

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Newspaper

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Friday, April 5, 2024

School Committee hears parents' concerns about bullying

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The School Committee held a special meeting to hear comments from the public about concerns of bullying in the school district.

At a special meeting held on March 25, Heather Halkyard, a mother of a former fifth grade student, said her child had experienced bullying by both students and staff. She thanked the School Committee for hearing her concerns.

“Over the past several months I have been addressing

bullying concerns with the administration at North Brookfield Elementary School via ClassDojo, phone and in-person meetings,” she said.

Helgard said students have bullied her son for his appearance and clothing, calling him names, and making comments about his personal life. She said

one of his teachers has also made inappropriate comments toward him and promoted violence in the classroom.

She said on Feb. 15, her son was accused of threatening violence toward another student. She was notified via ClassDojo by his teachers hours after it happened.

Helgard said she went to the school to speak with Principal Sarah Priestley, but the principal was unavailable. She then called and left Priestley a message but didn't get a call back.

The following day, she brought her son to school and tried to meet with Priestley,

See **SCHOOL** | PAGE 12

Egg hunt brings together families

By Emily-Rose Pappas
Staff Writer
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NEW BRAINTREE – The New Braintree Revitalization Committee, with support from the Fire Department, hosted an egg hunt outside the library this weekend, and 60 kids came to enjoy it.

Students from the Quabbin Regional High School helped to pack and fill more than 800 eggs with candy for kids of all ages to hunt around the field.

The Revitalization Committee has been working to engage the community more by providing fun, free family-oriented activities and events for all to enjoy.

The egg hunt has hit its fourth year, and will continue for many more years to come as children make friends, and joy is spread amongst the community.



Above: Ben and Kaleigh Maio with their three kids, Addison, Maverick, and Marshall were ready with their bunny ears to hunt some eggs.

Left: The New Braintree Fire Department dropped off the Easter Bunny to begin the egg hunt. TURLEY PHOTOS BY EMILY-ROSE PAPPAS



Board interviews town administrator candidates

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Board of Selectmen interviewed two candidates for the newly established role of Town Administrator.

At the March 26 meeting, candidate Justine Caggiano of Spencer said she has been in state and local government for her entire career, starting

as a legislative aide in the State House. She has also worked in human resources for the town of Millbury and Millbury Public Schools, as well as the town of Ware.

Caggiano has most recently worked as the assistant town administrator in Leicester and now works as an HR consultant for Capital Strategic Solutions.

“I really believe that ev-
See **BOARD** | PAGE 12

Historical Society provides firearm presentation

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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STURBRIDGE – The Sturbridge Historical Society provided a presentation at the Publick House about a local firearms manufacturer last week.

The presentation was about Gibbs, Tiffany and Company, a Sturbridge based manufacturer of underhammer pocket pistols dating back to the 19th century. The original home of this manufacturer was located by Pistol Pond.

See **HISTORICAL** | PAGE 8



Sturbridge Historical Society President Doug Quigley describing a underhammer pistol manufactured by Gibbs, Tiffany and Company. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



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- community -

News from the Quabbin Regional School District

Lynn Lyons to speak at Quabbin High School

From the desk of Colleen Mucha, Superintendent of QRSD

BARRE – The Quabbin Regional School District is excited to host Lynn Lyons, a licensed clinical social worker and psychoanalyst with over 30 years of experience on Wednesday, April 10 at 6 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Quabbin Regional Middle High School, 800 South St.

This event is free and open to the public. The topic is what parents need to know and do to decrease stress, worry and anxiety with special emphasis on cell phones and social media.

Current news about young people and mental health has created warranted concern, but the information can be overwhelming and hard to sort through.

Lyons will provide dependable strategies for parents and families to assist their children with managing their moods and social pressures including school avoidance. She will focus on current traps that adults may fall into and the key adjustments needed to prevent and stem the current surge of anxiety and depression in our children, this includes preventative measures that we can all take.

At Quabbin, we see and hear concerns from parents and families as well as directly from our students.

One statistic states that teens, who spend more than three hours a day on social media actually double their risk of depression and anxiety. It can cause

behavioral changes such as irritability, withdrawal, lack of focus/concentration or issues with sleep.

Social media may create an increased form of “peer pressure.” Eating disorders, increases in body dissatisfaction and low self esteem have been directly linked to too much time on social media. Children are scrolling through images and videos that may have been altered and present what may be perceived as a “perfect” picture/image that may not actually be a true representation of someone’s appearance.

There can be dangers associated with watching videos made by other children. Sometimes these videos may result in dangerous viral trends.

Through the desire to be “like” someone else or to be “part” of something else, children can put themselves in physical harm by trying to replicate these viral activities.

They often lack the executive functioning or cognitive ability to see the actual dangers. The good news is that there are steps and strategies that can be taken to support our children.

Please consider joining us for this helpful, informative and entertaining session with Lynn Lyons. No matter if you are a parent, thinking of becoming a parent or have grandchildren, all are welcome

If you want to learn more or see what Lynn is all about, check out her podcast called “Flustercux.”

Poetry and music series offered at Merriam-Gilbert library

WEST BROOKFIELD – A poetry and music series will be held at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library, 3 West Main St. on Tuesdays, April 16, 30 and May 7 at 6 p.m.

Each evening will feature readings by area poets book-ended by a musical duet. This program is made possible by the West Brookfield Cultural Council as supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

On April 16, poets Karen Sharpe and John Hodgen will be accompanied by musicians Jerry Wilfong, Rich Falco and Rich Ardizzone. On April 30, poets Andre Juarez and Geoff Wilkinson will be accompanied by musicians Jerry Wilfong and Jim Capone and on May 7, poets Eve Rifkah and Paul Szlosek will be accompanied by musicians Jerry Wilfong and Rich Falco

The program is free and open to all. Please stop by or call the library at 508-867-1410 to reserve your seat.

MSBS hosts button show on April 13

THREE RIVERS – The Massachusetts State Button Society’s spring meeting will be hosted by the Monson Button Club on Saturday, April 13, at the Amvets Post 74 on Main St., from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the day’s activities and to purchase buttons and button related items from 9 a.m.-noon and from 1:30-3 p.m. There will be no button sales during the break from noon to 1:30 p.m. as lunch, a business meeting, and auction will take place.

Morning visitors will be treated to coffee and refreshments provided by the hosting club; bring your own brown bag lunch, and dessert will be provided. There is no admission fee, and all are welcome.

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Town hosts rabies vaccine clinic April 13

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Town of West Brookfield is having a rabies vaccine clinic on Saturday, April 13 at the Highway Barn, 15 Front St. from 9-11 a.m.

The cost of the vaccine is \$20.

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- community -

Quabbin Visitor Center lists free upcoming events

BELCHERTOWN – The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center will offer several free programs in April and May.

The Quabbin Interpretive Services program operates the Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center, offering public and school education programs, teacher workshops, and general information about DCR's water supply resources and watershed management, the history of the Quabbin Valley and wildlife of the area.

Staff members are available to assist with visitor information and services. An automated telephone system, 413-323-7221, provides 24 hour access to current information on fishing, hunting, programs, rules and regulations, and public access.

All ages are welcome to these events. Email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov with questions or to be added to the mailing list

Please dress appropriately for the weather and bring water and snacks. Dogs are not allowed anywhere on the Quabbin Watershed.

Space is limited.

To register for any of these events, visit www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir/events.

Exploring the Ware River Watershed

On Saturday, April 13 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., explore the Ware River Watershed with a moderate 4.4 mile looped group hike near Muddy Pond.

Meet at the Ware River Watershed, Route 122 rest area parking lot in

Oakham. The rest area is in the shape of a banana with grass and picnic tables.

(<https://maps.app.goo.gl/jWsgofmrd-6NDyGzB6>)

The route climbs/descends roughly 140 feet in elevation. The foot path hikers will travel on is non-technical.

The last mile of the hike is on a scenic section of the Mass Central Rail Trail. The hike begins/ends north of Muddy Pond.

Visit the following website for additional information on the route: <https://www.trailforks.com/route/4mi-loop-near-muddy-pond-from-rest-area/>.

Register here: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/ab0e732a488d4df-da9847662dfe78286>.

Exploring Quabbin Park

On Saturday, May 11 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., exploring Quabbin Park via the Tower Trail and Webster Road Trail at Quabbin Reservoir, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown.

The hike will begin at the Tower Trail parking area which is located just inside the Middle Gate off Route 9 in Belchertown.

