

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Firefighters in training

Children explored their local fire station

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – In partnership with the Joshua Hyde Public Library, the Sturbridge Fire Department welcomed families on a tour of their fire station this past weekend.

Over 30 people consisting of children and their families met with JHPL Children's Librarian Meredith Fournier in the Public Safety Complex lobby in Sturbridge to meet the firefighters. Fournier took a moment to thank the firefighters for their time and for giving a tour of their fire station.

Recently, members of

TRAINING PAGE 5



Kids were alongside firefighters of the Sturbridge Fire Department, who gave a tour of their fire station this past weekend.

TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

Firefighter received certificate of recognition

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Correspondent

BROOKFIELD – Firefighter Philip Chaffee received a certificate of recognition from the Select Board at their meeting on Feb. 10.

According to a letter from Spencer Fire and Emergency Services, which was posted on their social media and read by the board, Chaffee assisted in lifesaving measures for citizen Ken Rizner.

Rizner was involved in a car accident after he went into cardiac arrest while behind the wheel, crashing into a utility vehicle before crashing into another citizen's car.

FIREFIGHTER PAGE 5

NB School Committee ended tuitioning-out talks

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – School Committee Chair Matt Grant said the committee members would discuss and vote on whether or not to enter into a tuition agreement with a neighboring school district for students in grades seven through 12.

The School Committee received tuition agreement

proposals from both Quabog Regional School District and Quabbin Regional School District. A task force worked with a consultant to compare the potential financial impact of each proposal, as well as the cost of keeping the high school students in district.

At the Feb. 18 meeting, School Committee Kristen Giangrande said several open forums were held over the past week, allowing staff, community members,

parents and students to ask questions and share feedback and concerns.

“Regionalization versus tuition agreement was discussed lightly,” she said. “Several parents shared their positive experiences in North Brookfield and shared their concerns about a tuition agreement.”

Grant said about 20 students attended an open forum that past Friday and they heard a lot of questions and concerns.

Committee discussion
Grant asked the committee members to share their input prior to taking a vote about a tuition agreement.

Grant discussed a recent correspondence he received from Quabog Regional Superintendent Stephen Duff regarding special education costs.

He said the school district's special education department analyzed the cost of services for special education students and estimated

it to be \$1.2 million. He said the proposal from the Quabog Regional School District estimated the cost to be around \$450,000.

He said the committee could utilize the services of independent consultant TMS, Inc. to review the special education needs of the students. This would take about two weeks and cost up to \$8,000.

“Certainly, I think we do need to understand... how does one special edu-

cation department look at one thing and get a number and how does one get a vastly different number?” Grant asked. “Just understanding that would help us all get to a realization.”

Director of Student Services Dr. Michael Baldassarre said his department never received a methodology from the Quabog Regional School District to calculate special education

SCHOOL COMMITTEE PAGE 6

The Next Watershed Moments

By Keith Davies
Coordinator, Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
Guest Contributor

Editor's Note: This is the third and final part in a multi-part series about the Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council.

So, what's next for these four rivers: Swift, Ware, Quaboag, and Chicopee? C4R has got the ball rolling, but it won't keep rolling if there is no push behind it.

Who pushes? Leaders and volunteers, communities.

During 2026, C4R will hold a series of community information sessions to highlight our potential and vision. The first will be a spring kick-off event at the Palmer Historical Cultural Center, 2072 Main St., in Three Rivers on Sunday, March 22 at 2 p.m.

Throughout the year, C4R will have fun paddles, nature paddles, clean ups (suggested sites?), water quality monitoring, and more.

We hope to post on our website our events schedule by March 22. These events and the meetings will be a good opportunity to see our rivers, meet others and hear how we can together Care 4 rivers-C4R.



TURLEY FILE PHOTOS
Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council Coordinator Keith Davies prepared paddlers for the inaugural launch on the Lower Ware River Blue Trail in spring 2023.

People with water resource and aquatic biological savvy can also help. We have reached a point where we can do more as a community group to Care 4 rivers.

Our vision is to promote stewardship, conservation, enjoyment, and restoration of the rivers, ecosystems and wildlife habitats of the Chicopee-4 Rivers basin, while balancing and fostering river friendly city and town economies and community life.

We have planted the seed for this with our basic monitoring and paddling trails. But sprouts need more to grow.

We could go to the next level by adding broader water quality monitoring (adopt a stream, macro-

WATERSHED PAGE 6



A Cub Scout picked up litter and scrap metal at Ware River Park in Gilbertville, near the Blue Trail launch site.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO
On the left sits Donna Major and Tom Lewandowski, and on the right is Sue Lewandowski and Mike Gibbons enjoying a chicken BBQ meal at the American Legion in North Brookfield.

Sons of the Legion held chicken BBQ

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Sawyer-Mathieu-Kearns American Legion Post 41, 163 North Main St., was the place to go and enjoy a delicious chicken BBQ meal.

This past weekend, the Sons of the Legion prepared around 80 meals in total. The American Legion had a delicious dessert after dinner. There



Dessert was served after dinner with this red, white, and blue American flag themed cake.

was a red, white, and blue American flag themed cake already sliced and ready for the taking.

In charge of running the chicken BBQ was

LEGION BBQ PAGE 6

- community -

QRSD Committee approves 2026/2027 school calendar

By Ellenor Downer
edowner@turley.com

BARRE – The Quabbin Regional School District Committee approved the 2026/2027 school calendar, which the teacher’s union already approved, at the school committee Jan. 8 meeting.

QRSD Superintendent Colleen Mucha said Labor Day is late this year, Sept. 7. Teachers would attend school on Thursday, Aug. 27 and Friday, Aug. 28. Students would begin school on Monday, Aug. 31 through Sept. 3. Students and teachers would have Friday, Sept. 4 and Monday, Sept. 7 off.

She said the last day of school would be Wednesday, June 16, 2027 if there were no snow days, an unlikely occurrence and Thursday, June 24, 2027 with five snow days.

Agricultural program Superintendent Mucha said she would be meeting at the New Braintree Grade School with someone from the Department of Agriculture this month as the school district moves forward with a plan to offer a vocational agricultural program. She said most likely the New Braintree school would be the site for an agricultural program. She also said it would likely be a collaborative with another school district or districts to get enough students to make it worthwhile.

The district also seeks community input through a survey on the proposed agricultural program. Residents from Quabbin community towns along with neighboring towns may answer an online survey by visiting the district’s website at qrdsd.org.

New course offerings Superintendent Mucha said in her report to the school committee that the guidance department planned to hold more face to face meetings with high school students to help them with the new course offerings available. She said it is a busy time for the students and she hoped these meetings would mean fewer course changes among students.

Renewal of drug free community grant

She said the drug free community grant was up for renewal. She said it was highly competitive and the application process entailed a lot of work. She said Q-DRUG, who were involved in the grant, recently changed their name to Quabbin Community Care. With the name change, they will expand their focus beyond drug awareness to

community endeavors such as community closets at all the schools and addressing food insecurity.

EV charging station Building, Grounds and Security Director Kevin Clark discussed with the Building, Grounds, Safety and Technology Subcommittee the possible installation of Electric Vehicle charging stations at the Quabbin schools. They met with a sales person from a company that provided EV charging stations for a cost of about \$50,000. School Committee member and a member of that subcommittee said the charging stations must be available for hook up 24 hours. They discussed possible fees, reduced fees and higher rates for night time use. The next step, which was non-binding, would be for someone to come out and look

at the school locations to see if EV charging stations would be feasible.

Policy Review/Reform School committee member Debra Chamberlin of the Policy Review/Reform Subcommittee asked that the following policies were removed from the table: IKF graduation requirement, IKFE competency determination and KJF Sunday/weekend schedules/programs and required a vote. The school committee approved those policies.

Trip approval The school committee approved a change in location of the Nature’s Classroom trip for the Hubbardston Center School from Charlton to Swanzy, New Hampshire. For years, Hubbardston students went to the Charlton location. They opened a new Nature’s Classroom at the

New Hampshire location and recommended Hubbardston students attend their new location. It was also less money.

Other business The superintendent said she participated in a meeting with 23 schools and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Twenty-one of the 23 school are schools with low enrollment and “held harmless” by the state. They received less state funding.

Superintendent Mucha said the North Brookfield School Committee would be meeting this month to discuss the proposed tuition agreement from the Quabbin District. The District should hear from them sometime in February. She also reported the high school track team broke eight records.

