo, Vice President, introduced the pillar of service and Secretary, Adelaide Harmon spoke about leadership.

A special moment during the ceremony was when the new inductees had the opportunity to recognize educators who have inspired them and always encouraged them to be the best they can be.

Receiving special appreciation were the following Quabbin educators: Brent Bolger, Captain Daniel Brennock, Mark DePasquale, Lieutenant Kathleen Frydel, Keara Hayes, Whitney Marshall, Diane McMorrow, Nicole Ricchiuzzi Robbins, Matthew Sniffen, Molly Szucka, Kelly Weideman, James Wheeler, Josefina White and Ailey Wynne.

The evening ended with closing remarks from Principal Abigail Rigney who expressed her pride in the students. She acknowledged their hard work and dedication and conveyed "we can't wait to see where your journey takes you."



Ambassadors are Benjamin Fisher - Hardwick, Winter Boyea - Barre, Sebastian Palomera-Espinoza - Gilbertville, Pele Johnson - Hubbardston, Lily Ryan - New Braintree and Olivia Vanoudenhove - Oakham.



New Inductees into the National Honor Society are front row from left, Sadie Kennan, Audrey Laursen, Anna Metcalf, Mia Miville, Ella Reeves, Grace Vanoudenhove and Leanna Zou and back row, Jacob Bassett, Madeleine Boissell, Mackenzie Casey, Isabel Doty, Tess Dunphy, Brody Faucher and Anna Hautala.

STURBRIDGE FROM PAGE 1

The board voted to grant the liquor license for Manjia Bene.

Abatement continuation
Department of Public Works Director Heather Blakeley said the water meter at a residence on Audubon Way was tested and was shown to be operating normally.

"It tested completely within the acceptable ranges," she said.

Blakeley said looking at the data, it showed periods of higher usage in mid-May through mid-June almost every day, for a couple of hours. She said this could be due to a leaking toilet.

The homeowner said he disagreed with the DPW's determination that this is the result of higher use or a leak. He said he brought people in to check for leaks.

He said the usage is "never consistent with household usage." He had previously provided a report to the board from a plumber.

The homeowner asked the board to consider issuing an abatement.

The board members said they were sympathetic to the homeowner's situation, but that the data didn't indicate that the issue was the town's responsibility.

Dowling motioned to have half of the abatement

issued, but it was not seconded and therefore failed.

Termination recommendation

The board received a request from the town's former Veterans Service Officer, Michelle Durkee, to re-open a previous hearing after the Town Administrator recommended her termination from that position.

Durkee also asked that her request be heard in public session and not in executive session.

Select Board Chair Jamie Goodwin said the hearing would not be reopened. He said the allegations made by Durkee during the hearing were investigated by a third party and found to be without merit.

Goodwin motioned to accept the recommendation to terminate Durkee, which passed.

Union representation

Town Administrator Robin Grimm told the board the Teamsters union will now represent the town's DPW employees. She said the town will commence contract negotiations and work with the Teamsters through the process.

Easement for water tower

Old Sturbridge Village has granted an easement to the town for access to the new water tower.

"They continue to be

very good partners with us," Grimm said.

Surplus items

The board declared several Department of Public Works vehicles and pieces of mowing equipment as

surplus for auction.

Blakeley said the equipment will be auctioned first, then discarded if no bids are received.

Resignation

The board accepted the

resignation of full-time Dispatch Keri Leonard. Leonard has accepted a position with the Manchester Police Department.

Appointments

Select Board member

Mary Dowling was appointed to represent the board on the Betterment Committee and Mary Lou Volpe was appointed to the Personnel Classification and Policy Committee.

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- community -



Amanda and Madalyne were ready for gingerbread decorators.



Students held a bake sale during White Christmas.



Heather and Jessica are shown with the White Christmas ornaments.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY

WHITE CHRISTMAS FROM PAGE 1

vendors and shoppers showing up early. The Elves R Us Parent Teacher Organization room had more than a few visitors.

At the staff table, Heather Gough, secretary, and Jessica Price, committee member, were not only overseeing what was going on in the building but also selling the official White Christmas ornament.

Back in the center of town, much was happening. At Rebecca Fay's West Brookfield Art & Frame a book signing was in progress. Local author, Jonathan Cook was there with his modern crime story, "The Vampires of York, Maine". Cook is glad people still read.

Next door, at Joy of Beans Coffee, proprietress Joy Hinton was keeping patrons' energy level raised. Also, no one needed to go without a pastry.

Across the street, in front of Hitchcock tavern, Tom and Martha of Bucket List Maple Syrup were there bravely enduring the weather. New this year were colorful T-shirts made by their daughter.

On the other side of the walk, school kids were holding a bake sale for their nature classroom.

In Hitchcock Tavern's first room, and in the main hall were more crafts, as there is every year. Lots of creativity on display on White Christmas.

