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SEND YOUR NEWS AND PICS TO News@StonebridgePress.news Friday, December 24, 2021

School officials host forum on DPHS building project

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

SPENCER – Guests attended a community forum earlier this month to learn more about the David Prouty High School building project.

Attendees at the Dec. 7 meeting included selectmen from both East Brookfield and Spencer; members of the respective Finance Committees; students; families; business leaders; and state officials.

Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District leaders are encouraged by the turnout and participation at the meeting.

“We held this public forum to talk

about a project that has been talked about for years in Spencer and East Brookfield,” said SEBRSD Superintendent Paul Haughey. “It builds on past projects, and on the visioning that was led by our administration in 2019. We wanted to share the preferred scheme the Committee has honed in on.”

The forum featured a PowerPoint presentation with a timeline for the project. Discussion topics included projected costs, upcoming goals, and key dates for 2022. Officials have also spent the last few months explaining the process of partnering with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) on

the project.

“Working with the Mass. School Building Authority is a complicated process,” Haughey added. “We have to work within their guidelines and calendar. But the advantage of working with the MSBA Grant Program is that the MSBA will assist the project by paying for more than half the project costs.”

Since 2005, the MSBA has distributed more than \$15 billion to cities and towns across the state. Projects supported by the organization have created over 95,000 jobs during the last 15 years.

Looking ahead, the DPHS project is moving into the schematic design phase. The district is working with

Jones Whitsett Architects on the design concept for the project. Several local officials support the district’s design proposal, which preserves parts of the school building.

“I believe the option the Building Committee chose to move forward with is the best option,” said Spencer Selectman Ralph Hicks. “It retains Building A—which gives an auditorium and cafeteria that are twice the size of one that would be approved in new construction—while retaining the terrazzo floor and interior brick walls that would not be approved by today’s

Please Read **DPHS**, page **A8**

MLAA keeps mask mandate in place for winter sports

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION – With COVID-19 conditions worsening again – and a new variant making headlines – high school winter sports athletes will once again have to mask up this season.

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) board of directors recently decided to keep the mask mandate in place for winter athletes. The decision reflects the indoor mask mandate still in effect statewide at public schools,

per order of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

“It makes no sense to do something that contradicts what goes on during the school day,” said MIAA Executive Director Robert Baldwin during a recent meeting.

All coaches and guests must also be masked while attending winter sports venues.

For many local athletes and coaches, the mask mandate is a source of frustration. The

Please Read **MIAA**, page **A8**

BERNABEI FINISHES SEASON WITH STUDENT ATHLETE OF THE MONTH AWARD



Photo Courtesy

Leicester High junior Abby Bernabei was awarded the MIAA Student Athlete of the Month for the month of November for her strong cross-country season. On Friday, Dec. 10, a representative from the MIAA presented the award to Bernabei. Pictured, Bernabei (center) and members of the cross-country program accept the prestigious honor.

Baker fast-tracks recovery funding

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION – Gov. Charlie Baker recently signed a \$4 billion funding plan aimed at fast-tracking recovery efforts across multiple sectors.

Priority areas for the latest round of COVID-19 recovery funding include housing; healthcare; workforce development; and infrastructure. The majority of the funding represents federal aid from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

“The pandemic has had

a significant impact on Massachusetts workers, families, communities, and businesses for nearly two years, and today’s signing directs billions of dollars in relief,” Governor Baker said. “While this package falls far short of the investment I called for to address the housing shortage, the important investments included in this bill will help to accelerate Massachusetts’s economic recovery and provide long-lasting benefits to

Please Read **FUNDING**, page **A7**

Leicester PD seeking civilian detention clerks

LEICESTER – The Leicester Police Department is seeking two full-time civilian detention clerks to perform routine clerical work.

Job requirements will include receiving the public, answering telephones, camera monitoring, and keeping electronic records (Microsoft Office and IMC).

The detention clerks will also be required to successfully complete training in DCJIS, CPR,

first aid, suicide prevention, and matron training (if applicable), as well as monitor prisoners after they have been placed in a holding cell to ensure their safety and wellbeing while they are in police custody.