Tri-Parish donates to local missions

NEW BRAINTREE – Tri-Parish Community Church members voted at their Feb. 1, 2026 annual meeting to donate all the proceeds raised from the 2025 Christmas in New Braintree craft fair to the local missions supported by church.

A decision had been made in mid-2025 for the church to host the event, which had been on hiatus for several years. It was a successful event, featuring over 35 vendors and raising just over \$2,400, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers within the church and greater community.

An anonymous donor and Webster First Federal Credit

Union contributed funds as well, with the donation from Webster First specifically earmarked for the Hardwick Food Pantry and the church’s Mustard Seed program.

The proceeds have been distributed to the Hardwick Food Pantry, the Church’s Deacon’s Fund and Mustard Seed program. The Hardwick Food Pantry, located in the Calvinistic Congregational Church in Hardwick, serves many in the communities of Hardwick and New Braintree throughout the year. The Deacon’s Fund provides emergency financial assistance to individuals to help with a variety of critical needs such as the

costs of heating oil, electricity or rent.

Referrals for assistance come through the Hardwick Food Pantry, church office or deacons of the Tri Parish.

The Mustard Seed program provides a monthly meal to the Mustard Seed ministry in Worcester. Volunteers meet to prepare a nutritious meal, complete with fruit and homemade brownies the third Monday of each month at the New Braintree Town Hall, which is then transported to the Mustard Seed shelter in Worcester.

The church members are grateful for the support of the community and all the vendors, who participated in the

event, enabling the church to fulfill its mission to love God and its neighbors through worship and service. Donations to these worthwhile missions can be made to the Tri-Parish Community Church with specific designation written on the memo line of the check, mailed to Tri Parish Community Church, P.O. Box 202, New Braintree, MA 01531 or through the church’s website by visiting triparishcommunitychurch.org.

Those interested in participating in this year’s Christmas in New Braintree, either as a vendor or volunteer, should email the church office at tri-parishcc@gmail.com.

Burgess third graders kick-off Sturbridge Celebration of America 250

Family Fun Day and Parade also planned

STURBRIDGE – One-hundred and twenty “Happy Birthday America” cards created by Burgess Elementary School third graders are now hanging in the Senior Center. This project was developed in collaboration with the Sturbridge America 250th Anniversary Committee, established in January 2025. In the coming months, residents and visitors will enjoy a number of community programs created by and coordinated with this Committee.

Expect to see special commemorative banners featuring an historical flag posted on poles along Routes 20 and 131. Look for programs focusing on the history of America at the Joshua Hyde Public Library, and from the Sturbridge Historical Society.

Old Sturbridge Village is hosting Revolutionary Game Nights at the Ox & Yoke Café. Participants will have the chance to win prizes such as special event tickets, Village crafts, and more. Check out “Revolutionary Bingo”: March 27, May 29; and “Revolutionary Trivia”: Feb. 27, April 24, and June 26. For more information about these events and the many other new 250th events that the Village will be hosting go to: osv.org.

Additional events sponsored by the Committee include an essay program for grade five students titled “What Does America Mean to You?” with an option for students to voluntarily sub-

mit essays to a town-wide recognition contest.

Local restaurants will participate in a “Taste of Sturbridge” event during March and April featuring patriotic-themed offerings.

Opacum Land Trust will incorporate Sturbridge historical landmarks into its April 2026 Vacation Scavenger Hunt. Also planned for May at the Senior Center are a tree planting and the burying of a time capsule.

Events will culminate in May and June. A Family Fun Day on May 16 features a Children’s Bike Decorating and Parade, followed with activities on the Common including: a Mini Big-Top Circus, face painting, T-shirt decorating, yard games, potato sack and three-legged races, music and more. A hot dog cart will also be available.

The Committee’s signature event will be held on June 27, and will feature a parade along Route 20 and Route 131 followed by a community festival on the Town Common. More information on these events will be forthcoming.

Volunteer recruitment and community engagement have been central to the Committee’s work. The Committee extends its appreciation to all residents, volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses supporting the America 250th Anniversary celebration.

If you are interested in participating in either/ both the Family Fun Day and the Parade, or simply wish to find more information, please contact the Sturbridge250 Committee by email: Sturbridge250@gmail.com.

Federated Church’s Irish Feast coming

STURBRIDGE – A Sturbridge tradition returns just in time for your St. Patrick’s Day celebration.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale will host its annual Irish Feast on Monday, March 16, at the historic Publick House Restaurant, inviting the community to gather for good food, good company, and a good cause.

This year’s Irish Feast will benefit both the Federated Church and The Center of Hope Foundation, Inc., a Southbridge-based nonprofit that supports people with disabilities and their families from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, helping them access resources, services, and opportunities to live meaningful, fulfilling

lives.

Guests will enjoy a buffet-style Irish dinner featuring corned beef and cabbage, boiled potatoes, carrots and turnips, dinner rolls and Irish soda bread, a choice of beverage, and a cupcake for dessert. Dinner will be served in two seatings: The early seating will take place from 4:30-6 p.m., while a later seating happens from 6:30-8 p.m.

Adult tickets are \$18, and children ages 4-12 are \$7.

Tickets must be purchased by March 15 as no tickets will be sold at the door. Tickets will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m.-noon starting Feb.13 in the Federated Church of Sturbridge parlor, 8 Maple St.,

where you may use cash, check, credit/debit card, or Venmo.

The church website at sturfed.org and Facebook page both offer payment links and QR codes for those wishing to purchase tickets using PayPal. You may also purchase tickets electronically using Venmo at @Federated-Church.

Please include your address, the number of meals you wish to purchase, and your preferred seating time. Time permitting, tickets purchased by Venmo will be mailed to the address provided. Late orders will be held at the door.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact the Church Office at 774-304-1021 or Ken Benson at 774-230-3848.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ’s presence and God’s grace in our lives. Learn more at sturfed.org or email churchoffice@sturfed.org.

N Brookfield Senior Center upcoming events in March

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

Activities include: Free Art Classes March 5 and 19 at 11 a.m.; Free Drawing Classes March 12 and 26 at 11 a.m.; Music Bingo March 16 at 10 a.m.; MassEDP Presentation March 17 at 11 a.m.; St. Patrick’s Day Lunch by Tri Valley (sing up required) March 17 at noon; Ed Spater Medicare Specialist drop in hours March 24 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Bemis Nursery Workshop (sign up required) March 23 at 1 p.m.; and Hip Hop Square Dance sponsored by the North Brookfield Cultural Council March 24 at 1:15 p.m.

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- community -

Federated Church announces 2026 Lenten services schedule

STURBRIDGE – The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale has announced its 2026 schedule of Lenten services, starting with Ash Wednesday, and culminating in the Easter Sunday celebrations.

Services are held at the church located at 8 Maple St. and the community is welcome to attend.

The Rev. David W. Cote will officiate the services, which began on Ash Wednesday and continue through Easter Sunday on April 5. Refreshments will be served in Fellowship Hall following each of the Sunday services.

On April 3, Good Friday, the congregation will gather in the Chapel at noon for meditation and prayer. An ecumenical Stations of the Cross service will also be held at St. Anne's Shrine, 16 Church St., Fiskdale.

The sunrise service at Old Sturbridge Village is an ecumenical service, with local faith communities participating, including Bethlehem Lutheran Church (Sturbridge), Brookfield Congregational Church (Brookfield), Elm Street Congregational Church (Southbridge), Holy Trinity Church (Southbridge), and St. Anne/St. Patrick Catholic Church (Fiskdale).

Area residents who wish to attend are advised to enter the Meet-

inghouse by way of the security gate at the top of the parking lot, dress appropriately for the weather and wear sturdy walking shoes. Food and drink are not permitted, except for bottled water.

The Village will not be open for touring during this event and restrooms will not be available.

The Lenten season includes the following services: March 1, Second Sunday of Lent, 9:30 a.m.; March 8, Third Sunday of Lent, 9:30 a.m.; March 15, Fourth Sunday of Lent, 9:30 a.m.; March 22, Fifth Sunday of Lent, 9:30 a.m.; March 29, Palm Sunday, 9:30 a.m.; April 1, Maundy Thursday, 6:30 p.m.; April 3, Good Friday Meditations and Prayer (Federated Church) and Ecumenical Stations of the Cross (St. Anne's Church), noon; April 5, Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Serve at Old Sturbridge Village, 6 a.m.; April 5, Easter Sunday Service (Federated Church), 9:30 a.m.

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

For more information, call 774-304-1021 or visit sturfed.org.



Submitted photos
The 2026 annual ice carving judges favorite theme award winner "Eagle with American Flag."