(<https://maps.app.goo.gl/KeEppM-JmKDSjjMFz8>)

Participants will hike up to the Observation Tower and take in the scenic view. The tower is currently closed indefinitely for repairs, so people won't be able to go inside.

Hikers will then utilize a connector trail down to Webster Road, and then loop back to where they began. The trail to the tower gains 475 feet of elevation.

Register here: <https://app>.

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Quabbin's Hidden History

On Sunday, May 12 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. learn about Quabbin's Hidden History: Webster Road on this approximately .5 mile easy hike.

Meet at the Hank's Meadow parking lot.

(<https://goo.gl/maps/4RiEq17PC-NEf6s9E7>)

Quabbin's ghost towns are hiding in plain sight - if you know where to look. This two-hour guided interpretive walk will teach you how to read the natural landscape as you uncover clues that reveal the hidden history of Webster Road.

Explore old cellar holes and historic stone walls, get to know some native and invasive plants, and learn more about the families who lived in the town of Enfield a hundred years ago.

Register here: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/8fa0a8815fd-1474c801926220047b22f>.

Memorial Day at Quabbin Park Cemetery

On Sunday, May 26 from 11 a.m.-noon, a Memorial Day Commemoration will be held at Quabbin Park Cemetery.

Refreshments will be offered at 10 a.m. and the parade and services begin at 11 a.m. No registration required.

In 1868, Major General John A. Logan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, named May 30 as a special day for honoring the soldiers that had died in the Civil War.

Like communities across the United States, the towns of the Swift River Valley commemorated their war dead each year on Memorial Day until the towns' demise in 1938.

Since 1947, Quabbin Park Cemetery has been the center of Memorial Day services for the four towns. Please join the Friends of Quabbin, the Swift River Historical Society, the Veterans Council of Belchertown, Chauncey D. Walker Post #239, American Legion and the staff of the DCR Quabbin Reservoir for our annual Memorial Day Service at Quabbin Park Cemetery.

The public is welcome but please, no dogs.


(<https://goo.gl/maps/tDuKU2VLjx-nhVbdc8>)

Quabbin Park Cemetery tour

Following Memorial Day events on Sunday, May 26 from 2-3 p.m. take an easy walking tour of Quabbin Park Cemetery. The walk is on uneven ground (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/rv4tzdEPr-robajV9>)


After they Memorial Day remembrance ceremony, join DCR staff for a cemetery tour focused on the stories of some of the Valley residents that served and lost their lives in service to the United States. The tour will begin at the town monuments.

Register here: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/31306340e82941628d5e7fb-1bee3b017>.



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- opinion -



Asparagus plants-upkeep, harvest and oddities

It was so much fun to be outdoors on Easter Sunday.

I enjoyed just sitting on the deck, talking with family and moseying around the yard while the little kids enjoyed an Easter egg hunt. It's funny that being outside is one of those things that once you do it, you want to do it more often.

It got me thinking of some of the tasks back home I have to do to get the gardens ship-shape.

One of the tasks concerns my asparagus bed. The grocery stores are teasing us lately, with spears from Mexico making an appearance in the sales circular.

I usually hold off buying it, preferring my home-grown to anything store-bought. I never did get to cut back the foliage in the fall after the first frost.

Presently, its laying down in the beds, making a catch-all for leaves. I'll to get in there with a pair of sharp clippers, cutting away the foliage, then with a rake to further tidy up.

Once complete, I'll sprinkle lime on the beds, followed by some compost, since asparagus prefers fertile soil on the alkaline side.

It'll be a few weeks still before the spears start to poke through the surface. Since my beds are several years old at this point, I will be able to harvest for a good eight weeks.

Be on the look-out for the asparagus beetle midstream and the black eggs that are laid horizontally shortly thereafter, usually apparent on the upper portion of the spears. I monitor my beds often and flick the bugs into a yogurt container of soapy water while squishing the eggs in-situ.

I don't do more than that in terms of pest control and I'm able to keep populations down.

Weeds are another foe. It's important to keep the beds weeded – especially free of perennial grasses, and you will likely have a productive asparagus patch for decades to come.

I usually harvest asparagus with a knife, so that the cut is clean. If the spear has gotten a bit too tall, but the buds haven't opened too much, I will still harvest it at the appropriate length of 6-8" long, and cut the rest of the stem off at ground level.

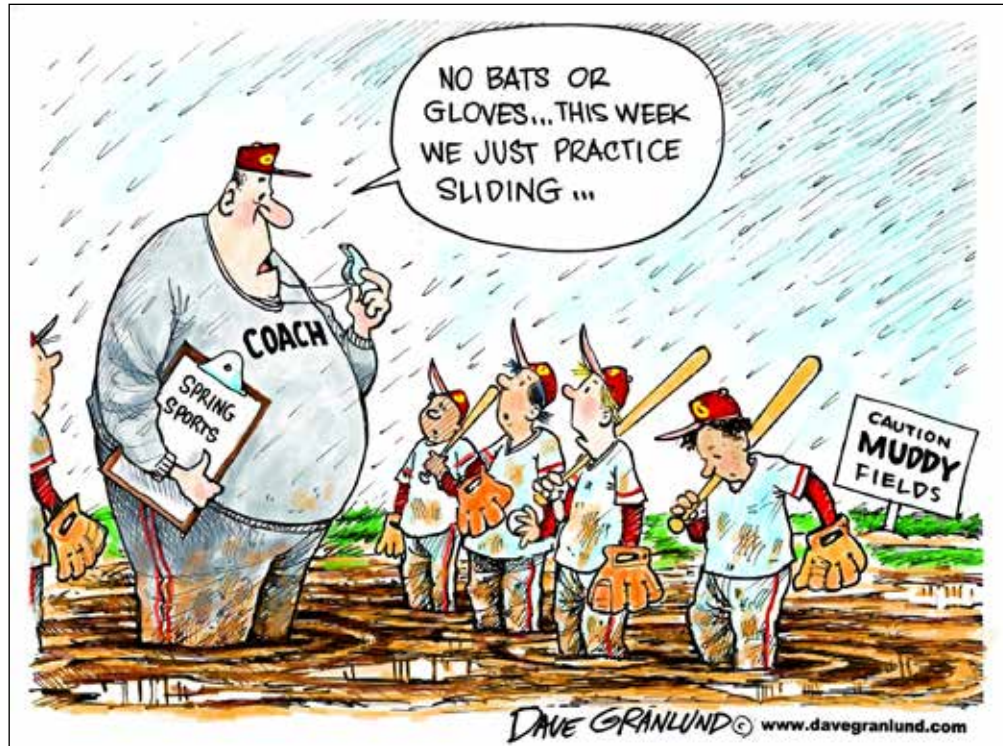
If the buds have opened and are too far gone to be edible (at least in terms of looking like traditional asparagus) I will just allow the foliage to grow, figuring that the photosynthesizing will benefit the roots in the long run, just as later foliage does after the harvest period is over. I usually let really skinny spears go to foliage as well – they are usually kind of tough.

Speaking of tough, what about those really thick spears, the kind that are "thumb-thick?"

If you notice the base of these spears to be woody and tough in appearance, get out the potato peeler and remove the outer skin, revealing a much more tender interior portion. An old friend taught me this trick, and it works out pretty well.

I'd be in remiss if I didn't address the stinky smell associated with eating asparagus.

Yesiree, it can happen even 15 minutes after ingesting it. Use the bathroom and voila, your urine will have a pungent, asparagus-like smell. Only maybe worse.



in my BACKYARD

By Ellenor Downer

I had fox sparrows under my feeder for several days now.

Most recently I counted five of them usually it is two or three. The fox sparrow is a large sparrow about seven inches long. It has a gray head and back with bold, rufous or brown streaking.

It has an irregular shaped central dot on its breast and reddish, brown rump and tail. The reddish coloring resembles the color of a fox, hence its name.

It often jumps forward and back, pulling aside ground cover to find food underneath. It may come to feeders when seed is scattered on the ground. I not only put seed in the tray feeders, but I sprinkle some on the ground for the juncos, sparrows and mourning doves.

The female lays four to six light blue green eggs with darker marks in a cup like nest of grasses, lichens and leaves lined with hair, fur and rootlets. When we had horses, I would often find nests with their hair in them.

My daughters and I would leave hairs groomed from their manes and tails on the ground for the birds.

The fox sparrow's song is a short series of clear melodious whistles and it is more melodic than most sparrows. Males may have one to three versions their songs, which are distinct to each male.