The ideal candidate is a self-motivated, detail-oriented professional with an understanding of the high level of confidentiality needed for the position.

The Leicester Police Department is operational 24/7. Hours may include days, evenings, overnight shifts, holiday shifts, and weekend hours.

The hourly rate is \$18.19 to \$23.05.

For more information about the available positions, including how to apply, visit www.leicester-ma.org.

A VISIT FROM ST. NICK



Photo Courtesy

Members of the Spencer/East Brookfield Police Association were joined by none other than Santa himself last week during visits to Wire Village School and East Brookfield Elementary School.

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Worcester Children's Chorus to perform with NESO in "Festive Baroque and Beyond" concert at Mechanics Hall

WORCESTER — The Worcester Children's Chorus will appear with the New England Symphony Orchestra in a "Festive Baroque and Beyond" concert, taking place in Worcester's Mechanics Hall at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 18. Tickets are available through the orchestra's Web site (newenglandsymphony.org) or from the Mechanics Hall box office at 508-752-0888.

The Worcester Children's Chorus is led by its Artistic Director, Pamela Mindell, along with Associate Director Philip Montgomery. The mission of the Worcester Children's Chorus is to enrich the lives of children ages eight to 18 by providing a quality musical experience through training in choral singing. WCC's ensembles enhance young people's lives, helping them to develop qualities of self-reliance, personal integrity, compassion, and confidence in their abilities. The Worcester Children's Chorus has performed at Carnegie Hall (2015 and 2017) and has toured to New Orleans, La. (2016) and

Canada (2018). Recent highlights include Bach's Saint Matthew Passion with the Worcester Chorus, Benjamin Britten's War Requiem with several choruses in Central Massachusetts, a 10th Anniversary tour to Canada, James MacMillan's "Passion According to Saint Luke" with WPI and Trinity Lutheran Church, and collaborations with several other area choruses and orchestras.

Also appearing with the orchestra will be soprano soloist Elaine Daiber. Mechanics Hall composer in residence Leonard Ciampa has composed a new piece especially for this concert by the NESO, Worcester Children's Chorus, and Elaine Daiber. NESO Music Director Roderick MacDonald will give a free pre-concert talk for ticket holders at 6:30 p.m.

New England Symphony Orchestra continues to operate as a volunteer-led, non-profit professional symphony orchestra serving the people of New England. This season's strategic plan



includes a three-concert series at Mechanics Hall, streaming performances as part of the NESO At Home series,

and more. For information about volunteering or sponsorship, call 603-438-8920.

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Local schools receive threats connected to TikTok challenge

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

REGION — A new social media trend has caught the attention of local school districts and law enforcement as schools nationwide have experienced a disturbing series of school shooting and/or bomb threats seemingly attached to a challenge on TikTok.

In recent weeks, schools across the country have experienced threats through phone calls or social media posts of violence at schools seemingly in an attempt to have classes canceled or to disrupt the daily activities of students. While such threats are serious, the knowledge of the TikTok challenge has forced law enforcement and school officials to approach the situation in a unique manner.

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District, for example, was the victim of several of these threats, including ones at Dudley Middle School and Charlton Middle School, prompting both police and the district superintendent to respond.

"Social media is a powerful tool often used to influence others, and not always for the good. It is always important to remain vigilant when it involves these types of threats. Please take time to talk to your children about the influence of social media, and that we take every threat seriously," Superintendent Steven Lamarche said in a statement on Dec. 16, acknowledging that the district was made aware late the night prior of a Snap Chat targeting the Dudley and

Charlton Middle Schools.

"We want to say thank you to the students, parents and community members who made us aware of the social media posts last evening. We all have a role in keeping our students and community safe," he added.

Later that same day, Lamarche released an updated statement saying that police from both district communities were working to investigate what was considered a "non-credible threat" to students.

"We understand the uneasiness that occurred. Our incredible staff will continue to monitor their student's health, safety and well-being. We are very lucky to have a staff that cares so much about your children," said Lamarche. "What was very difficult today was the sheer number of rumors, speculations, and untruths spread across social media throughout the school day. Administration has tried to stay in front and answer all communications that occurred today."