Back across the street, The Merriam-Gilbert Public Library was in the midst of its traditional raffle. One decided how much to spend and was given that number of tickets to fill out and turn in. Then it's time to wait. A lot of folks will be sitting by the phone in following days.

Churches in West Brookfield are also open and welcoming for the day. The George Whitefield United Methodist church greeted people until 3 p.m. and the Catholic parish served food until it ran out.

On East Main Street, the welcoming First Con-

gregational Church of West Brookfield was a busy place. Fortunately, they had a team equal to the task. The chair, Karen Andersen, led what was described as a "wonderful group of elves," comprised of Debby Steltzer, Karen Murphy, and Linda Daskowski, who did more than a little baking in the church.

The raffle team were Dee Blanton, and Angela Carville taking care of all the donated items.

On the common in the afternoon, the Boy Scouts served hot chocolate, while a horse and carriage took passengers for a ride around.

At 5:45 p.m. in full darkness it was time for the tree lighting on the common. One second it would be near

pitch black and then, light. Candles were lit and the choir that would perform in the town hall sang.

At 6:30 p.m. in the Great Hall people took their seats. A young man from the choir that would sing, played "Away in a Manger" on guitar.

Annually, the town honors a person who had been a distinguished member of the community. This year, it would be Annamay Zabek. Annamay, who passed away this year, was a lifelong town resident, raising three children with her husband, the late police chief, John Zabek. She was always civically involved and was worthy of the posthumous honor bestowed.

Next, two pianists of the

choir would play the carol, "The Holly and the Ivy".

The Saint Thomas Aquinas choir, from the parish in Warren would then finish the evening under the direction of Barbara Horgan. They would serenade with a lovely harmony.

Thus, it was over for another year.

The townspeople owe a debt of gratitude to the team that puts together White Christmas. Not just the aforementioned Amanda Wodyga, Heather Gough, Madalyne Chamberlain, and Jessica Price, but also treasurer Melannie Waugh, and committee members Christin Girouard and Jamie Hasenfus.

Looking forward to next year already.



Candles were lit during the tree lighting portion of White Christmas.



The Saint Thomas Aquinas Choir performed on stage.

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	69								70					

CLUES ACROSS

- Spiritual leaders
- A type of solution
- Fortified wine
- Edible mollusk
- They precede C
- A way to compare
- Government lawyer
- "Game of Thrones" actor Ciaran
- The eighth month (abbr.)
- Very willing
- ___ ex Machina
- Makes happy
- Type of berry
- A doctrine
- Popular Dodge truck model
- Dekagram
- Naturally occurring solid
- Company officer
- Villains
- Cricket frogs
- Influential German

CLUES DOWN

- psychologist
- Endured
- A female domestic
- You can get stuck in one
- Cigarette (slang)
- Fiber optics network
- Group of blood disorders (abbr.)
- Employee stock ownership plan
- Belonging to the bottom layer
- Sound
- MLB legend Hank
- Very attractive person
- Late beloved sportscaster Craig
- South Dakota
- Mocking
- Symbol for gold
- Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
- Humor
- Shawl

- Preliminary patient assessment

CLUES DOWN

- Animal disease
- Commercial
- Necklace material
- Containers
- A way to save for your future
- Colorado Heisman winner Rashaan
- Dipped down
- Head injury (abbr.)
- Lay about
- Intestinal
- Opposite of yes
- Caused to be loved
- Spiritual leader of Islam
- Businesslike
- Not in
- Number above the line in a fraction
- An animal with its own day
- Pouch
- Swedish krona
- Start over
- Field flowers
- Fourteen
- A visual way to interact with a computer
- Up-to-date
- Campaigns
- Touch lightly
- "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
- Violent seizure of property
- Supporter of the Pope
- Anxiety
- Body fluid
- One who's faking it
- Title of respect
- Chilean city
- City in central Japan
- Silk garment
- A form of dance
- Automobile
- The man
- Justice Dept. head honcho

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- Country Journal • The Register • Wilbraham-Hampden Times

Thursday, December 18 at 2 PM for December 25 Issue

- Agawam Advertiser News
- Sentinel • Quaboag Current • The Journal Register

Friday, December 19 at 2 PM for December 25 Issue

- Ware River News • Barre Gazette

Monday, December 22 at 2 PM for December 26 Issue

- Town Reminder • The Holyoke Sun • Chicopee Register

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SEND US YOUR SPORTS SUBMISSIONS

Turley's Henry, Peterson recognized for work by PVSOA

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

LUDLOW – For nearly 20 years, two people have anchored the sports department at Turley Publications.

When you think of sports in the Journal Register, Sentinel News, Agawam Advertiser, or Ware River News, you think of David Henry and Tim Peterson.

Both have been members of the Turley Sports staff for almost two decades, covering every sport offered by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, and connecting with thousands of athletes over the course of their careers.

Their job has been to see that the deserving student-athletes who work hard and achieve milestones, league titles, Western Mass. titles, and college success get recognized by their communities.