Calib Allen proudly held the "Golden Chisel" his family won for their ice carving "Eagle with American Flag"

Ice Carving winner announced

STURBRIDGE – On Feb. 14, the Friends of Sturbridge Trails (FrOST) held its 6th annual ice carving competition on the Riverlands open space property.

Twelve blocks of ice were taken out with 10 blocks returned and set out along the Grand Trunk Trail section of the Riverlands. In addition to viewing the ice sculptures, that had a theme of "celebrating our 250th Anniversary" visitors to the ice carving display were also treated to two professional ice carvers demonstrating their craft, and to keep it festive, there was a warming barrel and hot chocolate available.

Ice carvings set out along the trail were lit by candles, presenting a nice evening stroll.

The judges favorite for "best of theme" was the "Eagle with American Flag," carved by the Allen family. They were presented the "Golden Chisel" and a \$25 gift certificate to Deep Roots Distillery, who also provided the hot



The Allen family proudly stood behind their ice carving.

chocolate.

The Friends would like to thank the Sturbridge DPW for plowing out the trail and parking lot, Sturbridge Police for the light stand and assistance, Old Sturbridge Village for use of their parking lot for parking, the Sturbridge Tourist Association for event funding, and the crew of FrOST Volunteers led by Jen Scherer for pulling this all together.

The Friends of Sturbridge Trails is a 501 3c non-profit open to anyone who would like to support trails in Sturbridge. If you have questions or wanting to help in the organizational effort please email them directly at: Froststurbridge@gmail.com More information on FrOST or to "like us" can be found on their Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Sturbridge-Trails-476149822433894/>

and To learn more about trails in Sturbridge and membership information and link visit the Sturbridge Trails website: <http://www.treksturbridge.org/>

Visit us on the web
www.turley.com

Historical Commission announces 2026 scholarship

WEST BROOKFIELD – The West Brookfield Historical Commission is pleased to announce its 2026, 15th annual scholarship in the amount of \$2,000.

Qualified students must reside in West Brookfield and may attend Quaboag Regional High School, or be school-choice students, home schooled students, and independent school students.

This award is made possible through the J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust.

The students must be planning to attend either a four-year college/university program or a two-year college with the intent to transfer to a four-year college.

The Commission will show preference to study plans with concentration on History and Histo-

ry-related areas. Major or minors may include Political Science, Social Studies, Anthropology, Archaeology, Historical Preservation, Museum Studies, and Education in any of these related fields.

Applicants must submit a brief essay based on one of the Notable Persons or Significant Places listed on the application. All necessary information will be found on the West Brookfield Historical Commission website. <http://westbrookfield.org>

Essays are due no later than April 6.

Email info@westbrookfield.org or mail to: West Brookfield Historical Commission, P.O. Box 372, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

The application and details can be found on the Historical Commission website- <http://westbrookfield.org>.

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- opinion -

Snow flowers for an impending storm

As I write, we are expecting a blizzard. More snow in a winter that has already provided plenty, at least in my humble opinion.

Instead of focusing on all of that depressing news, why don't we "think spring" by focusing on bulbs that appear just as the snow is melting.

Perhaps the earliest and best known of the spring harbingers is the Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*). Toughened points on the leaf tips make it possible for the snowdrop to push through the crusty soil of late winter. Two or three strappy leaves grow from each bulb; most often there is just one flower.

You'll notice three white outer petals first and upon closer inspection you'll see green tipped inner petals. The flowers are held on the stem in a nodding fashion and in my experience they stay in bloom for upwards of three weeks.

Reportedly they are well adapted for bees, at least

those that are brave enough to venture out of the hive in search of pollen during the warmest days of late winter!

Snowdrops will naturalize if happy, increasing in numbers both above and below the ground! Although we "deadhead" most bulbs, keeping spent flower heads of this genus in place will allow seeds to ripen and new plants to form. It is interesting to observe the process of a snowdrop self-sowing.

Once the flower has gone by a large seed will form; because of its weight, the stem will bend toward the ground dropping its ripe seed at a perfect distance from the mother plant. Under no circumstances should the foliage of a bulb be removed until it is brown and dry.

It may not be the most beautiful to look at, but all the while that it is green it is

making and storing food for next year's flowers.

Glory of the Snow (*Chionodoxa luciciliae*) is also



one of the

first spring bulbs to appear, sometimes right through the melting snow. Most common in periwinkle blue with a white center, these six inch tall, six petaled flowers also appear in pink and white.

They thrive in full to part sun situations, whether it be the rock garden, at the base of shrubs or deciduous trees or even when planted in the lawn! They naturalize easily, forming large colonies by bulb offsets and self-sowing. They are deer resistant.

Glory of the Snow stay in bloom upwards of two

weeks, maybe longer if temperatures don't spike. Like other spring bloomers, the bulbs go dormant after the foliage ripens. It does not stick around long enough to be much of an eyesore in the garden.

One word of caution for those looking for the blue flowered lawn effect: don't mow until the foliage has yellowed or mow high to miss the foliage.

Another one of my favorite harbingers is the Snow Crocus (*Crocus tommasinianus*). Not to be confused with the large Dutch crocus, Snow Crocus is typically lilac in color and has white stems.

They grow about three inches tall and naturalize well with daughter corms forming around the mother corm. They are both squirrel and deer resistant.

Native to Hungary, Snow Crocus are sometimes called "Tommies" thanks to their species name, which was a

tribute to Muzio G. Spirito de Tommasini, a Hungarian botanist. Years ago we had these beauties in a sequence of spring bloomers that started with Snow Drops, moved on to the Snow Crocus, then on to a Daffodil and then finally the Spanish bluebell. The combination spanned March through May.

Just the thought of that versus what we are expecting in terms of weather has lightened my mood some; I hope it has done the same for you.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts, 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.

QUABOAG CURRENT TEAM



EDITOR
Paula Ouimette
pouimette@turley.com



ADVERTISING SALES
Dan Flynn
dfflynn@turley.com



STAFF WRITER
Ryan Drago
rdrago@turley.com



SPORTS EDITOR
Greg Scibelli
sports@turley.com

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PATRICK H. TURLEY
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President



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My friend is 65; shouldn't she be exempt from Medicare payroll taxes?

Dear Rusty:
My girlfriend is 65 and she just enrolled in Medicare.

She is still working full time as a nurse, but they are still deducting Medicare taxes from her paycheck. I thought as soon as you started Medicare, that they would no longer take any Medicare taxes from her paychecks. Is that not correct?

Signed: Concerned Friend

Dear Concerned Friend:
Your understanding about Medicare payroll tax is, indeed, not correct. Medicare taxes are levied on everyone, who works and earns, regardless of whether or not they are currently enrolled in the Medicare program. That is how Medicare has worked since it was first enacted in the mid-1960s and how it still works today.

For Your Information, everyone who works for an employer must pay Federal Insurance Contributions Act payroll tax of 7.65%. Most (6.2%) of that payroll tax goes to support Social Security, but 1.45% goes to support Medicare Part A. Self-employed individuals must also pay this tax under the Self-Employed Contribu-

tions Act, which is equivalent to FICA, except the self-employed individual must also pay the employer portion of the payroll tax. The Social Security portion of the FICA/SECA tax has an earnings cap (\$184,500 in 2026), but there is no cap on earnings for the Medicare portion of the FICA/SECA payroll tax. FYI, employers pay an equivalent amount of Social Security and Medicare taxes and the Medicare portion of the payroll tax is paid on all earnings. There is no cap on earnings from which the Medicare payroll tax is withheld.

To ensure understanding, Medicare Part A provides healthcare coverage for inpatient hospitalization services and Medicare Part B provides coverage for outpatient medical services (doctors, medical tests, etc.). That 1.45% of the FICA and SECA tax for the self-employed is paid by those who work to help fund the Medicare Part A program, which is premium-free for most Americans after age 65. For Medicare Part B, there is a separate premium

SOCIAL SECURITY
PAGE 10



Northern flicker

On President's Day I saw a northern flicker fly up into a tree as I traveled in Barre.

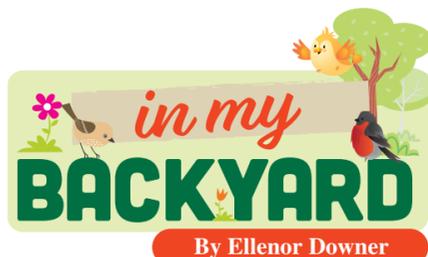
The white rump patch was clearly visible. A Brimfield resident said he has a friend in Belchertown, who occasionally has a flicker come to his suet feeder. Four or five bluebirds also frequent his suet feeder.