Both the Dudley and Charlton Police Departments released statements on social media acknowledging the situation on Dec. 16. The Charlton Police Department simply confirmed a threat to Charlton Middle School and that they believed it was part of the TikTok trend. Dudley Police Chief Steve Wojnar also confirmed his department is investigating the situation.

"An investigation was conducted (the night of Dec. 15) into early morning, and it appears that the threats are not

credible. They appear to be part of an unfortunate social media challenge that has been circulating nationwide," the Dudley Police Department said in a statement on Facebook. "School administrators were notified and are working with the police departments to identify anybody responsible for these messages. As a precaution, we have increased police presence in all of the Dudley schools and will continue to do so. Our goal is to provide a safe environment for our communities as well as our schools."

While schools in Webster were not the subject of the threats, the Webster Police Department also posted on social media about the TikTok challenge, acknowledging they had received reports about a potential attack for Dec. 17 that had "not specific ties to Webster" but had caught their attention all the same. As with all law enforcement, the department is taking the threats seriously.

"The Webster Police will have an increased presence at our public and parochial schools at arrival and dismissal. There will be patrol checks done throughout the day as well," the department wrote on Facebook on Dec. 16. "Please be careful in what you post on social media, and keep in mind that there are things that are being posted that are, quite simply, false."

Students and parents are encouraged to report any concerns, especially involving threats to schools or any other local institutions, to their local police department.



ACCURACY WATCH

The Spencer New Leader is committed to accuracy in all its news reports. Although numerous safeguards are in place to ensure accurate reporting, mistakes can occur.

Confirmed fact errors will be corrected at the top right hand corner of page 3 in a timely manner.

If you find a mistake, call (508) 909-4106 or email news@stonebridgepress. news during normal business hours. During non-business hours, leave a message in the editor's voice mailbox. The editor will return your phone call or email.

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P.E.O. Sisterhood helps Bay Path students reach for the stars

CHARLTON — Sarah Garcia of Charlton was presented with a \$2,000 grant on Oct. 23 by members of an organization that's helping women reach for the stars.

Garcia was one of three women (and the most recent) from Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy who received a grant from the Philanthropic Education Organization. P.E.O. has 6,000 chapters across the United States and Canada.

Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director said she didn't know much about P.E.O., other than her students and alumni receiving grants.

"It is amazing what P.E.O. does," she said, thanking the members of Chapter R, who presented Garcia with the award.

Chapter R nominated Garcia for the Program for Continuing Education (PCE) and helped her with the process.

The P.E.O. began as a bond of friendship among seven young women in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, and is now one of the oldest women's organizations in North America. According to the P.E.O. website, "since its inception in 1869, the

nonprofit has helped more than 105,000 women pursue educational goals by providing more than \$321 million in grants, scholarships, awards, and loans."

"I came across information on P.E.O. back in 2018 when I was researching scholarships for my nursing students," said Bolandrina.

The P.E.O. sisterhood has brought together women in the United States and Canada who are passionate change-makers helping women's advancement through education, support, and motivation.

"There are meetings and socials," said Bolandrina, who has now been newly inducted to Chapter R. "I am very excited to participate, and there are special interest groups!" she exclaimed.

Chapters hold fundraisers throughout the year to support the organization's scholarship programs, as well as the stewardship of Cottey College, a nationally ranked, fully accredited, independent, liberal arts and sciences college in Nevada, Mo. The women's college has been owned and supported by the P.E.O. since 1927. The fundraisers

are as varied as the chapters that hold them.

"I saw the beautiful dishcloths of Chapter R," said Bolandrina.

Chapter R also holds a Chocolate Sunday fundraiser. The fundraisers help support the national organization and help local women like Garcia.

Membership is by invitation only. Philanthropy is the goal of P.E.O. however, friendship is its cornerstone. The P.E.O. has a long legacy of sisterhood.

"The friendship and sisterhood brought me in," concludes Bolandrina.



Photo Courtesy
Chapter R members
at a recent social.