Interesting sightings

I have received emails of several interesting sightings. A Granby resident wrote, "I recently saw a bald eagle in my neighbors tree right next to my property. It was on Feb. 28. To make sure what I was seeing, I grabbed my binoculars and sure enough it was a bald eagle. He stayed there for around five minutes then he flew away." She said, "It was my first time spotting an eagle in Granby. I did spot one in the 90s at the Quabbin flying around. I usually see hawks

in my neighborhood on a regular basis. But this was a nice site to see for sure."

A Barre resident saw a snow bunting on March 15. An Oakham resident saw two sandhill cranes on the morning of March 15. He said, "While driving down Rutland Road in Oakham, I did a double-take and hit the brakes. There, near the road at Eva Grimes' old place, stood two Sandhill Cranes. They almost could have been mistaken for lawn ornaments, but they were real. One stood erect while the other pecked at the lawn grass. Last year I observed three cranes fly over my house. Perhaps they plan to nest in one of our large beaver-impacted marshes?"

Brimfield resident

A Brimfield resident reported on March 18, he saw 22 ring-necked ducks and an immature bald eagle at a pond in Warren.

He also said, "On South Street where last year there were three great blue heron nests and an osprey nest. There were two great blue herons standing in one of the nests used last year and an osprey sitting on the nest used previously. The osprey have been present there for three years, producing at least one chick each

year. He also said his wife saw a dozen chipping sparrows in their yard, a first of the year at this location.

He report the only spring arrival in our yard had been one male robin a few days ago. No phoebes yet and he still has some juncos and at least one white-throated sparrow.

The Brimfield resident said he did a tour of some local ponds on Wednesday. At the heron rookery at

Conant Brook in Monson he saw one great blue heron and one tree swallow. In Brimfield, there were 54 male and 18 female common mergansers.

Turkey vultures

On Tuesday, I spotted about four turkey vultures perched in a dead tree in Oakham. Several more were circling overhead. I have seen then at this location in past years.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



Fox sparrow

OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

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

Send opinions to:

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

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Quaboag Current Newspaper

- opinion -

Guest Column

Selectmen's candidate shares his platform

By Vaughn Schlegel

I often get asked "What is your platform? What do you bring to the table?" The short answer is: "What do you, the voter, want for North Brookfield?"

I am here to represent the will of the voters for this community. It is not my decision alone to "be the change."

I work for you, and I will listen to each and every one of you. This will help us build a shared vision for a better North Brookfield. To represent the people of North Brookfield means truly listening to the input of the people of the town, rather than coming in with preordained conclusions.

Everyone has ideas of what would make North Brookfield better than it already is. Those ideas include better roads, sidewalks, changes in the school system, and upgraded first responder services.

In fact, there are many issues facing the town, but most of these issues are a direct or indirect result of insufficient revenue. My time on the Finance Committee has given me the opportunity to see all areas of our town's budget in great depth.

Year after year, our town has been faced with a growing deficit. Interest paid on this debt makes it increasingly difficult to balance the budget.

As the deficits add up, the chunk of our budget that must be paid in interest

grows, and this forces us to allocate revenue to interest that should be going to other priorities. To be clear, our expenditures exceed our revenue, and there is very little in our discretionary budget that would be considered wasteful.

There are two avenues we need to pursue to address this problem. The first is by growing our tax base.

North Brookfield has untapped industrial zones and vacant commercial space. These areas can be used to bring in new businesses that will help generate growth in our tax base.

Importantly, this can be done without expanding the existing industrial and commercial zones, so we can grow our sources of revenue without disrupting the rural character of our town.

I believe a dedicated focus on this issue could be accomplished by appointing an Economic Development Committee consisting of members of both local government and the business community that will research and plan commercial growth in the town. This committee would be able to identify any roadblocks that are preventing businesses from locating in our town, while also fostering a positive relationship between local government and business.

In addition, an Economic Development Committee would plan and hold events that would highlight area businesses and help our residents direct their spending to support these local businesses.

This will foster a relationship in which everyone wins.

Businesses will benefit from the friendly and supportive environment of North Brookfield. Residents will see increased local opportunities for employment, goods, and services and our town as a whole will have a larger tax base, allowing us to grow our revenue to eliminate our growing deficits.

The second task in addressing our revenue shortfalls is to identify and hopefully eliminate unnecessary spending that is forced upon us by the state, or to address structural problems that lead to misallocated revenue.

School regionalization is a key problem in this regard. We would all like to see some sort of closure on this issue.

Many other schools outside of North Brookfield offer programs of study that

are in high demand by our students that we cannot offer. This was one of the reasons for regionalization.

We have access to other schools at present that give our students the opportunities we cannot provide. These include programs in the trades, such as electrical training and carpentry, among many others.

The school should find alternate ways to offer other course such as those offered at an Academy. Courses in Medicine, Law, etc. When a student from North Brookfield chooses to attend a school outside of town to get an education most suitable for their career path, that state educational revenue follows the student and no longer supports our schools.

Simply put, choicing out is hurting our schools. And this doesn't help when everyone's attitude towards our school system is a negative one.

Working closely with the School Committee I believe we can develop the programs that our students need right here in town, and in this way serve our students better while simultaneously improving the town's bottom line. We want the best possible education and opportunities for our children along with rock solid finances.

Another key problem affecting our budget is that of unfunded state and federal mandates. Working with Senator Durant and Representative Berthiaume, I would seek with help from other members of the Board to find ways to push back on these burdens placed not just on our town, but also so many others around us.

This has especially had a devastating impact on our school budget, where the town is expected to come up with more and more money we don't have to pay for services the state deems mandatory. These mandates impose costs, along with huge administrative burdens, even for things we don't remotely need or want.

We're seeing state overreach everywhere. These include misplaced mandates for education, funding the state's MBTA plan, and providing public funding to house illegal aliens.

The taxpayers must not be burdened with escalating costs for counterproductive programs they never wanted in the

first place. The state also needs to work for the best interest of its citizens, and not merely serve some distant agenda for which we bear the burden.

I am confident that with the help of a full-time professional Town Administrator, we will be able to work together and find a path forward that both represents the residents' needs and tackles the necessary changes needed to make this town thrive sustainably. I think we can all agree on most of the things we would like to see improved, and I will make it my job as Selectman to ensure those desires are expressed and put into action to the best of my capabilities.

Aside from the strictly economic side of things, I would also advocate for more town-wide activities, community events, and upgrades to our public spaces. Our Parks and Recreation Committee is already doing a fantastic job of getting the ball rolling on these projects.

This sort of civic investment can foster a sense of pride and belonging, encouraging families to make North Brookfield their family home for generations, rather than just a temporary place of residence.

In closing, I will not only work with this Town Administrator, but I will also work closely with all Boards (the Board of Selectman included), Committees, and Department heads. At this present time already have a close working relationship with many of the town's elected and appointed officials and I will continue to forge these relationships as well as those with our residents so we can work together to help solve the issues facing North Brookfield.

I have taken it upon myself to better understand each department in our town and how it operates, its financial needs, and future plans which are not just limited to many of the renovation and building projects we are currently focused on such as the Sewer, Fire, and High Departments.

If you would like to follow updates on my campaign and any topics I have posted about. Please follow my Facebook page "Vaughn Schlegel for Selectman."

Remember, the last day to register to vote is April 25 and the election is on May 6 at the North Brookfield Senior Center located at 29 Forest St.

GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

Our bodies convert asparagusic acid into sulfur-containing chemicals that are volatile enough to fly from the toilet up your nose, that is, if you have the ability to perceive it. Some people don't.

Call them lucky, perhaps. I consider myself lucky to have such an amazing vegetable growing right in my backyard, stinky or not.

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

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USDA INSP. FROZEN GOAT MEAT.....	\$6⁹⁹ lb	USDA INSP. GROUND FRESH DAILY 80% LEAN GROUND BEEF	\$3⁶⁶ lb		
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- community -

Quabbin Visitor Center lists First Thursday hikes

BELCHERTOWN – The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center, is hosting First Thursday Habitat Hikes each month.

All ages are welcome at these programs; however, dogs are not allowed anywhere at Quabbin Reservoir.

Quabbin is an area of immense diversity of habitat, from shady vernal pools to sunny mountaintops. Staff will be hosting hikes one Thursday each month (weather permitting) to spotlight some of these beautiful landscapes.

Hikes will vary in location and intensity and may focus on an individual species or on a more general area. For more information and to register visit www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir or email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov

Wetlands Walk

A 1.5-mile easy Wetlands Walk will be held on Thursday, April 4 from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (<https://goo.gl/maps/RvC5y8AMtmWToTTq5>).