Turley Publications Sports writer Tim Peterson and photographer David Henry were recognized last Friday night at the Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association. They are pictured with PVSOA member Joe Santos.

Last Friday night, it was their turn to be recognized for their dedicated work.

The Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association award-

ed Henry and Peterson with Letters of Commendation.

The PVSOA, which held its awards banquet at the Ludlow Polish-American

Club on Dec. 5, recognized the pair for their dedicated service of reporting and photographing boys and girls soccer, impacting multiple

communities throughout the region.

The PVSOA Awards Committee believed their longtime service at Turley Publications was deserving of the letters.

Peterson had a more conventional background in sports journalism. He participated in his high school newspaper at Oxford High School and went on to work at the Southbridge Evening News.

In 2007, he transitioned to being a freelance writer for Turley Publications. At first, Peterson had an established rapport in the Palmer-Monson and Ludlow-Belchertown areas. But in recent years, readers can find Peterson in almost any one of the towns in Turley's 11-newspaper, 17-high school coverage zone.

"I really enjoy it," Peterson said. "I just love covering sports and I really enjoy watching high school soccer."

Peterson also named baseball as one of his favorite sports to cover. Peterson, especially over the past several years, has had no shortage of exciting competition to cover. He's been at most major championship games in Turley's coverage area, and even enjoys traveling around the state to schools he has never been to thanks to the state's new tournament format.

Peterson was not even taking much of a break at the PVSOA banquet, forgoing receiving too much recognition, and focusing his attention on the award winners at the event (see related stories).

Henry did not have a typical path to becoming Turley's longstanding sports photographer since 2006.

He had a more than 30-years career in the military in the United States Air

See TURLEY SPORTS PAGE 8

Pioneer Valley Soccer Officials Association hold awards banquet

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

LUDLOW – There are multiple soccer officials associations throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, all which are responsible for the recruiting, training, assigning, and evaluating of soccer referees that do high school games, as well as some youth leagues.

The Pioneers Valley Soccer Officials Association is the only organization that is still doing awards banquets, recognizing athletes, its members for longtime service, and contributors to the soccer community.

Last Friday night at the Ludlow Polish American Club, the 79th iteration of the awards banquet was held and the same positive vibe could be felt in the room as the PVSOA gave out their sportsmanship awards, most valuable players, and other miscellaneous awards for service, contributions and dedication to the soccer community at large.

James Duggan, who was the master of ceremonies at last Friday's banquet, said he thinks it's amazing that the PVSOA is still going strong with its banquet.

"You are all a part of history," Duggan told the award winners. "Our program gets bigger every year as we have the entire history of our awards in that program."

Chief among the recognized people at the banquet are the sportsmanship



David DelBuono, the outgoing PVSOA President, was inducted into the Massachusetts Interscholastic Soccer Officials Association. He was recognized at the PVSOA banquet for that accomplishment by James Duggan.



Joe Santos was the Downie Award winner this year. He stands with James Duggan.

awards. Coaches like Eric Degnan of Monson girls soccer and Tom Rivet of Chicopee boys soccer, both of whom were present at this year's awards ceremony for other recognition, often said the sportsmanship awards for their teams were huge honors.

Degnan, who recent-

ly retired from coaching, said making sure his teams showed exemplary sportsmanship was even more important than winning league titles, and multiple sectional and state championships. Degnan has received nine sportsmanship awards from the PVSOA, all with Monson.

Rivet has three from the group. Two came with Chicopee boys soccer and one with East Longmeadow.

Outgoing President David DelBuono, who received an award, emphasized the importance of holding the annual event.

He said he appreciated the hard work of all the officials who continue to work hard for the student-athletes on the playing field.

The event was attended by family and friends of the awardees along with sever-



Reid Savoie receives a service award from David DelBuono.

See AWARDS PAGE 8



Dustyn Cook kicks off for the Pioneers.

Pioneers fall to Cape Cod in vocational tournament

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—In a span of six days, the Cape Cod Regional Vocational Tech football team traveled more than 650 miles and celebrated two upset victories in the State Vocational Tournament.

Following their 30-16 opening round victory at second-seeded Franklin County Tech on Nov. 14, the seventh-seeded Crusaders made another long bus trip from Harwich to Western Mass., on Nov. 21. This time, Cape Cod Tech overcame a ten point halftime deficit to defeat the third-seeded Pathfinder Tech Pioneers, 18-16, in a semifinal game played at Legion Field in Palmer.

It was the first meeting on the gridiron between the two squads and the final home game of the season for the



Anthony Arventos rushes toward the sideline.



Trevor Alexander heads into the crowd.

Pioneers.

"I'm very close with most of the seniors, so this is a very tough loss for those guys," said Pathfinder sophomore Cassian Kowalik. "It's going to be very diffi-

cult not playing with them again next year."

The Pioneers seniors, who wrapped up their high school football careers against rival Belchertown on Thanksgiving morning, are Dustyn Cook, Ethan Mooney, Stephen Curtis, Brandyn Wilson, Aiden Girard, Brandon Charron, Jaiden Ambrose, Wyatt Breault, Amias Kowalik, Harold Black, and Jarrett Skowrya.