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PERSON of the WEEK

Rachelle Cloutier,
Leicester Senior Center Director

I had the pleasure of meeting Rachelle recently. It was clearly evident how much she loved the seniors, her community, and her position working with local civic organizations to assist those in need. From serving Thanksgiving Dinner to just lending an ear to a lonely soul, she goes above and beyond to help people. She gave me a tour of the Center which I found to be so very warm and inviting for the residents of Leicester and the surrounding communities.

Thank you, Rachelle, for your commitment and dedication to the community and for all that you do to make Leicester a great place to live.
Merry Christmas!

— June Simakauskas

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DA's community outreach talks reach audience of 600,000



WORCESTER — Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.'s office has officially reached more than 600,000 people with his crime prevention and community safety programming.

"We are at schools, senior

centers and community events across Worcester County nearly every day, presenting on topics such as bullying and cyber bullying, scams and fraud, drugs and alcohol, and texting and driving," Mr. Early said.

"I've always said I'd rather pre-

vent a crime than have to solve one. I'm proud to say we've officially reached 600,000 residents with this programming, many of them youth."

The District Attorney's Community Outreach Team, made up of 10 staff mem-

bers, presents programming to schools and groups of all sizes by request. These presentations are always free and can be tailored to the specific age range or audience. Our Outreach Team also runs our intern program and manages grant implementations.

The most popular program is bullying and cyber bullying prevention. This program also helps kids understand the importance of protecting their digital footprint and imparts the knowledge that nothing on the internet is ever deleted.

There are two specific programs addressing drugs and alcohol, including "This Is (Not) About Drugs" and "If They Had Known." The office also has a display called "Hidden In Plain Sight" that shows parents potential warning signs of substance use by their children.

"Early substance use can lead to a lifetime struggle with addiction for our youth," Mr. Early said. "These evidence-based programs help kids understand the risks associated with all substance use,

including prescription medications."

Scam and fraud education is regularly provided to seniors. New this year, the Outreach Team is also presenting a program called "Creating A Caring Community" to senior housing facilities.

"Our seniors, who have contributed so much to our society, deserve to live without fear of losing their hard-earned money or being bullied or excluded in their social life," Mr. Early said.

These presentations are coordinated with schools and community partners who share a commitment to protecting residents and preventing crime.

"This level of widespread outreach would not be possible without our dedicated staff," Mr. Early said. "Thank you to our Outreach Team: Nelson Colon, Kevin Donahue, Elisabeth Haddad, Michael Jennette, Eileen Kneeland, Kevin Lefrancois, Julie Lesure, Ellen Miller, Julie Nonni, Jill Wooldridge and, until recently, Abigail Westerlind."

Bridget O'Leary initiated into Omicron Delta Kappa

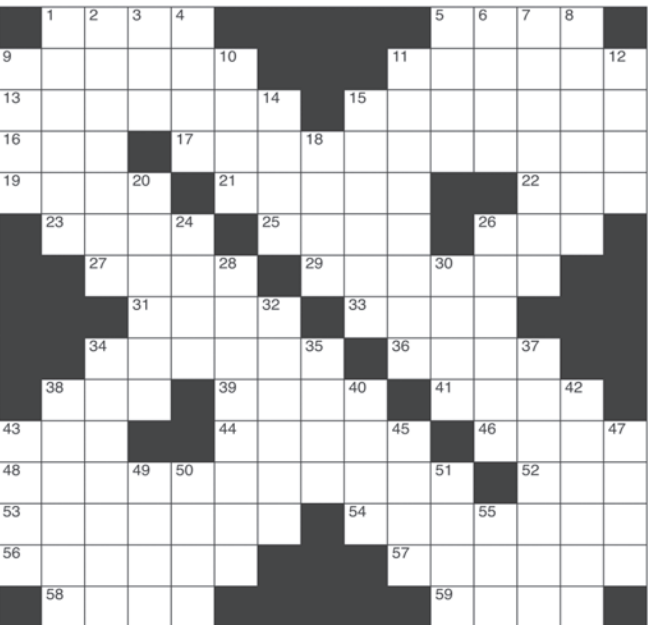
LEXINGTON, Va. — Bridget O'Leary, a native of Rochdale, was recently initiated into the Johns Hopkins University Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa, the National Leadership Honor Society. The Society welcomed more than 1,100 new initiates from 41 universities during November 2021.