Northern flickers are a fairly, large woodpecker about 11 to 12 inches long. They are larger than a hairy woodpecker and smaller than a pileated woodpecker.

They appear brownish overall with a white rump patch that's is conspicuous in flight and often visible when they perch. The undersides of the wing and tail feathers are bright yellow for eastern birds or red for western birds. The brown plumage has black spots, barring and a black "bib." The sexes are similar, but the male has a black mustache.

Flickers spend a lot of time on the ground and like many woodpeckers fly in an undulating up and down path with flapping and gliding. They make a repeated flicker or "wicka-wicka-wicka" call and a loud "kleer."

They inhabit open forests, woodlots, groves and semi-open country. The female lays five to eight eggs sometimes



By Ellenor Downer

more. Both sexes incubate the eggs with the male incubating at night and part of the day. Both parents feed the young by regurgitation. The young leave the nest in about four weeks after hatching, but parents feed them for while. Later, they follow them to good foraging sites. They mainly eat ants and other insects. They also eat fruits and berries in fall and winter.

Bird bath visitors
A Brimfield resident sent an email recently. He said, "I have a heated bird bath so I modified it by placing rocks in the center so that the only water available is near the edge and birds can't immerse themselves in water to take a bath. The birds sit on the edge of the bird bath to drink."

He also said, "I have a trail camera aimed at the bird bath. I was looking at pictures taken during December (40,000) and saw that blue jays, house finches and juncos are the most frequent birds taking a drink. Birds that show up less often are cardinals, titmice and morning doves. Curiously chickadees drink infrequently even though they are often seen in the yard. We seldom see goldfinches drinking, but they are not seen in the yard often. I was surprised to see a downy woodpecker show up twice to get a drink. I can't recall ever seen a woodpecker drink at the bird bath before, summer or winter."

Helping birds
The Brimfield resident said creating brush piles provides shelter for birds. The piles also provide shelter for small animals as well. He said this time of year is a good time to trim trees and shrubs, a source of materials for a brush pile. He said someone sent him a link about the possible dan-

gers to birds of their feathers freezing if they take a bath in cold weather. For more information, people may visit the link at <https://blog.nature.org/2022/01/31/should-you-provide-birds-water-in-winter/>.

Project Feederwatch
The Brimfield resident also said, "I recently visited the Project Feederwatch 2025 results (https://cdn.feederwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Winter-Bird-Highlights-2025_12.22.2025.pdf). The chart shows the top 25 birds seen in the Northeast during last year. The top 11 species can be seen most days in our yard."

Here is the list: 1. chickadee, 2. dark-eyed junco, 3. northern cardinal, 4. downy woodpecker, 5. blue jay, 6. mourning dove, 7. white-breasted nuthatch, 8. American goldfinch, 9. house finch, 10. red-bellied woodpecker, 11. tufted titmouse, 12. American robin, 13. European starling, 14. house sparrow, 15. hairy woodpecker, 16. Carolina wren, 17. white-throated sparrow, 18. song sparrow, 19. red-winged blackbird, 20. common grackle, 21. American crow, 22. brown-headed cowbird, 23. chipping sparrow, 24. northern flicker and 25 purple fin

people may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005. The Palmer office has a new phone system and I will be getting an extension where messages may be left. I will publish the number as soon as it is set up.



OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

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

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- community -



Firefighter Cam assisted kids during a fun demonstration of using the firehose.



Kids were aiming the firehose at a bucket, which was used as a fire target.

TRAINING FROM PAGE 1

the Sturbridge Fire Department visited the library for story time. Shortly after, the library and the fire department thought of an idea to invite kids for a tour of the fire station.

The tour guides were the Sturbridge Firefighters Stephen, Wes, Cam, and Chris, who met all the kids inside the main office. According to Fournier, this is the first time the library has done a program where kids got to tour the fire department.

The main office was the first stop as Firefighter & Paramedic Stephen Joyce pointed out the dispatch center, which helps communicate calls for both the fire department and the police department.

The tour would then go down the hallway into the living space for the firefighters. In the living space and break room are trophies on display and one firefighter explained these are trophies from firefighter events where they compete against other fire departments. "The Firefighter Olympics" to put it simply.

The Fire Station side of the Public Safety Complex also has an exercise room for the firefighters. Just down the hall is the top of



Firefighter Stephen Joyce handed out junior firefighter helmets to the kids.



Junior Firefighter Jack, center, alongside Firefighter Towns, right, and Firefighter Tyler on the rescue gator.



Junior Firefighter Dean after taking a tour of the fire station.

the fire pole, which leads to the garage downstairs. All the guests made their way to the garage where all the vehicles were and waited to see a demonstration of firefighters using the fire pole.

Joyce said the public safety complex was built back in 1989 and is a reliable shared building with the police department. Now in the main garage, or apparatus bay, the firefighters showed all the vehicles they use when they're on the job.

One of the first vehicles the firefighters talked about was the tanker truck. This truck can carry approximately 2,000 gallons of water. The kids would then observe how the stretcher works inside an ambulance.

Firefighter Cam showed the



Firefighter Stephen Joyce demonstrated how the stretcher works inside the ambulance.

kids the Sturbridge Rescue Truck, which includes various equipment.

Joyce showed one of the tools to the kids that is referred to as "the Jaws of Life". This is a rescue tool designed to cutting and spreading metal and rescuing people who are in damaged or crushed vehicles.

One of the exciting parts of the tour was the kids being able to walk inside the back of one of the fire engines. As kids took turns exploring the inside of the engine, Fournier mentioned that these children are "firefighters in training".

Another fun activity during the fire station tour was learning how the firehose works. The kids would line up and get a turn to practice using the firehose.

One of the firefighters grabbed an orange bucket to be used as a target as the kids pretended to put out a fire with the firehose.

Towards the end of the tour, Firefighter Wes arrived in his fire gear. Wes was demonstrating how quickly he must put the gear on, how his equipment works and how it will protect him while looking for people in a burning building. The firefighters told the kids that they learn a lot at the fire academy, which teaches them the job and responsibilities of a firefighter.

The tour concluded with the Sturbridge Fire Department giving the kids some souvenirs, including junior firefighter helmets. All the kids thanked the Sturbridge Firefighters for the tour and



Firefighter Cayla made her way down the firepole.

got to hang out a little longer to take pictures of the firetrucks and other vehicles.

It was an excellent turnout for the fire station tour, which was made possible thanks to the Joshua Hyde Public Library and the Sturbridge Fire Department. Fournier says the library is planning on doing similar events or a "let's meet series," where kids can meet people of various profes-

sions. Community members such as veterinarians, dentists, staff at the DPW, and other community members of various professions.

Next weekend, Feb. 28 and March 1, the Joshua Hyde Public Library will be hosting their annual Mini-Golf Fundraiser. The library will be decorated as an indoor miniature golf course. For more information, visit www.sturbridgelibrary.org.

FIREFIGHTER FROM PAGE 1

according to the letter.

Chaffee, alongside Spencer fire department officials, including Chief Robert Parsons, performed CPR and utilized a defibrillator on Rizner, which ultimately saved his life.

Spooner Well site bench

Eagle Scout Aidy Simpson requested permission from the Select Board to place a bench at the Spooner Well site for her Eagle Scout project. Chair Richard Chaffee said she had reached out to the owner of the property where the well sits, and the owner approved of the project.

Simpson said the well is currently covered in poison ivy and other plant matter, and she wants to place educational information, a bench made of stone, and do some landscaping. The board voted unanimously to support the project.

Conservation Commission donation

Eagle Scout Miles Oprica said he wanted to donate \$175 to the Conservation Commission, as a "thank you" for their help with his

Eagle Scout project. Conservation Commission Chairman Steve Karrmann said they motioned at their last meeting to approve the donation pending Select Board approval, for the purpose of trail improvement.

Liberty Tree

Chaffee discussed the possibility of participating in the Liberty Tree program for the 250th anniversary of the United States. He suggested that they could place it in either the town common or the cemetery.

According to the board, it is a 35-45 foot elm tree, and would cost between \$2,000-3,000. Board member Beth Coughlin suggested utilizing the shade tree budget for funding. Chaffee said he received an email from Brad Kadelski from the Friends of Brookfield saying that they would also help financially if needed.

Snow and ice deficit spending

The board approved \$20,000 in materials and \$20,000 more in labor for the Highway Department for snow and ice removal.