"You're always disappointed to see the seniors' season come to an end, and I'm proud that they got this far," said Pathfinder head coach Bill Darling. "We're one of the only teams play-



Grayson Griswold attempts a pass.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

See PATHFINDER PAGE 8

- sports -

Railers comeback falls short

READING, PA — The Worcester Railers HC (9-9-1-1, 20 pts) fell to the Reading Royals (10-9-2-0, 22 pts) on Saturday, December 6th, with a final score of 4-5 in front of a crowd of 3,494 at the Santander Arena. The Railers are back in action on Wednesday night against the Adirondack Thunder at will take on the Royals again on home ice on January 14th at 7:05 p.m. EST.

Reading struck first with an early goal, scored by Massimo Rizzo (1-2-3), assisted by Nolan Burke (1-1-2) and Carter Berger (0-2-2) at 4:09 in the first. The Royals extended their scoring streak to two goals, the second added by Jeremy Michel (1-0-1), assisted by Rizzo and Ben Meehan (0-1-1) at 15:45 in the first (0-2). Worcester answered with a power play tally of their own at 17:46, scored by Gleb Veremyev (1-0-1), assisted by Anthony Callin (0-1-1) and Drew Callin (0-1-1) (1-2). Reading bookended the first period with their third goal of the night from Burke, assisted by Rizzo and Berger at 19:24. Reading grabbed the only goal in the second period, a tipped shot from Robbie Stucker (0-1-1), re-directed by Nick Capone (1-0-1), also assisted by Artem Kulakov (0-1-1) at 7:46. A final Reading goal was scored by Kyle Haskins (1-0-1) at 2:54 in the third. Worcester answered the Royals' fifth goal with three

goals in the second half of the period. The first by Matt DeMelis (1-1-2) (2-5), the second by Anthony Repaci (1-1-2) (3-5), and the third by Lincoln Hatten (1-1-2) (4-5). The clock ran out just as Worcester pushed for their goal to tie the game and force overtime, but the game ended in a 5-4 Royals' victory.

Reading opened the game with an early lead at 4:09. Royal's forward Massimo Rizzo (4th) tucked the puck in between the pipe and left skate of Parker Gahagen (0-1). Reading stretched their lead to two goals with a score from Jeremy Michel (1st) at 15:45 (0-2). A chance for the Railers to narrow the gap came late in the period as they went on their third power play of the night, which opened the ice for Anthony Callin to feed a pass from behind the net to Gleb Veremyev (2nd) for Worcester's first goal at 17:46 (1-2). T.J. Walsh headed to the box shortly after the tally for holding, which put Reading on their first power play of the night. Nolan Burke (3rd) nabbed a goal for the Royals 28 seconds into Walsh's penalty to re-establish their two-goal lead. Shots on goal were 12-16 in favor of Reading.

The Royals' fourth goal of the night came just over a third of the way through the second period from forward Nick Capone (2nd). Worcester played the period on the defensive and found

themselves down a man on two separate occasions. Neither penalty resulted in a Royals goal, but Capone's scored soon after the clock ran out on Riley Ginnell's time served for high-sticking. Worcester was kept off of the board in the second which left the score at 4-1 Reading to close the second. Worcester trailed in shots on goal with nine to Reading's 12. Reading was assessed one penalty served by Ben Meehan.

As play resumed in the third, Worcester worked to cut into the Royals three-goal lead, turned four as Kyle Haskins (5th) added another to Reading's tally for the evening at 2:54. Worcester opened the floodgates on Reading's net and scored three times in the second half of the period. Matt DeMelis scored an even strength goal at the 12:41 mark to make it a three-goal game. Worcester then called its timeout and pulled goaltender Thomas Gale to give the team an extra attacker. Repaci (6th) (3-5), and Hatten (8th) (4-5) each added their own goals with the extra-attacker on to get back to within one. Despite their offensive push across the final 2:30 of the third, Worcester fell short by one as the final horn sounded. The final score was 5-4 Reading. Final shots were 41-35 Worcester, and final penalties were six for the Royals and three for the Railers.

TURLEY SPORTS FROM PAGE 7

Force. He spent many of his years working as a mechanic at Westover Air Reserve Base right in his hometown of Chicopee.

But he also spent some of his time overseas during his early days in the military.

"I bought my first SLR while I was in Thailand," Henry said. He was looking to capture moments from his tours in foreign places and began taking pictures.

He eventually built his own dark room at his home. But he did not do too much more with photography until digital became more prevalent and he was encouraged to apply to the Chicopee Register following his retire-

ment from the military in 2006.

He was put in contact with then-sports Editor Lou Zoldy, and has been a fixture with Turley Sports ever since. Additionally, over the years, his non-sports photo spreads have also been a huge support for Turley's mission of capturing the big events in the communities. Among other things, he has covered the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Holyoke for many years, and has done many photo spreads in Agawam, Holyoke, and Chicopee in recent years.