This Habitat Hike will visit two different types of wetlands. It will begin at the parking area for Goodnough Dike in Quabbin Park and walk the Dike Road down to the wetlands' location and back, covering approximately 1.5

miles round trip.

Please dress appropriately for the weather and be prepared for wet/muddy conditions (wear appropriate footwear).

Register at: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/fe46ba08256404fa1bd-49660f68c624>.

Gate 37 Forest Walk to Wetlands

A 1.5-mile east Gate 37 Forest Walk to Wetlands will be held on Thursday, May 2 from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (<https://goo.gl/maps/wPedFYxiN5Qp8sVv9>)

Meet at Gate 37 off Route 122 in the North of Quabbin Reservation. Parking is limited.

This Habitat Hike will be a short walk down a forest road to a stunning wetland habitat. It is a little over 1-mile round trip.

Those who are feeling adventurous may opt to hike further, up the side of Soapstone Mountain to a spectacular view of the Quabbin, though be advised this portion is difficult and will not be a part of the official hike. Please wear appropriate footwear and protect yourself against ticks.

Register at: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c3936c4d26c8443694b6b-3fc0beb97d4>.

Tower Trail Habitat Hike

Join a 3-mile moderate Tower Trail

Habitat Hike on Thursday, June 6 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. (<https://goo.gl/maps/9K3L4xf44nbVK4bG7>)

This hike will meet at the parking area inside the Middle Entrance off Route 9. It is a moderately difficult hike, approximately 3-miles round-trip up Quabbin Hill through woodland and mountain habitat and back.

Due to safety issues, hikers will not be able to go up to the tower itself, as it is currently closed for renovations. Please wear appropriate footwear and protect yourself against ticks.

Register at: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c2dd1551fbb7467bbd-da704a469c7929>.

Trees are Treasures

Earth Day/celebration at Wells State Park April 20

STURBRIDGE – Grassroots Central Mass will continue its tradition of celebrating Earth Day with its fourth "Trees Are Treasures" event on Saturday, April 20 at Wells State Park in Sturbridge from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

GCM, a local affiliate of Indivisible Mass Coalition is again co-sponsoring this year's events with Brookfields Fight Fear. Both GCM and BFF are local groups dedicated to serving the communities we live in through finding and

supporting solutions to issues in our communities, our state, and our nation.

This event includes a short, level walk along the Mill Pond Trail at Wells State Park, where costumed interpreters are stationed to discuss the importance of wetlands and forest ecosystems, at both child and adult levels. This is a family friendly stroll.

This free event will also include children's crafts under the pavilion, storytelling, facepainting and a free tree seedling giveaway. Join GCM to celebrate and appreciate the beauty of our native forest.

For more information visit grassrootscentral-mass.org/

Knights host spaghetti dinner on April 13

WEST BROOKFIELD – Knights of Columbus Council 11080 is sponsoring a spaghetti dinner on Saturday, April 13 in Dugan Hall, Sacred Heart Church, 10 Milk St.

Take-out is available at 6 p.m. and sit-down dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. Proceeds from this event will benefit Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish.

Dinner includes pasta fagioli, garden salad, meatballs and sausage, spaghetti and sauce, garlic bread, dessert, water, soda and coffee. The cost is a \$15 donation and \$10 for children under 12 years old.

Admission tickets are also good for entry for a special door prize. Raffle tickets for a 50/50 Raffle and more will be available.

Advance ticket purchase is encouraged and appreciated, and tickets are available from any Knight or by calling 508-612-1649 or 413-813-8100 or by emailing bobfalter@gmail.com or wallyconnor122@gmail.com.

Tickets will only be available at the door while they last.



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- community -



The Fanfare Brass Ensemble will appear in a free concert at the Sturbridge Federated Church on Sunday, April 14 at 7 p.m. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Federated Church presents Fanfare Brass Ensemble in concert

STURBRIDGE – The community is invited to join the Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale for a special performance by the Fanfare Brass Ensemble on Sunday, April 14 at 7 p.m. in the newly refurbished church sanctuary at 8 Maple St.

The ensemble, established by David Neill in 2008, draws its inspiration from the acclaimed Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. The Fanfare Brass Ensemble is composed of experienced brass musicians including David Neill (Bass Trombone), Trumpet players Robert Venables, Sheldon Ross, Ken McCance, and Melissa Willis, Jean Jeffries (French Horn), Trombonists David

Sporny and Charles Emery, Ernie Adams (Bass Trombone), and David Winer (Tuba).

The concert will showcase a variety of music ranging from classical pieces like “Fanfare from La Peri” by Paul Dukas, to modern medleys from “West Side Story” and selections from “Phantom of the Opera” by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The program also includes traditional American melodies, with the patriotic “America the Beautiful”, the compelling “The Cowboys” by John Williams, and “Make Our Garden Grow” by Leonard Bernstein and Richard Wilbur.

The event is free to the public, with a voluntary

goodwill offering to be collected during the performance.

The Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale joyfully celebrates Christ’s presence and God’s grace in our lives.

Community members are welcome and invited to join in worship on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. Services are also live streamed on the church’s Facebook page.

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

Meet the author at Merriam-Gilbert library

WEST BROOKFIELD – “Just Sue,” a past resident of West Brookfield and author of “This Is Why I Sing” and “Balancing My Seesaw”, returns to West Brookfield at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library, 3 West Main St., to share what she has learned through life’s hardships as a lifelong New Englander, mother and grandmother.

Sue uses poems and storytelling to share how she has found strength in times of hardship through her relationship with God, and hopes to inspire her readers by sharing how she has in turn found her voice.

This program will be held on Tuesday, April 9, at 6 p.m. Please stop by or call the library at 508-867-1410 to register.

MWCC announces honors lists

GARDNER – Mount Wachusett Community College announces the President’s and Dean’s lists for the fall 2023 semester.

Local students making President’s list are: Jakob Lanne, Brookfield and Elizabeth Cyganiewicz of New Braintree.

Local student making Dean’s list is: Hannah Southwick of North Brookfield.

Local students making Distinction list are: Jessica Holmes of New Braintree and Sadie Kiley of

North Brookfield.

Local students making Excellence list are: Elizabeth Faford of Brookfield, Katelyn Hallihan of Brookfield, Hanna Shailer of Brookfield, Rachel Chisholm of New Braintree, Kaylee Newland of North Brookfield, Eric Azevedo of Sturbridge, Jacob Croteau of Sturbridge, Luke Quattrocelli of Sturbridge and Madison Gendron of West Brookfield.

Students who complete a minimum of 12 semester hours are

eligible. The Dean’s List requires a 3.30 to 3.99 grade point average while the President’s List requires a 4.0 grade point average.

Students who have earned between 6 and 11.5 semester hours and who have attained a grade point average of 4.0 and receive no incomplete grades are honored with placement on the Distinction List, while those who attain a grade point average between 3.3 and 3.99 are honored as Excellence List members.

Library holds Rainforest Reptile Show on April 21

NEW BRAINTREE – Rainforest Reptile Shows, a hands-on traveling animal show, is coming to the New Braintree Town Hall, 20 Memorial Drive, on Sunday, April 21 at 3 p.m.

Children of all ages will have a chance to come into direct contact

with live reptiles, artifacts and their incredible stories. This program is presented by the New Braintree Public Library and is sponsored in part by a grant from the Hardwick/New Braintree Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state

agency.

The program is free and open to the public. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. People may call the library at 508-867-7650 during regular business hours for more information.

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

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

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

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

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- community -

Zonta Club's program makes women's self-care a priority

LUDLOW – Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well, better manage stress, lower your risk of illness, increase your energy, and improve your overall physical and mental health.

Too often, however, women's self-care takes a back seat to everyone-else care. On Monday, April 8 at the Ludlow Country Club, the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley will host two women entrepreneurs determined to raise awareness about why women need to shift the focus and how even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

Jen Belanger, Registered Dietitian, the featured speaker, is focused on self-care from a food perspective. Belanger appears regularly on local television,

showcasing recipes and healthy-eating tips, and hosts a podcast "Mom, What's For Dinner?" for parents who need help navigating the muddy waters of feeding their kids.

She will dispel the myths of dieting and share how healthy eating can be fun. Attendees are invited to submit questions and be prepared to leave with practical ideas that will improve their outlook on self-care.

Shannan Swinton, CEO of Shandoll's Beauty Lounge, uses natural ingredients to create skin care products that improve both skin health and self-confidence. Attendees will get a chance to learn about her products and services and even purchase a selection of soaps, scrubs, and lotions, starting at 5:30 p.m. She accepts cash, cards or



Jen Belanger, Registered Dietitian, is the featured speaker at Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley's April 8 program on self-care.