Town Administrator goals

Coughlin presented a "framework" for setting specific goals for newly appointed Town Administrator Bob Ayers. The board said they would revisit the framework at their next meeting.

Appointment

The board voted unanimously to appoint Margaret Aubin to the Brookfield Cultural Council.

Other business

The board voted to approve monthly reports from December for the Police Department, and January from the Fire Department and EMS. The board voted to approve the meeting minutes from their Nov. 12 and Dec.

17 meetings.

The board also gave a special recognition of firefighter David Merlo for 15 years of service.

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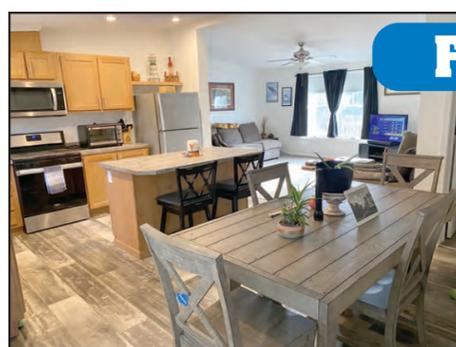
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- community -

Town Clerk lists annual election information

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The North Brookfield Annual Town Election will be held on Monday, May 4.

The last day to submit nomination papers is Monday, March 16, 2026, at 5 p.m.

The following offices are up for election: Board of Selectmen – one seat, three-year term; Board of Assessors – one seat, three-year term; Board of Assessors – one seat, two-year term (to fill a vacancy); Board of Assessors – one seat,

one-year term (to fill a vacancy); School Committee – two seats, three-year terms; School Committee – one seat, one-year term (to fill a vacancy); Water Commissioner – one seat, three-year term; Water Commissioner – one seat, two-year term (to fill a vacancy); Board of Health – one seat, three-year term; Cemetery Commissioner – one seat, three-year term; Library Trustees – two seats, three-year terms; Planning Board – one seat, five-year term; Planning Board – one seat, four-year term

(to fill a vacancy); Housing Authority – one seat, five-year term; and Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational School District (Bay Path) – one seat, three-year term.

It is strongly encouraged that anyone interested in serving to become familiar with the work and responsibilities of these boards, committees, and commissions.

Nomination papers are available from the Town Clerk's Office.

West Brookfield Town Election information

WEST BROOKFIELD – Town Clerk, Klarissa Rose, announces that Nomination Papers are available for the upcoming Town Election to be held on Tuesday, May 5.

These papers must be filed with the Board of Registrars, in the Town Clerk's office, for certification on or before Tuesday, March 17 at 5 p.m. Final day to withdraw as a candidate is Thursday, April 2 at 5 p.m.

Appearing on the ballot will be the following: Se-

lectman, three-year term; Board of Health, three-year term; Assessor, three-year term; Common Committee, three-year term; Library Board of Trustees, three-year term; Library Board of Trustees, three-year term; Planning Board, five-year term; Housing Authority, five-year term; Water Commissioner, three-year term.

The Quaboag Regional School District positions will also be incorporated on the Town Ballot. Two members from the Town

of West Brookfield for a three-year term and two members from the Town of Warren for a three-year term.

These nomination papers are available at the Superintendent's office at 284 Old West Brookfield Road, Warren. Deadline for returning these papers is Friday, March 20 by 4 p.m.

Last day to register to vote before the Town Election is Friday, April 24, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Town Clerk's office at 2 East Main St.

WATERSHED FROM PAGE 1

invertebrates), trail teams, storm water education and action efforts, wildlife monitoring, annual rivers report card, restoration efforts, and perhaps a rivers celebration event!

We could be the source for Caring for our local 4 Rivers. Now we're talking!

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C4R is a means to gather



Cub Scouts are shown cutting the ribbon to officially open the Lower Ware River Blue Trail. Both of these Cub Scouts volunteered with C4R to establish the Robbins Road launch site and test the water quality.

us together to do that, albeit in a humble way. We invite you to join in the vision, let's C4R!

For more information about C4R and to get in-

volved, people may visit www.c4rivers.org, email chicopeewatershed@gmail.com, or mail C4RWC, P.O. Box 126, Three Rivers, MA 01080.

TURLEY FILE PHOTOS

LEGION BBQ FROM PAGE 1

Commander of the Sons of the Legion, Jim Brown, who was selling tickets for the meals. Brown has been a member of the American Legion for 20 years and says they've always put on a meal during the middle of winter.

The Sons of the Legion wanted to carry on with offering this popular dinner because "the people enjoy it," according to Brown. The chicken BBQ meal came with a baked potato, green beans, and a dinner roll.

Funds from this meal help the American Legion support various causes. Over the years, Sons of the Legion have supported kids groups, scout groups, youth sports, members in



The meal came with BBQ chicken, a baked potato, green beans, and a dinner roll. The meals were prepared by the Sons of the Legion.

distress, Hearts for Heat and various causes.

A total of eight members of the American Legion help put the meals together. The chicken was cooked in the style of over the flame.

The American Legion also offers a monthly breakfast and features various

breakfast meals. Breakfasts include eggs, ham, sausage, home fries, pancakes, and French toast.

The next breakfast will be held on Sunday, March 8 at the American Legion. Breakfast will be served at 10 a.m. and is \$15 per meal.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE FROM PAGE 1

spending.

"We were given a rate sheet with hourly rates and that was it," he said. "Nothing in writing that spells out anything whatsoever about how the costs would be calculated. I still don't have that to this day."

Baldassarre said his department was told that the cost would be an hourly rate based on the state's in-district Circuit Breaker rates. He said they used service delivery grids from student IEPs and calculated the hourly rates.

"We felt that those were inline with that actual cost of special education children in Massachusetts," he said.

He said the Quabbin Regional School District's estimate for the cost of special education services was in a "few percentage points" of his calculations.

"I've been in special education now for two decades and I don't understand how its possible to provide special education services to our high school at such a significantly discounted rate as we do and every school district in the state does as well," he said. "The calcula-

tion that we did was appropriate and it was inline with what we were given verbally, but I have yet to be given a written methodology of how those costs would be calculated."

Baldassarre said the Quabbin Regional School District proposal tells them "almost to the penny" how much special education services would cost the school district.

He also shared concerns about the school district having to pay for special education services at the discretion of another school district.

School Committee Vice-Chair Tim Canada said the reason the task force looked at tuition agreements with other school district was due to financial reasons. He said the cost of special education services is part of the big picture.

He said he was in support of regionalization when it came up, but he didn't feel comfortable entering into a tuition agreement contract and closing the high school. He said the town as a whole, needs to "buy-in" to the school district and support and promote it.

"The kids should feel

like the town has their back when they're in this school; not that they are a burden to the town," Canada said.

Giangrande said she does not feel comfortable taking away educational choices from the families of North Brookfield by entering into a tuition agreement. She said the financial savings to the town are also less than expected.

Superintendent Timothy McCormick spoke of the need to create a strategic plan to bring the North Brookfield Public Schools "to the next level."

Grant said the school district also needs to communicate with the town in order to move forward. He said they need to develop a solid plan to boost enrollment and help the school district to thrive.

"We just have to figure out what path, and what's realistic," he said.

Public comment

Deb Arnold spoke about the 2011 educational task force report. She served on the committee with three other residents.

She said it took a year to research and create the report, at the Board of Selectmen's request.

"I think you're coming to some of the same conclusions," Arnold said to the School Committee.

Arnold said they need a vision and a plan to move forward positively.

Student Dante Giangrande said the opportunities at North Brookfield High School are different than those at either the Quaboag or Quabbin school districts. He described his school as a family.

"That is what we are and that is what we have become," he said.

School staff and parents shared concerns about students getting overlooked in the larger school districts, and missing out on key leadership and athletic opportunities.

Town Accountant Shiela LeBlanc said the town is facing a \$700,000 deficit in the town budget.

She said there needs to be a plan to bring students back to the school district, that is followed through by the School Committee members.

"You've got to get people back here and that's the plan you have to work on, but with no money," LeBlanc said.

LeBlanc said she understands that many of the students like the smaller population in their high school, but she questioned if this fully prepared them for attending college after graduation.

"I think we should encourage the kids that they can do it in a bigger school... they can work hard, they can make these teams... look at maybe getting a late bus to come home for the sports or the afterschool things," she said. "Everybody wants everything but no one wants to pay for it and there's just no money."

Rich Rigney, president of the North Brookfield Teachers Association, said the School Committee needs to support the staff and teachers.