In accepting their letters of commendation, both thanked the PVSOA for recognizing their work. Henry recognized the student-athletes and their accomplish-

ments as what has found him the most enjoyment in the work he has done for the past 20 years.

Turley Sports is dedicated to the coverage of high school sports with a boots-on-the-ground type of approach, attending as many events as possible with photo or story coverage. Both Henry and Peterson's loyalty to Turley and to the student-athletes in the region personify the approach and the pursuit of that mission.

Peterson was just the third writer to be recognized by the PVSOA while Henry became the first photographer to receive a letter of commendation from the organization. The PVSOA has been awarding letters of commendation since 1979.

PATHFINDER FROM PAGE 7

ing at the end of the season here for some type of trophy, so I'm really proud of the boys."

Pathfinder Tech (5-6) didn't have very much trouble dispatching sixth-seeded Smith Vocational, 42-12, at home in the first round of the Vocational Tournament.

The Pioneers have qualified for the Vocational Tournament three times since 2022, but they haven't advanced to the championship game yet. They lost at Nashoba Valley Tech in the 2022 semifinals.

"This is the second time during the past four years that we've lost in the Vocational semifinal game," Darling said. "We're still in the building process and our goal is to play in the championship game."

After recovering a fumble with 8:24 left in the first quarter, the visitors from Cape Cod put together a 16-play scoring drive. The series was capped off with a three yard TD run by junior running back Thomas Allen less than a minute into the second quarter.

Pathfinder sophomore Elijah Cardenas tackled junior running back Chaz Thomas in the backfield on

the two-point conversion play.

The Pioneers dominated the second quarter as they scored 16 unanswered points.

With 7:49 remaining in the first half, sophomore quarterback Grayson Griswold completed a 36-yard pass to Skowrya at the Crusaders 33 yard line.

Four plays later, Griswold, who completed four passes for 101 yards, scrambled 11 yards into the endzone capping off the seven play scoring drive.

Cook made the extra point attempt giving the home team a 7-6 advantage with 5:32 left in the second quarter.

After the Pioneers defense forced the Crusaders to punt, Griswold connected with Cassian Kowalik, who made an outstanding one-handed catch before rumbling about 20 yards into the endzone, for an impressive 51-yard TD reception.

"The cornerback was on my back, so I couldn't really back up. I just jumped as high as I could and I put my hand up and hoped I could catch it," Kowalik said. "I then saw green grass and I went for it."

Cook added the extra point, which gave Pathfind-

er Tech a 14-6 lead with two minutes left in the half.

Then junior Anthony Arventos sacked the Cape Cod quarterback in the end zone for a safety.

The Pioneers offense couldn't score another touchdown before the first half ended.

The Crusaders (7-4) received the second half kickoff and marched down the field.

Thomas scored on a one yard plunge into the end zone with 4:25 left in the third quarter.

Pathfinder Tech held a slim four point lead (16-12) as the two-point play failed.

With 11:09 remaining in the fourth quarter, the Crusaders retook the lead following a 19-yard TD run from junior Anthony Bartlett.

Arventos returned the ensuing kickoff about 80 yards down the left sideline for a touchdown. The long return was nullified due to a holding penalty on Pathfinder Tech.

The Pioneers offense turned the ball over on downs on their final two series of the game.

Griswold left the game late in the fourth quarter with an injury.

T-Birds get big win over Bruins

PROVIDENCE, R.I. - The Springfield Thunderbirds (6-11-3-2) rode an otherworldly performance from their goalie to a 3-1 win over the Providence Bruins (17-5-0-0) on Sunday inside Amica Mutual Pavilion.

Vadim Zherenko had the busiest first period of anybody in the building, as the T-Birds goaltender was subjected to 15 attempts in a furious first-period push by the Bruins. Zherenko stood his ground, relenting only a power-play one-timer to Georgii Merkulov.

However, before Merkulov broke through, the T-Birds used their first shot on net of the day to get a fortuitous bounce and a 1-0 lead as Matthew Peca threw a puck off the legs of Hunter Skinner and through Michael DiPietro at 6:20 of the first period.

Providence wound up outshooting Springfield by a 15-2 margin in the opening frame, but the T-Birds responded with a great start to the second, as Chris Wagner found open space in the low slot and wired a perfect wrist

shot over DiPietro's glove at 2:04, off a great find from Nikita Susuev.

The T-Birds played a much more balanced second period, limiting Providence's high-danger chances and allowing Zherenko clear sight lines to deny all 11 Bruins shots that did reach the net.

The pressure only intensified in the final 20 minutes for Zherenko, as the Providence attack emptied the tank on the Springfield goal mouth with 20 shots on net in the final period, but "Big Z" had responses every single time, including a highlight-reel denial of Christian Wolanin on a one-timer from the right-wing circle in the closing minutes.