Shannan Swinton, CEO of Shandoll's Beauty Lounge, will present on skin health using her own skin care products. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

April 8 with a 5:30 p.m. gathering, 6 p.m. dinner, followed by the program. Pay at the door for the buffet (\$28), but RSVP is required by emailing info@zontaqv.org.

Questions can be directed to Mary Knight, secretary, by calling 413-219-8260.

About Zonta Club

Since 1919, Zonta has been working to create a more equitable future for women and girls. Members believe that fostering a diverse and inclusive global community is a powerful platform to bring about the social change needed to make our vision for gender equality a reality.

For more information, visit Zonta.org or email info@zontaqv.org.

Venmo.

The public is invited to join Zonta Club at the Ludlow Country Club on

HISTORICAL | FROM PAGE 1

Speaking during the presentation was the team of Bob Arnold, Charlie Blanchard and Doug Quigley. All three presenters are collectors of antique weapons including some of the pistols created by this Sturbridge manufacturer.

Gibbs, Tiffany and Company was the largest manufacturer of underhammer pistols back in the 1830s.

These pistols were small and inexpensive and benefited many buyers who were moving out west. The pistols were light, easy to carry weapons making it convenient to carry while traveling.

The company was started by Enoch Gibbs and Lucian Tiffany and started the business back in 1833.

Many of the company's shops were located throughout western Connecticut and western Massachusetts and had over 30 employees. The business ceased operation in 1838.

Arnold is a freelance photographer, historian and avid collector of all things Sturbridge. Arnold has been documenting life in the community of Sturbridge for over 50 years.

Arnold mentioned during the presentation that the underhammer pocket pistol was invented in Sturbridge back in the 1830's and is also known as a "pocket rifle". This 3.5 inch barreled firearm would have the words engraved "Gibbs, Tiffany and Co," to indicate who its manufacturer was.

The underhammer pocket pistol was known for its unique design and had ties to a manufacturer that came before the Sturbridge company.

Prior to Gibbs, Tiffany and Company, a local manufacturer out of Hardwick the Ruggles Factory operated and produced underhammer style firearms. Adin and Fordyce Ruggles obtained a patent for manufacturing firearms and their designs were very simplistic and grew in popularity in New England.

Both Ruggles brothers died from separate firearms accidents. The company began leasing room in the factory to at least five other individuals who made underhammer pistols on the Ruggles machinery.

Therefore, the production of these unique firearms would continue.

Another speaker during the presentation was Blanchard, who shared the history behind both Ruggles Factory in Hardwick and Gibbs, Tiffany and Company.

Blanchard has served on the Water and Sewer Commission for 16 years. He also served on the Board of Selectman for 18 years.

Blanchard currently serves on the

Planning Board and is a founding member of the Sturbridge Historical Society. Blanchard has served as treasurer of the Historical Society since its inception.

Joining Blanchard and Arnold is Sturbridge Historical Society President, Quigley. A resident of Sturbridge for over 45 years, Quigley has contributed in many living history events from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War.

He is also a collector of original and reproduction firearms.

Quigley begins his presentation by sharing the background behind firearms dating back to the invention of gunpowder.

Before the invention of underhammer pistols, the flintlock pistol was a popular firearm in early American history. Explaining with a photograph of the flintlock, Quigley stated that the Flintlock was used for over 140 years.

Gibbs, Tiffany and Company operated until 1838, but was one of many pistol manufacturers out of New England. Other known companies include W. Ashton, HJ Hale, EK Putney, Ingraham, BM Bosworth, Ethan Allen of Grafton and many more.

There was a question and answer period after the presentation and many guests had questions regarding how the guns worked at the time.

Quigley described the underhammer pistol made by Gibbs, Tiffany and Company as "a personal defense weapon."

According to Quigley these firearms from the 1800s are rare and were hardly produced after the company's closure in 1838.

"These guns were considered gone by the 1840s," Quigley said.

When asked about the value of these antique firearms, these collectors believe they vary pending on condition. There was one firearm manufactured by Ruggles that sold at a Connecticut Auction for about \$4,800.

This was the first ever firearm presentation by the Sturbridge Historical Society and to conclude it there was a display case of some of the original underhammer pistols by Gibbs, Tiffany and Company. There was also a rare buggy rifle produced by the company during its tail end of operation.

Arnold, Blanchard and Quigley are all collectors of these underhammer pistols and enjoyed sharing this program about a local manufacturer that is viewed as an important piece of history.

The Sturbridge Historical Society appreciates the Publick House for hosting their events. The next program will be on April 25 for "Sturbridge in the Civil War" by Wally Hersee at 7 p.m.



Bob Arnold, Doug Quigley and Charlie Blanchard spoke during the Sturbridge Manufacturer of New England Underhammer Pocket Pistols program at the Publick House. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



A display case of some of the original firearms were presented after the presentation.



The buggy rifle is a rare firearm made during the tail end of Gibbs, Tiffany and Company's operation back in the 1830s.

SPORTS

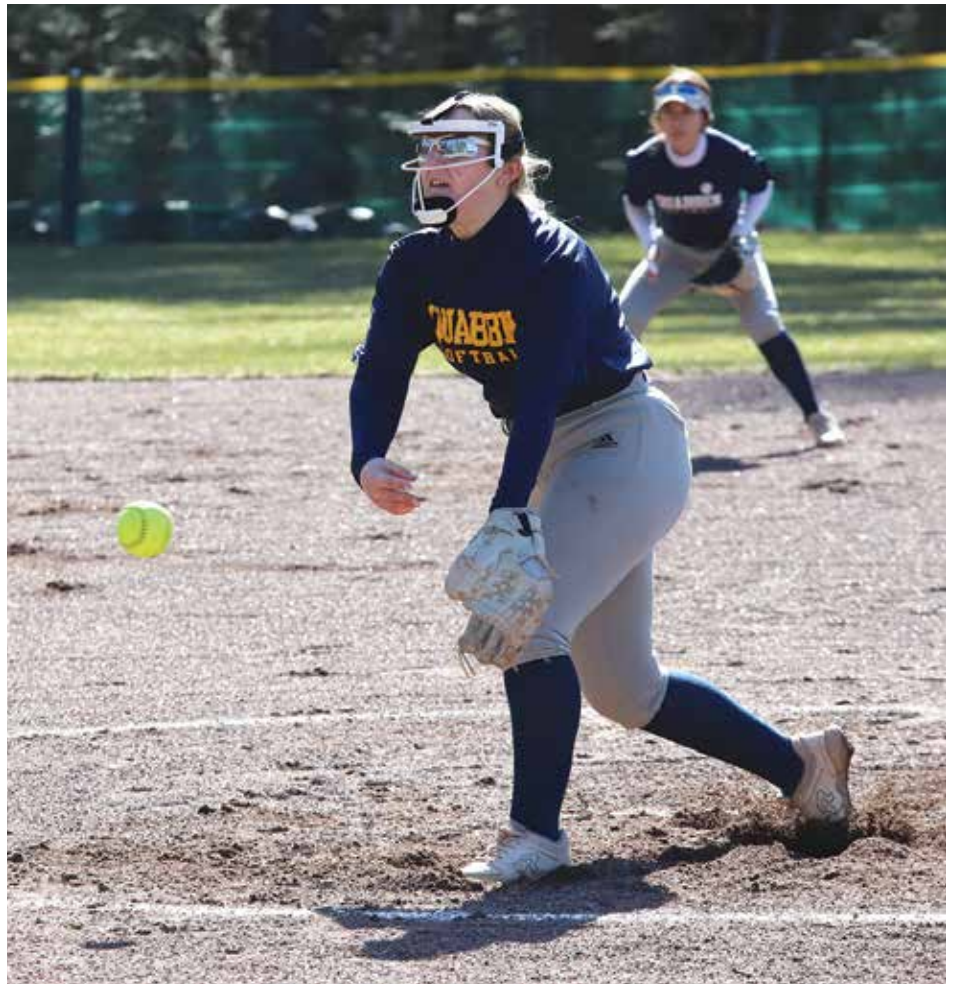
Panthers look to open season



The Quabbin offense will need to perform if the Panthers are to have a successful season.



The Panthers were scheduled to face competition at the beginning of the week.



Late last week, Quabbin softball continued its preparation for the regular season. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



The Panthers were also scheduled to play this Friday, but will not.