"We are willing to work to keep the school open, we just need to be empowered to do so," he said.

Selectman Jamie Gilman said Net School Spending won't change by entering into a tuition agreement, but he said if they can't turn things around for the high school, each year will become "more desperate than the one before."

"The conversation will never go away," Gilman said. "This hope that kids will stop leaving because we stop talking about it; we're not going to be in that position. The more desperate we get, the less bargaining power we have into any of these agreements because we are quickly going to get to the point of unsustainability."

He said eventually there will be no choice.

"What it all boils down to is the money," Gilman said.

School Committee vote

The School Committee voted 4-1 in favor of ending discussion to enter into a tuition agreement with another school district and keeping the middle/high school open. Grant was the only opposing vote.

McCormick said in a statement after the meeting: "This topic has been a significant and, at times, emotional conversation within our community since last spring. We are grateful to now have clarity and closure on this matter."

McCormick thanked the School Committee, district and school leadership and the members of the tuition task force for their efforts to research, analyze data and engage in discussions.

"Their work was thorough, transparent, and grounded in what they believed to be in the best interest of our students and community," he said.

McCormick said it is important that the school community and the town come together to strengthen and grow the North Brookfield Public Schools.

"Our district's small size is not a limitation; it is one of our greatest strengths," he said. "Now is the time to lean into those strengths while continuing to think boldly about our future. I believe it is important that we continue engaging all stakeholders in conversations about how we can innovate, expand opportunities, and build on the strong foundation that already exists."



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SPORTS

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Indians lose regular season finale

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Last Tuesday evening, North Brookfield girls basketball suffered a defeat against the Collegiate Charter School of Lowell 62-37 in the final regular season game.

The Indians finished the season with overall record of 11-6 and are scheduled to play in the preliminary round of the Division 5 state tournament this week.



Sophia Giangrande tries to secure the ball.



Olivia Holmes passes out of the paint.



Milcalia Ayala looks for a layup.



Sophie Dufresne attempts a shot.



Kalyn Roy travels down the court.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



The defense sets up for the Panthers.



Abby Rogowski holds the ball away from the opposition.

Panthers pick up big win

BARRE – Last Tuesday evening, the Quabbin Regional High School girls basketball team picked up a victory, defeating rival Narragansett 45-26 in a non-playoff matchup. The Panthers had more game to play the following night against Monty Tech.

Pioneer Valley Baseball registration now open

SOUTH HADLEY – The Pioneer Valley Baseball League, an adult baseball league for players who are age 18 and over, has just opened up its registration for the 2026 season.

The adult league will be administered by the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, and a registration link is on the home page of the league's website www.quabbinvalley-baseball.org. Thought it will be under the Quabbin umbrella, there will be no major changes in how the league is operated.

This year, the PVBL

See **BASEBALL PAGE 8**



Makenzie Casey sends a pass inside.



Izzy Doty tries to steal the rebound away.



Aubrey Thorpe tries to come up with a rebound.



Mia Ducos sends a pass toward the corner.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Athlete of the Month

NAME: Caitlyn Toomey
SCHOOL: Quaboag



Toomey had a big game for Quaboag girls basketball against Palmer on Feb. 9, scoring 14 points for the Cougars.

To nominate someone for Athlete of the Week, contact Managing Sports Editor Gregory A. Scibelli at 413-283-8393 or send an e-mail to gscibelli@turley.com.

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Railers score win in overtime

RAPID CITY, SD – The Worcester Railers HC (23-19-5-1 pts) grabbed a 5-4 overtime victory over the Rapid City Rush (21-23-4-0) on Friday, February 20th at The Monument in front of a crowd of 3,409. The Railers will wrap up their three-game road series against the Rush on Feb. 21, with puck drop at 7:05 p.m. MST.

Rapid City struck first with back-to-back goals from Briley Wood (2-0-2) in the opening half of the first period. Matt DeMelis (1-1-2) got Worcester on the board with a one-timer at 9:35 in the second. Drew Callin (3-0-3) kept it rolling for Worcester with two goals for the Railers, the latter of which was on the power play to put the team ahead 3-2 heading into the final period of play. Rapid City's Ryan Chyzowski (1-1-2) tied the game for the Rush once more at three apiece early in the third. Linemate Blake Bennett (1-0-1) put Rapid City ahead for the second time of the evening with a power play shot atop the right circle to make the new score 4-3 at 10:31. Callin scored his first hat-trick as a Railer and pushed the night into overtime with a quick shot off from the left faceoff circle over the shoulder of Nathan Torchia (4-4). Anthony Repaci (1-1-2) lit the lamp for a final time for the Railers just fifty-nine seconds into OT and picked up the 5-4 victory off a pass from DeMelis.

Rapid City established an early two-goal lead for themselves with back-to-back unanswered goals at 7:05 and 9:43 in the first, both from Briley Wood. Wood (7th) deked out goaltender Tristan Lennox and created an opening along the right side of the Railers' net to score the Rush's first tally. Wood (8th) followed up the play with a second unanswered goal for the team three-and-a-half minutes later, a shot that snuck its way in between the pads of Lennox (0-2). Worcester was unable to respond to the new lead before the horn sounded. No penalties were called in the period. Worcester led in shots on goal with 13 to Rapid City's 6.

The second period was Worcester's turn to chase down the Rush's lead and take the game for themselves. In the span of six minutes and twenty-four seconds, Worcester went from trailing by two to a three-goal lead. Matt DeMelis (14th) got the scoring streak going with a quick one-timer assisted on by a pass through the crease from Riley Ginnell at 9:35 (1-2). Drew Callin (16th) capitalized on a center ice breakaway as Rush goaltender Nathan Torchia was unable to block the push (2-2). Khristian Acosta was then sent down to the ice on the next play as he collided with the Rush's net. The act put the Railers on their first extra-man advantage of the night as Mitchell Smith headed into the box for roughing. The two minutes with the man-advantage proved fruitful as Callin (17th) nabbed a second tally, his fourth in two games. Amidst heavy traffic, Callin finished off a rebound and put the puck into a wide-open Rush net, which gave Worcester their 3-2 lead as the second frame of play came to a close. Shots on goal once again favored Worcester 15-9. Smith's penalty was the only one called for the period.

Rapid City quickly re-tied the game for the second time early in the third. The goal was tucked into the Railers net by Ryan Chyzowski (21st) at 4:18. Rapid City then reclaimed the game lead at 10:31 with a top-shelf shot atop the right circle from Blake Bennett (18th) (4-3). The play came from an man-advantage delivered by a tripping penalty called on Railers' defenseman Adam Samuelsson at 9:35. Drew Callin (18th) kept a victory in the Railers sights with a late-game hat-trick as netminder Lennox was called to the bench to give Worcester the extra body. Callin drove the puck from the left faceoff dot over the shoulder of Torchia, and both teams skated into overtime, nodded up at four apiece. As the overtime clock began to count down, it was Anthony Repaci (15th) who claimed the game winner just fifty-nine seconds into play. Repaci tipped a backhanded pass from DeMelis out in front to claim the Railers' second victory in South Dakota with a 5-4 final score. Worcester put up 53 shots on goal to Rapid City's 20.

Thunderbirds come up with win in shootout with Bridgeport Islanders

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (19-25-4-2) rode a turbulent night to an eventual 5-4 shootout win over the Bridgeport Islanders (21-21-3-4) on Friday night inside the MassMutual Center.

Unlike their last contest on Wednesday, the T-Birds and their opposition had a much slower start to the night offensively, with a scoreless struggle carrying late into the first. Thomas Bordeleau finally broke the ice at 14:54,

winning a draw and darting to the right wing circle and rifling home a feed from Calle Rosen to give Springfield a 1-0 advantage.

Just 1:16 later, and less than half a minute into their first power play of the night, the T-Birds built a cushion as Chris Wagner jammed a loose puck through the legs of Marcus Hogberg from the blue paint to make it 2-0.

Bridgeport's power play provided a response at 19:05 when Julien Gauthier inter-

cepted a loose puck deep in the offensive zone before sifting a forehand over Vadim Zherenko to make it a 2-1 game into the first intermission.

Zherenko proved to be pivotal in the second, especially when he made a lurching post-to-post skate save on Matt Maggio to keep his team in front. Later in the same sequence of play, Matt Luff hit Alek Kaskimaki on a 2-on-1 pass, and Kaskimaki picked the glove-side cor-

ner on Hogberg, making it 3-1 for Springfield at 6:53 of the second.