Sam Stange eventually gave the T-Birds a breath with an empty-netter with less than 30 seconds to play to usher the visitors to a victory. Zherenko completed his masterpiece with 45 stops.

The T-Birds are back on the ice next Saturday, Dec. 13, as they pay a visit to Utica to take on the Comets; puck drop is set for 7:00 p.m. at Adirondack Bank Center.

AWARDS FROM PAGE 7

al recognizable faces who have served as officials for many years.

Duggan said he is look-

ing forward to having everyone back next years for the 80th years of the awards. The banquet was established in 1946.

The PVSOA recognizes

individuals with the Jimmie Downie and Larry E. Briggs Awards as well as plaques given to referees who had achieved milestone years of service.

CHARLES DICKENS FROM PAGE 2

as Gad's Hill, a house he spotted 30 years ago in his youth and desired to have.

What Dickens tried to avoid was repeating the mistakes his father made, which included falling into debt. Dickens and his family moved into Gad's Hill in 1857.

Though he achieved much success, Dickens kept an exhausting schedule of writing and touring all over Europe and the United States for his readings. His last tour of the U.S. was in 1867.

Thierfelder talked about Dickens' other successful Christmas books. "The Cricket on the Hearth" (1845) was released in December of 1845 and is a Christmas novella focusing on the Peerybingle family and their domestic life. In December of 1846, Dickens released "The Battle of Life", a story about two sisters and their intertwined love for their father's ward, Alfred.

The last Christmas novella by Dickens is "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain" (1848).

This story follows a chemist who is haunted by painful memories and

a spectral double who offers to remove them. He accepts but discovers that makes him lose compassion and empathy, and he spreads this forgetting to others, turning them cruel. The chemist realizes that even painful memories are essential to human connection and must be embraced and not forgotten.

After writing these five notable books, Dickens went on to write over 20 more Christmas stories during his writing career. "A Christmas Carol" was written when Dickens was 31 years old and this Christmas story along with the others helped Dickens find a way to recoup his former glory as a writer.

When he wrote "A Christmas Carol", Thierfelder said that Dickens, "certainly spread the message about what Christmas could and should be."

The book was self-published, and it sold out in one week. With this success, Dickens would return to financial stability. At the same time, the story inspired interest in the holiday season during Victorian Era England.

Overall, every Christmas book by Dickens was successful and each had a

unique story behind them, shared by Thierfelder.

"The Chimes" was written during a family trip Dickens took while he was in Italy. "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain" was just as successful as the previous four books but had a unique ghost idea tied to it.

Ghost stories were a popular theme in Dickens' stories, including the Christmas ones.

Thierfelder reminded his viewers that Dickens always shifted back to other stories and gave many good ones to the world, including the holiday novellas. At the end of the presentation Thierfelder encouraged his audience to explore other stories written by Dickens.

"You just might find some other gems," Thierfelder said.

Thierfelder would then take questions that were left by viewers and were read by Dalal. When asked about his favorite stories by Dickens, Thierfelder mentioned he likes the book, "The Signal-Man", a ghost story by Dickens.

When talking about film adaptations of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol", Thierfelder said his favorite is the 1951 movie with Alastair Sim.

R	A	B	B	I	S	S	A	L	I	N	E		
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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.

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- community -



Abby, in the center, is shown alongside Nicole Mendicino and Patricia Lundstrom of Oak Rose Designs and Rosie's Crafts. This was Abby's first craft fair.



Creatively knitted animal hats were made by Knotty or Nice.



The Quaboag Church ran a gift raffle and 50/50 raffle during its annual craft fair.

PEPPERMINT CHRISTMAS FROM PAGE 1

"The Legend of the Candy Cane". This story is the inspiration for the Peppermint Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair.

The shape of a candy cane is in the shape of a shepherd's staff. With Jesus as their shepherd, the church is their flock. The flavoring of the candy cane is peppermint, which is comparable to hyssop. Hyssop is part of the mint family and was used in Old Testament times for purification and sacrifice.

It was busy as this year's craft fair brought shoppers from Brookfield and neighboring communities to shop for those thoughtful gifts that count. This craft fair

displayed various types of creativity.

There were gorgeous picture frames featuring sea glass and stones made by The Glassy Lady. This new crafter started designing these picture frames earlier this year and was started by The Glassy Lady alongside her 11-year-old granddaughter. There were various designs, including Christmas themed characters made by sea glass and stones.

For those who love maple syrup, Bryson's Maple Syrup of Monson had a table of goodies in this year's Peppermint Christmas Craft Fair. Family members of Bryson, Jodi and Briea, were at the Quaboag Church represent-

ing Bryson's Maple Syrup, a company Bryson started when he was 11 years old.

This year, Bryson's Maple Syrup celebrated 15 years in business.

Bryson's Maple Syrup's vendor table had all maple syrup-based products, such as maple crunch, cream, candy, sugar, and maple whoopie pies.

"Everything you see here and more," Jodi said.