BARRE – Earlier this week, Quabbin softball was scheduled to face off with Littleton in the team’s season opener, but that game was postponed on Monday. The game was rescheduled to Tuesday, but weather was still not ideal. The Panthers were also scheduled to face Oakmont on Friday, April 5, but that game was postponed. The Panthers finally hope to open the season on Monday, April 8 against Narragansett.

Games being delayed or moved off Monday for eclipse

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

Athletes, parents, and fans are seeing changes to their schedules related to next Monday, April 8.

Several games and contests being held outdoors have had their start times delayed or have had the games moved off the date completely due to the upcoming solar eclipse set for the late afternoon hours that day.

Agawam High School Athletic Director Karen Gomez said she moved a softball game to later in the afternoon after she and other athletic directors received guidance from the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association urging them to move events away from the time the eclipse is scheduled for.

See ECLIPSE | PAGE 11

Pioneers hold off Sci-Tech



Dayne Shanley reaches high to get an out at first.

SPRINGFIELD – On Monday afternoon, Pathfinder was able to get its baseball season started with a matchup against Sci-Tech at Forest Park. Though leading 6-1, Sci-Tech was relentless in the late innings. The Pioneers were able to overcome a late rally in the seventh for a 10-9 victory. Sci-Tech was able to get three runs in the seventh off Brayden Mega, but Mega was able to get the final out

for the save for the Pioneers. Tim Russell got the win, allowing just two earned runs on seven hits. Errors hurt the Pioneers a bit, resulting in some unearned runs scoring for the Cybercats. On offense, Russell had a two-run double, and had three hits, three RBI and scored three times. Ethan Nompleggi had two hits and two RBI.

See MOE POINEER PHOTOS | PAGE 11



Tim Russell delivers a pitch for the Pioneers. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

- sports -

North Brookfield 2024 spring varsity schedule

Softball

Monday, April 8	Home	Murdock	5 p.m.
Thursday, April 11	Home	Quaboag	3:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 16	Away	Pathfinder	11 a.m.
Thursday, April 25	Away	Whitinsville Christian	3:30 p.m.
Tuesday, April 30	Home	Hampden Charter	4 p.m.
Wednesday, May 8	Away	Ware	3:30 p.m.
Tuesday, May 14	Home	Pathfinder	3:30 p.m.
Friday, May 17	Away	Hampden Charter	4 p.m.
Monday, May 20	Away	Murdock	3:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 23	Away	Quaboag	3:30 p.m.



ECLIPSE | FROM PAGE 9

According to the email from the MIAA: "On Monday, April 8, Massachusetts will be experiencing a solar eclipse from 2 to 4:30 p.m. You may already be aware of the danger of looking at the sun during the eclipse. Outdoor activity, practices, and games should be approached with extreme caution as unavoidable exposure to the harmful intensity could happen accidentally with extreme harm to athletes."

The email did not specifically bar events from happening during that time period, but most of the rescheduled games outdoors were moved to the 5 p.m. hour to avoid the eclipse, which is supposed to result in more than 80% coverage of the sun in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also issued guidance to all schools, directing education officials not to allow students to look directly into the eclipse while it is happening.

"A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes directly between the Earth and the sun," the DESE guidance states. "The moon is much smaller than the sun, but because it is so close to the Earth, it can appear to partially or completely block the image of the sun."

South Hadley High School Athletic Director Eric Castonguay confirmed he had to move some events scheduled Monday, including a track meet due to the eclipse's timeline. "I didn't really have an issue with it," Castonguay said. "I don't really know a lot about it, but I certainly would not want to expose the kids to anything that could be harmful to them."

The forecasted weather for Monday, April 8, is actually supposed to be ideal for the eclipse. It is currently forecasted to be sunny with temperatures in the low 60's. For more information on what contests have been moved to different times or off the date altogether depending on the availability of officials, go to www.arbiterlive.com for up-to-date schedules.

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Quabbin 2024 spring varsity schedule

Baseball				Girls Track			
Tuesday, April 2	Home	Littleton	4 p.m.	Monday, April 8	Home	Narragansett	4 p.m.
Friday, April 5	Home	Oakmont	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, April 10	Away	Groton-Dunstable	4 p.m.
Monday, April 8	Home	Narragansett	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, April 24	Home	Oakmont	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 10	Away	Lunenburg	4 p.m.	Wednesday, May 1	Away	Hudson	4 p.m.
Friday, April 12	Home	Clinton	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, May 8	Home	Lunenburg	3:30 p.m.
Friday, April 19	Home	Quaboag	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, May 15	Away	Lunenburg	3 p.m.
Monday, April 22	Away	North	3:30 p.m.				
Wednesday, April 24	Away	Tyngsborough	4 p.m.	Girls Tennis			
Monday, April 29	Home	Gardner	3:45 p.m.	Monday, April 1	Home	Littleton	4 p.m.
Wednesday, May 1	Away	Oakmont	3:30 p.m.	Friday, April 5	Away	Tyngsborough	4 p.m.
Friday, May 3	Home	Lunenburg	4 p.m.	Monday, April 8	Away	North Middlesex	4 p.m.
Monday, May 6	Away	Gardner	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, April 10	Home	West Boylston	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 8	Away	Clinton	4 p.m.	Friday, April 12	Away	Gardner	3:30 p.m.
Monday, May 13	Away	Littleton	4 p.m.	Tuesday, April 23	Home	Clinton	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 15	Home	Tyngsborough	4 p.m.	Wednesday, April 24	Away	Littleton	4 p.m.
Softball				Friday, April 26	Away	Hudson	4 p.m.
Tuesday, April 2	Home	Littleton	4 p.m.	Monday, April 29	Away	South	4 p.m.
Friday, April 5	Home	Oakmont	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, May 1	Home	North Middlesex	4 p.m.
Monday, April 8	Home	Narragansett	3:30 p.m.	Thursday, May 2	Away	Clinton	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 10	Away	Lunenburg	4 p.m.	Monday, May 6	Away	West Boylston	3:30 p.m.
Friday, April 12	Home	Clinton	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, May 8	Home	Tyngsborough	4 p.m.
Friday, April 19	Home	Quaboag	3:30 p.m.	Friday, May 10	Home	Doherty	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 24	Away	Tyngsborough	4 p.m.	Monday, May 13	Home	Gardner	4 p.m.
Friday, April 26	Away	Notre Dame Academy	3:30 p.m.	Wednesday, May 15	Home	Leominster	3:30 p.m.
Monday, April 29	Home	Gardner	3:45 p.m.	Girls Golf			
Wednesday, May 1	Away	Oakmont	3:30 p.m.	Thursday, April 4	Home	Auburn	3 p.m.
Friday, May 3	Home	Lunenburg	4 p.m.	Friday, April 5	Home	Ayer Shirley	3 p.m.
Monday, May 6	Away	Gardner	3:30 p.m.	Tuesday, April 9	Away	Nashoba	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 8	Away	Clinton	4 p.m.	Wednesday, April 10	Away	Ayer Shirley	3:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 9	Home	Montachusett	3:30 p.m.	Tuesday, April 23	Away	Hopkinton	3:30 p.m.
Monday, May 13	Away	Littleton	4 p.m.	Friday, April 26	Home	Nashoba	3 p.m.
Wednesday, May 15	Home	Tyngsborough	4 p.m.	Monday, April 29	Home	Notre Dame Academy	3 p.m.
Boys Track				Thursday, May 2	Away	Westborough	3:30 p.m.
Monday, April 8	Home	Narragansett	4 p.m.	Friday, May 3	Home	Burncoat	3 p.m.
Wednesday, April 10	Away	Groton-Dunstable	4 p.m.	Monday, May 6	Away	Auburn	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 24	Home	Oakmont	3:30 p.m.	Thursday, May 9	Away	Burncoat	3:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 1	Away	Hudson	4 p.m.	Friday, May 10	Home	Wachusett	3 p.m.
Wednesday, May 8	Home	Lunenburg	3:30 p.m.	Monday, May 13	Home	Hopkinton	3 p.m.
Wednesday, May 15	Away	Lunenburg	3 p.m.	Friday, May 17	Away	Wachusett	3:30 p.m.
				Monday, May 20	Home	Westborough	3:30 p.m.

Registration now open for Quabbin Valley baseball

The Quabbin Valley Over-28 Baseball League is looking to infuse new talent into its league for the 2024 season.

Registration for the 2024 season is now open and any interested players can go to www.quabbinvalley-baseball.org to get registered, or to seek more information or make inquiries about the league. The league website will also be updated over the next month with information about the upcoming season.