Down 3-1 heading into the third, the Islanders turned the game upside-down in the span of just over six minutes. After Springfield killed two straight Islander power plays, Hunter Drew finally got Bridgeport's second goal of the night at 5:02, moments after Hogberg kept Springfield from goals on two straight odd-man rushes.

Liam Foudy followed

Drew's lead with a sneaky wrist shot from the left side at 8:42, tying the score at 3 before Pierrick Dube got a fortuitous bounce in the slot and whistled a shot over Zherenko's blocker at 11:31 to get Bridgeport its first lead of the night, 4-3.

In desperate need of a momentum shifter, Hugh McGing delivered just that for Springfield, crashing the low slot area and firing a forehand over a fallen Hogberg at 14:28 off a centering pass

from Juraj Pekarcik.

For a fourth time in 10 meetings, overtime was needed between the clubs, and for a third time, it reached the shootout. Bordeleau put his stamp on the night with a gorgeous backhand deke to beat Hogberg in the opening round. Zherenko then stood his ground and made three successive saves on Adam Beckman, Gauthier, and Dube to secure Springfield's first shootout triumph of the season.

BASEBALL FROM PAGE 6

will have a 22-game regular season schedule followed by a double-elimination playoffs. The league, which had five teams last year and had to utilize multiple byes throughout the season, will be fielding a sixth team this season.

There are several spots open for that sixth team, so players interested in joining the league should get signed up as soon as possible to claim a spot.

The league is a wood-bat only league utilizing playing under regular baseball rules though all players do

bat. The league operates on a Saturday-Tuesday schedule. Games are played on Saturday mornings with 10 a.m. starts typical and on Tuesday evenings with start times in the 5:30 to 6 p.m. range. The league will start play in late April and running through the end of August. There are slots open for both full-time players and part-time players. The fee for full-time players will be \$260 with part-time players getting up to 11 games for \$130. Fees paid go toward the operation of the league, paying for insurance, umpires, fields, and baseballs and no one profits in any way.

In addition to the new sixth team, there are limited open roster spots on the other teams in the league, so get your registration in as soon as possible to participate in this season.

Games are played at ballfields throughout the region from as far south as Southwick's Whalley Field, through South Hadley's Beachgrounds and up north at Frontier Regional High School in South Deerfield.

For any questions, please go to the league website for more information. The league hopes interested players will come out and join the fun this spring and summer.

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62							63							
											64			

CLUES ACROSS

- What travelers must do
- Calendar month
- Hopefully quickly
- Once more
- Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
- "Cheers" actress Perlman
- Astronomy unit
- Savings vehicle
- Get your ducks in this
- Right away
- Popular sports league
- Containers
- Entireties
- One who wassails
- Turned-up position
- Extreme modesty
- Writing utensil
- Rewards (archaic)

CLUES DOWN

- Off-Broadway figure
- Gelatinous substance
- Concern
- "Lick It Up" rockers
- Serbian river
- Part of a hat
- Bowl-shaped drinking vessel
- Semitic language
- Utter a shrill cry
- Long times
- Animal parts
- Causing annoyance
- Amorous talker
- Attempt
- Harmonic effects
- Cost per mile
- They ___
- Bitterly regret
- Not even
- A way to drop

CLUES ACROSS

- Ancient capital
- S. American wood sorrel
- General discomfort
- Philippine island
- A witty saying
- One who summarizes
- Covered in
- Mimic
- Henry was a notable one
- Daughter of Hera and Zeus
- Retired NFLer Newton
- Playground equipment
- Concept
- Satisfaction
- Fishing net
- Hammer end
- A father's male child
- Japanese drink
- Title of respect
- World leader
- Georgia rockers
- National capital
- Great Plains people
- Duck-sized dinosaur genus
- Architectural recesses
- Member of U.S. Navy
- Mountainous
- Kite bird
- Sweetheart (archaic)
- Popular snack made of potato
- 70s songsters The Bee ___
- SE China port ___-men
- Something to fill up
- League of Legends character

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Jamie Joslyn
24 Water Street
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Email: jamie@turley.com

SUMMER CAMP

Check Out These Great Camps!

Registration open for HCC Summer Youth Programs

It's still winter, but it's not too early to start thinking about summer.

Registration is now open for 2026 Summer Youth Programs at Holyoke Community College.

Starting July 7 and running through August 8, HCC will offer 16 week-long, in-person summer programs for youth aged 8 to 16.

For more than 40 years, HCC has offered fun, challenging summer education activities for youth, providing early opportunities for students to experience a college environment guided and encouraged by experienced professionals.

HCC's 2026 on-campus

summer youth programs run Monday through Friday, some for a full day and others for a half day.

All in-person programs will be held on the main HCC campus, 303 Homestead Ave., except for cooking classes, which are held at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St., Holyoke:

July 6-10:

Cooking without Borders with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16): In this lively hands-on camp, young chefs will team up to chop, stir, and create tasty dishes from around the world. Each day brings a new theme and a chance to dis-



cover fresh ingredients, cool cooking techniques, and the joy of working together in the kitchen. By week's end,

they'll walk away with new cooking skills, delicious recipes to show off at home, and plenty of tasty memories. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

Fun Bites with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16): Join us for an exciting week of hands-on culinary fun, where young chefs will discover the joy of cooking delicious, easy-to-prepare meals to share with family and friends. Participants will work together to chop, season, cook, and taste a variety of recipes – all made from scratch. Each day introduces new menu themes, ingredients, and techniques designed to build confidence in the kitchen. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

July 13-17: Cooking without Borders with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

Fun Bites with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

ROBLOX Coders (ages 8-10; 11-14): Discover the Lua coding language while designing experiences in ROBLOX, an online universe where you can create anything you dream of. New developers will learn to use ROBLOX's Studio software to reimagine the popular game genres with their own custom code. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. to noon for ages 8-10; 1 to 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199)

July 20-24:

Around the World with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16): Cuisine around the world serves as a universal language that unites people across cultures through shared flavors, traditions, and stories. Learn to prepare full-course meals from Asia, Puerto Rico, Greece, Italy,

and New Orleans. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

Make Your First Video Game (ages 8-10; 11-14): Go beyond the limitations of traditional 2D game design classes and create an immersive 3D world. Students will learn the physics behind 3D games, explore beginner event scripting, level design, controlling the flow of gameplay, and storytelling. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. – noon for ages 8-10; 1 – 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199)

Passport to Flavors with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16): This hands-on cooking camp takes kids on a delicious journey across global cuisines, exploring flavors, techniques, and ingredients that make each culture unique. Dive into fun daily themes like diner classics, Mexican favorites, Mediterranean feasts, Filipino street bites, and southern comfort food, all while building confidence one tasty dish at a time. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

July 27-31: Around the World with

Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

Minecraft Designers (ages 8-10; 11-14): Learn how to create a custom map, design structures to share between worlds, build with Redstone and Command blocks, and create custom textures for you to import at home or share with friends. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. – noon for ages 8-10; 1 – 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199).

Passport to Flavors with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

August 3-7:

Python Programmers (ages 8-10; 11-14): Learn the world's fastest-growing programming language favored by Google, NASA, YouTube, and the CIA. Learn how to code with Python to create engaging apps and games. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. – noon for ages 8-10; 1 – 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199).

For more details or to register for Summer Youth Program classes, please go to: hcc.edu/summer-youth.

summer@HCC

Holyoke Community College Summer Youth Programs for Ages 8-16

Save your spot and register today for summer fun!

- July 27-31, Minecraft Designers (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- August 3-7, Python Programmers (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 20-24, Make Your First Video Game (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 13-17, ROBLOX Coders (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 6-10 and 13-17, Fun Bites with Chef Swanigan (ages 9-16)
- July 20-24 and 27-31, Around the world with Chef Swanigan (ages 9-16)
- July 6-10 and 13-17, Cooking without Borders with Chef Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16)
- July 20-24 and 27-31, Passport to Flavors with Chef Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16)

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COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**

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Registration Link
bement.org/summer

- community -

College graduates and Dean's Lists

URI fall 2025 Dean's List

KINGSTON, RI – The University of Rhode Island is pleased to announce that several area students have been named to its fall 2025 Dean's List.

Among them are: Lidia Barbalho, Libby Dodson, Erin Farrell, Landon Grover, Elise Mazeika and Jillian Winco, all of Sturbridge; Stella Buday and Haley Willitts, both of Fiskdale; and Elizabeth Czaja of West Brookfield.