Carol's Creations displayed the artwork by Carol Simpson of Fiskdale. Simpson has been painting for 65 years and was offering prints of her work that are based off her original paintings. Many of Simpson's prints are paintings of birds and her chosen art medium

is acrylic.

Simpson was joined by several members of her family as this year was her fourth year as a vendor for the Peppermint Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair.

You're never too young to begin crafting as Abby, representing Rosie's Crafts and Oak Rose Designs, was at her first craft fair. Rosie's Crafts had these creative travel bags with a tic-tac-toe theme.

Oak Rose Designs was founded by Nicole Mendicino and Patricia Lundstrom and is based in Brookfield. These owners have been crafting since 2021 and were excited to bring Abby aboard to help out during the Peppermint Christmas



Sea glass picture frames were made by the Glass Lady.

Craft & Vendor Fair.

This year's Peppermint Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair was a success and a festive way to celebrate with

fellow crafters, friends, and family. The church provided refreshments and meals during the craft fair.

For more informa-

N BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

lumber for interior walls, metal roofing for outdoor runs, unopened/unexpired dog food, soft dog treats, pill pockets, canned chicken/tuna/salmon, bleach/disinfecting cleaners, paper towels, laundry detergent, dryer sheets, dish soap, heavy-duty trash bags, dog waste bags, scrub brushes/mops/buckets, towels and blankets (new, clean or gently used), T-shirts and other fabric scraps for bedding, collars and leashes, harnesses, food and water bowls, grooming supplies, durable toys, pet-safe shampoo and deodorizer, potty pads and more.

Monetary donations or gift cards will also be accepted.

The fundraiser will be held until Dec. 31 at the Town Clerk's office.

People can bring a donated item from the above list to be entered into the raffle. Every donation will qualify for one ticket entry into the raffle to win dog tag number 1. The raffle will also include kennel tag number 1 (for kennels with five dogs or more).

Winners of the contest will be announced on Jan. 2, 2026.

For more information, call the Town Clerk at 508-867-0203 or email townclerk@northbrookfield.net.

Holden Hospital fund requests

The board approved two requests from the Police Department for use of Holden Hospital funds.

The first request was from the Police Chief in the amount of \$1,480.82 to cover emergency repairs to the sally port garage door at the Police Department, and the other request was for \$585 to purchase three defibrillator replacement batteries.

A suggestion was made during the meeting to also replace the pads for the defibrillators at \$58 a piece, bringing the second request total up to \$933.

Sewer easement

Town Administrator Ronald Aponte said National Grid received drafts of articles 24 and 25, which are related to the purchase of a town-owned sewer easement.

"Wording has been vetted by KP Law so now its up to

the town to convey or at least authorize the board to enter into those agreements."

Petraitis said the board is waiting to hear a response

from National Grid regarding the articles.

Grant application

The board approved a request from Police Officer Jeff Martin to apply

for a grant in the amount of \$35,950 from the Law Enforcement Body-Worn Camera Program through the Massachusetts Office of

Grants and Research. There is no town match needed to receive this grant.

Fire/Highway buildings project

Committee Chair Peter

Orsi said the Fire Department headquarters building is expected to be completed by early February 2026.

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DEADLINE
January 28, 2026

PUBLICATION DATE
February 18, 2026



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- community -

Wings of song performs 'Night, Moon, Stars' Dec. 13-14

STURBRIDGE – The community chorus Wings of Song offers a program of songs for Christmas and the Winter Solstice in two upcoming concerts.

The first, Saturday, Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m., will be presented at St. Joachim Chapel, part of St. Anne – St. Patrick Parish, 16 Church St., Fiskdale. The second is Sunday, Dec. 14 at 3 p.m., at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Both concerts are free, with a freewill offering collected at intermission. The venues are fully handicap-accessible. As always, free refreshments will be served after each concert.

Folks are encouraged to arrive early to be sure of a seat.

Over his two decades as Wings of Song Music Director, Nym Cooke has introduced the chorus and its audiences to a wide variety of music. This program is

no exception.

Pieces come from places as far apart as Denmark and South Africa. Musical styles range from French Baroque opera to white gospel. Featured instruments include handbells, djembe, and upright bass. Compositional dates stretch from the early 1500s (composer: King Henry VIII of England) to 2025 (composer: Wings of Song tenor Gianni Davilli).

Moods vary, from deeply peaceful to ferocious. Familiarity ranges from widespread (classic Christmas songs such as "O Little Town of Bethlehem") to non-existent (two world premieres).

Pieces last less than a minute to over five minutes. Vocal range spans almost four octaves. Musical tex-

tures range from highly contrapuntal (rounds such as "This Longest Night" and "Full Moonlight Dance") to grandly homophonic (the ever-popular "O Holy Night," in John Rutter's magnificent arrangement).

The interlocking themes of night, moon, and stars proved to be enormously rich: many wonderful texts and pieces of music have been written to celebrate the mystery of darkness, or to bring spiritual light and uplift at the darkest time of the year. People are strongly encouraged to bring stars or moons to these concerts, to be held or hoisted aloft at key points in the proceedings. (More than one moon is fine, in the spirit of celebration.)