There are many open roster spots available in the league for the 2024 season, which is tentatively scheduled to begin on Sunday, April 21. The league plays most Sunday from late April through late August with playoffs following that. The league plays a 15-game schedule and typically fields six teams each year. Games are usually played at 10 a.m. with fields in

Easthampton and South Hadley normally used.

The Quabbin Valley league is an all-abilities league and all are welcome to join. Eligibility is players who are age 28 and over. You must be 30 to be eligible to pitch in the league. Your age for eligibility is whatever age you will turn in 2024. The league is also able to entertaining taking in an entire group as a team to add to the league. Please email the league board for to inquire about entering a team.

The league is currently in the process of preparing for the 2024 season and held a meeting on March 24 to discussion plans for the upcoming season. The next meeting will be held after the league's open practice for all players, including players interested in joining the league. The open practice will be at Beachgrounds Park in South Hadley at 10 a.m. on April 7.

MORE PIONEER PHOTOS | FROM PAGE 9



Zander Auffrey makes the long throw to first.



Brayden Mega fields a ground to shortstop. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

- community -

SCHOOL | FROM PAGE 1

who was unavailable until later that day. When Helgard met with Priestley, she shared her concerns about incidents that had occurred that week, as well as previous concerns about bullying.

Helgard said she also brought up the lack of follow-up and staff accountability.

Helgard said Priestley confirmed that students were bullying her son and that regular meetings would be held to address the situation. She said these meetings were never scheduled.

Helgard said her son's math and science teacher, Dan Pfefferle, would yell and throw things in the classroom, and make comments directed at her son. She said another student told their parent about Pfefferle throwing a chair in class because of her son's behavior.

A meeting with Pfefferle, Priestley and other staff had improved the situation, but Helgard said seeing how the situation was handled has led her to request a formal investigation into bullying at the school.

"I have always given this school the benefit of the doubt, believing that they had my son's best interests at heart, so I haven't been keeping track of every day and time they have failed my son and myself as educators," she said. "But I do know there have been more situations they have not handled in a professional manner."

Helgard said on March 11 her son returned home from school and complained of being bullied and hit. She said none of these incidents were reported to her by school staff and she requested an urgent meeting with the school's administration.

The meeting was held on March 14 and Helgard questioned why a formal investigation into the bullying was not performed after Feb. 16 when she initially met with Priestley. She said Priestley didn't start an investigation until Helgard filed a formal complaint with the Department of Education.

Helgard said Priestley didn't interview any of the students who were present when Pfefferle threw a chair; and that she only interviewed Pfefferle. Helgard said Pfefferle has admitted to treating her son poorly, but that Priestley classified it as an "isolated incident," and that the situation had improved.

"The problem is it wasn't isolated, it happened over weeks and months and was framed in the way of my son misbehaving in class," she said. "I truly believe that Dan Pfefferle's behavior encouraged the students to feel comfortable in treating my son poorly with no accountability."

Helgard said Priestley completed the investigation and found that it did not meet the criteria for bullying. Priestley included an action plan with the report, indicating how the school would keep Helgard's son safe going forward.

Helgard said, "it's a little too late."

She said she has unenrolled her son from the school district, and she will homeschool him until he can school choice out of the district the next school year.

Helgard said she reached out to other parents on social media and found that they have also experienced bullying.

Helgard said she hopes the Department of Education can "find the cracks in the system," and address these ongoing issues.

Another parent attending the meeting said her experience with the school district has been the opposite of Helgard's. She has found the staff and administration to be supportive and responsive to bullying and other concerns.

"Each time we've had an incident, whether my kids have been the aggressors...and they have been receivers...the school has, in my opinion, taken appropriate actions," she said. "They've been really supportive of my children when they've had issues. I think the school's been doing a good job."

She said the school has followed up on all incidents to make sure all students are safe.

Tashena Holmes said she has lived in town most of her life and she feared her children would face bullying in the schools. She said her children's experience in the elementary school has been positive and she has been satisfied with the school district's response to incidents.

Holmes said the high school has "serious issues," with bullying, and that her son had to transfer out of district. She said there needs to be proper documentation for incidents of bullying.

Two parents came forward about their students being named "aggressors" in bullying situations, including another fifth grade student.

"This was all very shocking, this entire situation," Stella Morin said. "It's just very upsetting."

Morin said she was notified that her student was identified as an aggressor by receiving a letter, rather than having a meeting with school staff.

School Committee member John Magario said it would be worth reviewing and possibly changing the school district's bullying policy.

"I think it's worth revisiting," he said, to make sure it is up to date with state policies. The topic of bullying "hits close to home," he said, and he hopes positive steps can be taken forward.

School Committee Chair Ron Ryel said now that the School Committee has heard from parents, they will have Superintendent Timothy McCormick look into their concerns. He said the policy subcommittee will review the current bullying policy and bring any amendments back to the full committee for approval.

BOARD | FROM PAGE 1

everything that the town is looking for is qualifications that I have and my experience, and just be such a good fit. We could grow together," she said.

Caggiano said she feels like she already knows the town well, and she has been watching the meetings.

"I see the passion that the residents have...and I really think that I could bring what I have and really serve the community," she said.

Caggiano said if she were hired, she would focus on formalizing policies and the budget process, and get information out to the public. She has reviewed the Department of Revenue's recommendations for the town from 2008 and she would like to follow through with them.

She would also take a thorough look at the budget to find ways to save money. She said she is familiar with both state and local budgeting processes.

Caggiano said she was part of the budget team for both Millbury and Ware, and was in charge of personnel as well as her own department's budget.

Caggiano said she has also been successful in securing grants.

"I don't want to leave anything on the table, whether grants or state funding," she said.

Caggiano said she is familiar with long-term strategic planning, but she hasn't been directly involved with developing one.

She said in her experience working with a five-member selectboard in a previous job, she made sure each member was prepared to make decisions.

"My position is to be that resource for the board," Caggiano said.

Caggiano said communication is important to maintain transparency, including keeping the town's website updated and utilizing media and social media. She said she has an open door policy and welcomes conversation with both residents and town employees.

"I always try to hear people out," she said. "I even welcome those difficult conversations."

The next candidate to be interviewed was Dawn Foster, who was born in East Brookfield and lived in both Brookfield and West Brookfield, before moving west to California. She has experience working in municipal government across the country.

"I've had quite a bit of experience just in different states," she said.

Foster said she would like to be Town Administrator because she enjoys setting up systems and writing policies and procedures; and putting all of them into play.

Having people work together as a team to reach a common goal is key.

She would make sure that "everybody is rowing the boat of North Brookfield in the same direction and that everybody is doing their bit."

Foster said some of the biggest issues the town is facing involves infrastructure and finances.

"There's a disparity between what needs to be done financially, and what's coming in," she said.

Foster said there is always a better way to do things, and it's important to look at current systems and efficiencies, to plan for the future.

Working in her current position in Lancaster, she helped develop a long-term strategic plan for information technologies. She said it requires a lot of communication with both town officials and residents.

Foster said she has dealt with conflict and stress in her position and as an EMT, including dealing with natural disasters while working in California.

"Often there is conflict, there is pressure, there is stress. A lot of time the conflict is coming from a position of either fear...or ignorance, and by ignorance I just mean somebody doesn't have all the facts," she said. Addressing fears and providing education has helped to resolve and solve issues, she said.

Informal conversations and office hours are helpful in sharing information, as well as using a town notification system and website. She said Facebook isn't always the best method to relay in-

formation.

When it comes to building the town's budget, Foster said she likes to work from a "zero budget" perspective. She would look at that the town spent the previous year on general operations, and then craft a budget that won't exceed that.

"If it's going to exceed that, then we need to identify 'how is that going to make North Brookfield better?'" she said. "You really have to quantify how it's going to make an impact."

Foster said she does not have a lot of experience with grant writing, but is familiar with managing Community Development Block Grants in her previous jobs. She said she would be working with department heads to determine which grants would be beneficial to apply for.

In terms of economic development for the town, Foster said that depends on the needs and wants of the residents.

"Those would be things to explore," she said.

Foster said she has been involved with planning and developing large projects, including the construction of a fire station in Arizona and refurbishing a historic opera house. She said the opera house project was complex, and it also involved coordinating with the friend's group.

FY 25 budget deficit

The Finance Committee joined the Board of Selectmen to discuss the deficit in the fiscal year 2025 budget.

Committee Chair Joseph Trentacosta said currently, the anticipated revenue is \$1.3 million less than the requested expenditures. He said last year the town faced a similar situation and had to borrow from the stabilization fund and utilize free cash.