To be included on the Dean's List, full-time students must have completed 12 or more credits for letter grades, which are GPA applicable during a semester and achieved at least a 3.30 quality point average. Part-time students qualify with the accumulation of 12 or more credits for letter grades which are GPA applicable earning at least a 3.30 quality point average.

WPI lists fall 2025 Dean's List

WORCESTER – Worcester Polytechnic Institute has announced its

Dean's List for academic excellence for the fall 2025 semester.

The following local students were named to the Dean's List: Matthew Carter of West Brookfield, class of 2028, majoring in Architectural Engineering; Lucas O'Connor of Sturbridge, class of 2029, majoring in Mechanical Engineering; Alexander Shettler of Brookfield, class of 2026, majoring in Computer Science; and Frederick Smith of New Braintree, class of 2026, majoring in Civil Engineering.

The criteria for the WPI Dean's List differ from that of most other universities as WPI does not compute a grade point average. Instead, WPI students are named to the Dean's List based on the amount of work completed at the A level in courses and hands-on projects.

Ryan Cunningham makes Dean's List honors

TAMPA, FL – Ryan Cunningham, of Brookfield, earned Dean's List honors at the University of Tampa for the fall 2025 semester.

Cunningham is a freshman majoring in allied

health. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.75 or higher to be eligible for the Dean's List.

Simmons University Dean's List

BOSTON – Jessica Hennessey, Fiskdale resident, was named to the 2025 fall semester Dean's List at Simmons University in Boston.

To qualify for dean's list status, undergraduate students must obtain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher, based on 12 or more credit hours of work in classes using the letter grade system.

Elizabeth Latour graduates from Elms College

CHICOPEE – Elizabeth Latour of Brookfield received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Elms College following the conclusion of the fall 2025 semester.

Latour was among 60 students who received their degrees in December.

Local nursing student received Blessing of the Hands

BOSTON – Megan Bokis, of North Brookfield received the Blessing of the Hands on Feb. 6 at Emmanuel College.

This meaningful ceremony is a long-standing tradition at the Maureen Murphy Wilkens School of Nursing & Clinical Scienc-

es for second-year nursing students as they prepare to begin their first clinical.

This semester 72 students participated in the ceremony. Hosted in collaboration with Emmanuel Mission & Ministry in the campus chapel, the Blessing of the Hands recognizes nursing

students' hands as instruments of care, comfort, and respect. The ceremony affirms nursing as a commitment to skilled practice, compassion, and respect for the dignity of every person as students enter clinical practice.

John John Brown brings 'Songs, Stories, & Art' to Workshop 13 on February 28

JWARE – Workshop13 welcomes award-winning songwriter John John Brown for a performance of his emotionally rich live show, "Songs, Stories, & Art: Lessons From Strangers."

This all-ages event takes place in Workshop13's Grand Hall at 13 Church St. on Saturday, Feb. 28. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the performance begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and are available at www.workshop13.org.

In recent years, Brown has been chosen as a Kerville New Folk winner and an Emerging Artist at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival. Most notably, in concert, he is known for mixing storytelling songs with the visual arts creating "an imaginative musical performance woven into a unique visual experience."

With only a guitar, a projector, and a storyteller's heart, Brown guides audiences through 14 com-



John John Brown will perform "Songs, Stories & Art: Lessons From Strangers" at Workshop13 on Feb. 28

PELLING character portraits – each one brought to life with original hand-drawn comics and narrative-driven songs. It's part concert, part illustrated story hour,

and unlike anything else on stage today.

About Workshop13
Workshop13 is a dynamic center where arts, culture, and community converge –expanding access to the arts and nurturing creativity and self-expression in our rural region. For more information visit workshop13.org, or call 413-277-6072.

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SOCIAL SECURITY FROM PAGE 4

which helps pay for Medicare outpatient healthcare services. The standard Medicare Part B premium for 2026 is \$202.90 per month, compared to Medicare Part A which is free to all who are eligible for So-

- public safety -

East Brookfield Police Log

During the weeks of Jan. 19-Feb. 1, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 294 building/property checks, 135 directed area patrols, 13 radar assignments, 12 traffic controls, 11 emergency 911 calls, three citizen assists, four assist other agencies, two safety hazards, one motor vehicle investigation, one harassment, one illegal dumping, one animal call and 48 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, Jan. 19

7:40 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
2:10 p.m. Safety Hazard, Route 49, Services Rendered
3:16 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
3:26 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Vehicle Towed
3:42 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
3:53 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
4:06 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Tuesday, Jan. 20

1:18 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Baker Hill Road, Transported to Hospital
4:05 a.m. Parking Complaint, East Main Street, Written Warning
4:50 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:31 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Written Warning
7:52 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Wednesday, Jan. 21

10:38 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
4:10 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
4:52 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Street, Citation Issued
5:03 p.m. Radar, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:04 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:34 p.m. Traffic Control, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:48 p.m. Motor Vehicle

Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Thursday, Jan. 22
9:22 a.m. Assist Other Agency, North Brookfield Road, No Action Required
11:05 a.m. 911 Illegal Dumping, East Main Street, Officer Handled
2:26 p.m. Harassment, Harrington Lane, Services Rendered
4:24 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Report Taken

Friday, Jan. 23

1:32 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
1:06 p.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, East Main Street, Services Rendered
Saturday, Jan. 24
8:44 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
9:27 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
10:32 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
12:54 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Monday, Jan. 26

5:04 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Bridge Street, Transported to Hospital
9:09 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Baker Hill Road, Negative Contact

Tuesday, Jan. 27

11:08 a.m. Assist Other Agency, East Main Street, Spoken To
1:01 p.m. Parking Complaint, North Brookfield Road, Spoken To
1:02 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Draper Road, Transported to Hospital
3:58 p.m. Traffic Control, East Main Street, Citation Issued
4:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
4:52 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
5:48 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
8:29 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Wednesday, Jan. 28

3:03 a.m. Parking Complaint, East Main Street, Written Warning

8:52 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

9:28 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Vehicle Towed

Thursday, Jan. 29

12:32 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Route 49, Call Canceled
1:24 a.m. Suspicious Activity, Flagg Road, Spoken To
9:01 a.m. 911 Hang-up/Abandoned, Harrington Lane, Services Rendered
8:24 p.m. 911 Misdial, West Main Street, No Action Required

Friday, Jan. 30

8:10 a.m. 911 Fire/Other, North Street, Services Rendered
10:03 a.m. 911 Lockout, Pleasant Street, Services Rendered
10:25 a.m. Safety Hazard, East Main Street, Services Rendered
11:30 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
1:45 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Mechanic Street, Citation Issued

Saturday, Jan. 31

9 a.m. Traffic Control, East Main Street, Citation Issued
9:11 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
10:01 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
2:05 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, East Main Street, Transported to Hospital
4:09 p.m. Radar, East Main Street, Citation Issued
4:18 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:08 p.m. Assist Citizen, Harrington Street, Negative Contact
8:51 p.m. Medical Emergency, Flagg Road, Transported to Hospital
9:24 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Doane Avenue, Transported to Hospital
11:27 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued

Sunday, Feb. 1

4:21 a.m. Parking Complaint, East Main Street, Officer Handled
12:06 p.m. Safety Hazard, Howe Street, Referred to Other Agency

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of Feb. 9-16, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 17 building/property checks, 35 directed/area patrols, nine radar assignments, two traffic controls, five emergency 911 calls, one safety hazard, three citizen assists, one disturbance, one animal call and nine motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Monday, Feb. 9

9:35 a.m. 911 Hang-up/Abandoned, Unitas Road, Spoken To
10:27 p.m. 911 Suspicious Activity, West Brookfield Road, Services Rendered

Tuesday, Feb. 10

10:49 a.m. Assist Citizen, West Brookfield Road, Spoken To
5:25 p.m. Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Patient Refusal
10:47 p.m. Safety Hazard, Town Wide, Dispatch Handled

Wednesday, Feb. 11

12:22 a.m. Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Patient Refusal
3:16 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Written Warning
8:55 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Served in Hand

Friday, Feb. 13

2:44 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning
3:33 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning

Saturday, Feb. 14
4:26 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning
10:51 p.m. Disturbance, Dennis Whitney Road, Transported to Hospital

Sunday, Feb. 15
12:23 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Spoken To
1:39 p.m. 911 Welfare Check, Dennis Whitney Road, Arrest(s) Made

cial Security benefits. But the 1.45% payroll tax which is being withheld from your girlfriend's paycheck is paid by everyone who has work earnings, even if they are enrolled in Medicare.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social

Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the Na-

tional Social Security Association To submit a question, visit amafoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

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