Cooke waxes enthusiastic about the chorus: "One

of the many good things about this group is that we are becoming more and more a collaborative enterprise. Rather than me saying, 'This is how this piece should go' and that's it, I start things off and then chorus members come up with all sorts of great contributions—an idea for dynamics here, a pertinent question about breathing there, an instrumental suggestion from someone else. There are so many deeply musical people in this group! And equally important are the devoted folks who just love to sing, and who help make our sound as big and thrilling as it is!"

People attending these concerts are in for a treat – a deep dive into some of the enduring mysteries of this charged time, mysteries stemming both from the natural world and from Christian tradition. Miracles will abound. Come and hear!



Local author to hold book signing event on Dec. 13

WEST BROOKFIELD – Former West Brookfield resident Jonathan Cook has released a novel about New England's criminal underbelly, "The Vampires of York, Maine: A Modern Crime Story" and will host meet the author book signing events across Worcester County.

A meet the author book signing will be held on Saturday, Dec. 13 at Moon Magick Café by Chey in Southbridge

from 2-5 p.m.

"The Vampires of York, Maine: A Modern Crime Story" follows the misadventures of Jerry O'Shaughnessy, journalist turned bar owner, as he gets involved in a missing girl case. In the process, he uncovers human trafficking, a neo-Nazi gang and supernatural elements in coastal Maine.

The novel is currently available online and at Tidepool Bookshop on Chandler Street in Worcester.

Senior Center lists activities

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The North Brookfield Senior Center, located at 29 Forest St., will offer the following events and activities during the month of December.

Activities include:

music bingo on Monday, Dec. 15 at 10 a.m.; and drawing class – Portfolio Work on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 11 a.m.

A blood pressure/glucose clinic will be held on Monday, Dec. 15 at 10:30 a.m.

NATIVITIES FROM PAGE 1

the World" is unique, but that they all capture the same event – the birth of Jesus Christ.

Joyce said she tends to like simply nativity scenes the most, and she pointed out several special ones in their collection. One featured the holy family being covered by an angel in robes, and another is made out of paper.

The Alts also have nativities made by well-known artists, including Thomas Kinkade and Jim Shore. The nativity made by Shore is also a music box.

Glen and Joyce said they were able to purchase the music box nativity at a yard sale for only \$2, after another person looking at it before they had accidentally broken it.

Glen said many people came through "Nativities From Around the World" this year, especially on Friday night to hear the music of the Weir River Concert Band and Spirit and Grace.



This nativity scene featured the holy family inside the word "peace."

People have also been very generous in dropping off nonperishable food items to support the local food pantries.

Joyce recalled one woman who attended the event crying tears of joy, because she saw a nativity just like one she had as a child.

The other rooms at the church contained the extensive collections of event founders Karen Dusty and Gail Ann Anderson, as well as nativities belonging to their family members, other church members and community members.

About the church

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in North Brookfield got its start meeting in the room of a member's home in Spencer. As its membership grew, the church moved into another home, and then a storefront next to the town hall.

The church building was constructed over 20 years ago and draws members from North Brookfield, Spencer, Barre, Warren, Hardwick and many other towns.

For more information,



Mary and Joseph are shown proudly looking at baby Jesus.

visit www.churchofjesuschrist.org, click on "Find a Church" and search for the closest location. You can also follow the church on Facebook as "North Brookfield The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints."



Snowbabies recreated the manger scene and shared a message of peace and joy.



TURLEY PHOTO BY DERICK VELLI

These hand-painted figures of Joseph and Mary embraced baby Jesus.



The Little Drummer Boy announced the arrival of Jesus Christ in this nativity scene.

- public notices -

TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the North Brookfield Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing to consider a petition to locate poles, wires, cables, and fixtures, including the necessary anchors, guys, and other such sustaining and protecting fixtures, brought before it by Massachusetts Electric Company

d/b/a National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc **Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 6:15 PM** at the North Brookfield Police Department, 55 School Street, North Brookfield, MA 01535.

The pole location that will be considered is as follows:

Madbrook Rd- National Grid to install 1 JO Pole on Madbrook Rd beginning at a point approximately 915 feet south of the centerline of the intersection of

Oakham Rd. Install a new Pole 25-25 to power new residential home.

Said hearing will begin at 6:15 PM and continue until completion, and will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 166.

Jason M Petraitis, Chairman
Jamie Gilman
Ralph Kay

12/05, 12/12/2025

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Please email or mail your resume and cover letter to the Town Administrator, Jim Ferrera, townadministrator@warren-ma.gov or by mail to 48 High Street, P.O. Box 609, Warren, MA 01083.

Salary range is negotiable from \$60,000 to \$64,500 and is based on relevant work experience, certifications, and educational background. Position open until filled, with a first look at resumes starting on December 22, 2025.

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