"Fortunately, it was very close," he said. "We were able to cover most of the deficit last year with the exception of \$76,000, which we could not pay back to the stabilization fund."

Trentacosta said the Finance Committee realized that rising inflation and increasing costs would pose a "greater

challenge" to covering the FY 25 budget.

He said the committee discussed ways to meet the growing needs of the town, including looking at an override. He said many other small communities in the region are also considering overrides.

Large capital projects, including the fire station, may need to be deferred, if an override passes to lessen the added tax burden.

"We have to really start to sit down and make some determination on how are we going to cover the \$1.3 million," Trentacosta said.

He said the biggest problem the town faces in its budget is centered around the cost of education, primarily the cost of out-of-district tuition and transportation, which totals \$1.7 million. He said these costs are "absurd" for a small town to pay.

Trentacosta said he shared these concerns with state legislators, hoping to find a way to cover some of these mandated expenses.

He said if significant cuts needs to be made to the school district's budget, the residents will need to know in advance.

"If we're going to start slashing the school, the residents need to know what the results may be," he said. "This isn't just people who have children in school; this is our community. It supports our tax base."

Finance Committee member Kathleen Crevier said the situation with the FY 25 budget is "very urgent," urging all involved to work together to find a solution. Member Chet Lubelczyk said the state needs to fund special education, adding that "the answer is not in this room."

ARPA recommendation

The American Rescue Plan Act Committee recommended spending \$4,175 to fund the replacement of the water heater at the Haston Free Public Library. The board approved the recommendation.

- community -

East Brookfield Police Log

During the week of March 25-31, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 200 building/property checks, 120 directed area patrols, seven traffic controls, 12 radar assignments, six emergency 911 calls, one complaint, four citizen assists, four assist other agencies, two investigations, one trespass, two safety hazards, one fire call, three animal calls and 45 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, March 25

2:34 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Adams Road, Investigated
 7:59 a.m. Medical Emergency, Podunk Road, Transported to Hospital
 8 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
 3:57 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
 10:10 p.m. Investigation, Harrington Street, Officer Handled

Tuesday, March 26

11:52 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
 6:48 p.m. Trespass, East Main Street, Report Taken

Wednesday, March 27

5:16 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, East Main Street, Transported to Hospital
 11:16 a.m. Assist Citizen, Unknown, Spoken To

Thursday, March 28

2:26 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, East Main Street, Transported to Hospital
 9:28 a.m. Fire Alarm, East Main Street, Investigated
 10:36 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
 11:24 a.m. Fire Alarm, East Main Street, Investigated
 11:51 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Harrington Street, Citation Issued
 5:40 p.m. Fire/Other, Blaine Avenue, Taken/Referred to Other Agency
 6 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Harrington Lane, Report Taken

Friday, March 29

1:18 a.m. Assist Other Agency, East

Main Street, Officer Handled
 8:34 a.m. Safety Hazard, East Main Street, Taken/Referred to Other Agency
 9:43 a.m. Assist Citizen, East Main Street, Officer Handled
 11:04 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Park Street, Transported to Hospital
 1:31 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
 2:42 p.m. Safety Hazard, Podunk Road, Removed Hazard
 7:46 p.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, East Main Street, Vehicle Towed

Saturday, March 30

8:18 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 8:26 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 8:39 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 9:10 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 9:17 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Street, Citation Issued
 9:29 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Mechanic Street, Citation Issued
 9:52 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Dispatch Handled
 10:10 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 10:25 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 10:38 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued
 11:24 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 11:33 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Written Warning
 11:50 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Written Warning
 1:37 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Written Warning
 5:24 p.m. Radar, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 5:27 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 7:48 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Out of Town, Officer Handled
 10:21 p.m. 911 Disturbance, East Main Street, Transported to Hospital

Sunday, March 31

3:53 p.m. Investigation, East Main Street, Officer Handled

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of March 25-April 1, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 19 building/property checks, 41 directed area patrols, nine traffic controls, two radar assignments, two emergency 911 calls, two citizen assists, one safety hazard, one complaint, one animal call, one motor vehicle investigation and three motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Monday, March 25

8:24 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Wine Road, Transported to Hospital

Tuesday, March 26

7:26 a.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, Hardwick Road, Investigated
 8:32 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency,

Barre Road, Transported to Hospital
 3:24 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Written Warning
 5:04 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

Wednesday, March 27

3:23 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Citation Issued

Friday, March 29

9:57 a.m. Safety Hazard, West Brookfield Road, Removed Hazard
 2:23 p.m. Complaint, West Brookfield Road, Officer Handled

Saturday, March 30

11:08 a.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Spoken To

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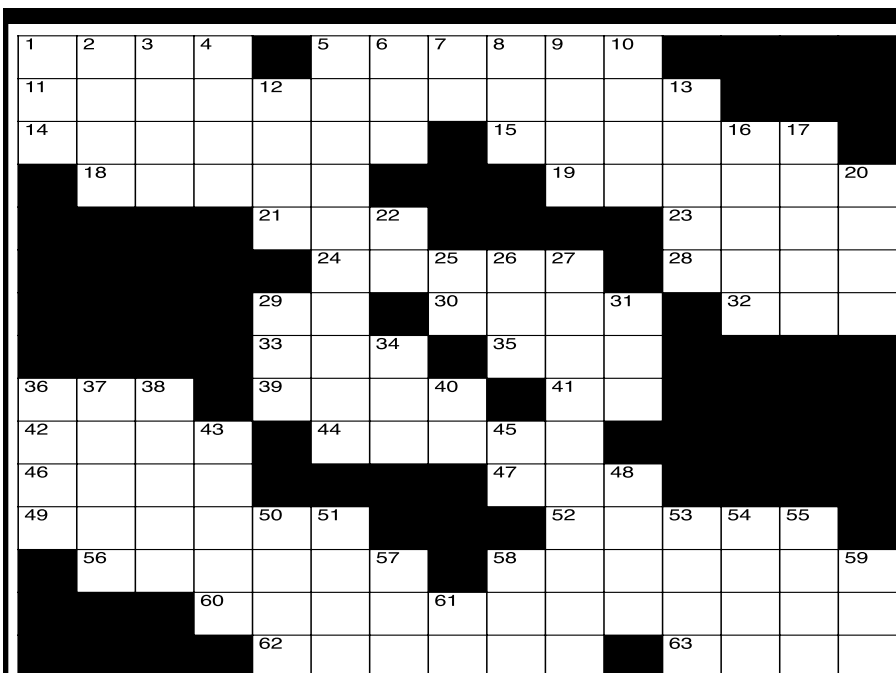
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|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. A minute amount (British) | 41. Commercial | city | 37. Doctor ___: children's book author |
| 5. Mystical or magical | 42. Spots where golfers start | 4. Clip | 38. Hebrew calendar month |
| 11. Shortening | 44. Polite form of address (Indian) | 5. In a way, misleads | 40. Designated hitter |
| 14. More satisfying | 46. French river | 6. Human gene | 43. Northern Poland village |
| 15. Other side | 47. Reduce the light | 7. The Golden State (abbr.) | 45. A passport is one form |
| 18. Philippine island | 49. Blood-sucking fly | 8. Lizard genus | 48. Hand (Spanish) |
| 19. More unnatural | 52. A way to categorize | 9. Parasites that invade the skin | 50. Hit with the open hand |
| 21. Mutual savings bank | 56. Procrastinates | 10. Took apart | 51. Actor Idris |
| 23. Famed designer Chanel | 58. Tall slender tower | 12. Mild yellow Dutch cheese | 53. Shakespeare's nickname "The ___" |
| 24. Makes less wild | 60. Where researchers work | 13. S. California town | 54. Northern U.S. lake |
| 28. At some prior time | 62. Office of the Pope | 16. Suffix plural | 55. Marvin and Horsley are two |
| 29. The cops who investigate the cops | 63. Office furnishing | 17. Painting technique | 57. Soak |
| 30. Immune system response | | 20. Small Eurasian deer | 58. Partner to cheese |
| 32. Distress signal | | 22. Mr. T character | 59. Expression of disappointment |
| 33. Engine additive | | 25. Microsoft | 61. College dorm employee |
| 35. "No Scrubs" trio | | 26. Shock therapy | |
| 36. Very fast airplane | | 27. Able to be sold | |
| 39. A reward | | 29. A doctrine | |
| | | 31. These three follow A | |
| | | 34. Pulse | |
| | | 36. Quantitative fact | |

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