Students initiated into the Society must be sophomores, juniors, seniors, or graduate/professional students in the top 35 percent of their class, demonstrate leadership experience in

at least one of the five pillars, and embrace the ODK ideals. Fewer than five percent of students on a campus are invited to join each year.

Omicron Delta Kappa Society, the **National Leadership Honor Society**, was founded in Lexington, Va., on Dec. 3, 1914. A group of 15 students and faculty members established the Society to recognize and encourage leadership at the collegiate level. The founders established the ODK Idea-the concept that individuals

representing all phases of collegiate life should collaborate with faculty and others to support the campus and community. ODK's mission is to honor and develop leaders; encourage collaboration among students, faculty, staff, and alumni; and promote ODK's leadership values of collaboration, inclusivity, integrity, scholarship, and service on college and university campuses throughout North America. The Society's national headquarters are located in Lexington, Va.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Breathe noisily
- 5. ___ Nui, Easter Island
- 9. Reddish browns
- 11. Simple shoes
- 13. Produce alcohol illegally
- 15. Home to famed golf tournament
- 16. Tax collector
- 17. Famous people
- 19. Urban area
- 21. Units of syllable weight
- 22. Pituitary hormone (abbr.)
- 23. Dismounted
- 25. Actor Damon
- 26. Vietnamese offensive
- 27. Retail term
- 29. Netted
- 31. Partner to carrots
- 33. Witnesses
- 34. Caulked
- 36. Satisfy
- 38. R&B performer ___ Lo
- 39. Monetary units of Macao
- 41. Give advice, explain
- 43. Possesses
- 44. Turn back
- 46. Gentlemen
- 48. One who fertilizes
- 52. Italian monk title (prefix)
- 53. Parties
- 54. Type of horse
- 56. Cuts in half
- 57. Raises
- 58. Expresses contempt or disgust
- 59. Ancient Italian-Greek colony

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Illinois city
- 2. One of the original disciples chosen by Christ
- 3. Young form of a louse
- 4. Type of powder
- 5. Finger millet
- 6. Share a common boundary
- 7. Assumed as a fact
- 8. Provide clear evidence of
- 9. Invests in little enterprises
- 10. A way to be
- 11. Monies given in support
- 12. Fashion accessory
- 14. Steal
- 15. Becomes less intense
- 18. Geological times
- 20. Hooray!
- 24. Monetary unit
- 26. Male reproductive organs
- 28. Earnings
- 30. Close by
- 32. Small integers
- 34. Fixed in place
- 35. Used to treat Parkinson's disease
- 37. Large, imposing building
- 38. A rooflike shelter
- 40. Stiff, hairlike structure
- 42. Print errors
- 43. To show disapproval
- 45. Body of traditions
- 47. Without
- 49. ___ Clapton, musician
- 50. Dangerous illegal drug
- 51. Infrequent
- 55. Sound unit



Toys For Kids Update

Monetary Donations may be sent to: Spencer Toys for Kids, P.O. Box 186, Spencer, MA 01562.

New, unwrapped toys can be dropped off at: Spencer Fire Dept, Spencer Post Office, Cornerstone Bank (Spencer office), ERA Key Realty Services (415B Main St). If you would like to sponsor a child please contact Katie at katrinah@erakey.com or call/text 774-925-8127 OR Donna at donnaflannery@erakey.com or call 508-885-6336. If you are in need of assistance, applications can be picked up at: Spencer Post Office, Mary Queen of the Rosary Food Pantry or ERA Key Realty Services (outside mailbox). You can see updates on Facebook at Spencer Toys for Kids.

DONATIONS AS OF 12/17/2021

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Webster First	\$350
Accurate Medical Cooling	\$100
Kathleen Kady	\$100
Victor Contracting	\$500
Norman & Michelle Berthiaume	\$50
Alison Chalifoux & Jeffrey Anderson	\$50
William & Annette Welch	\$100.00
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Irene Gadbois	\$25.00
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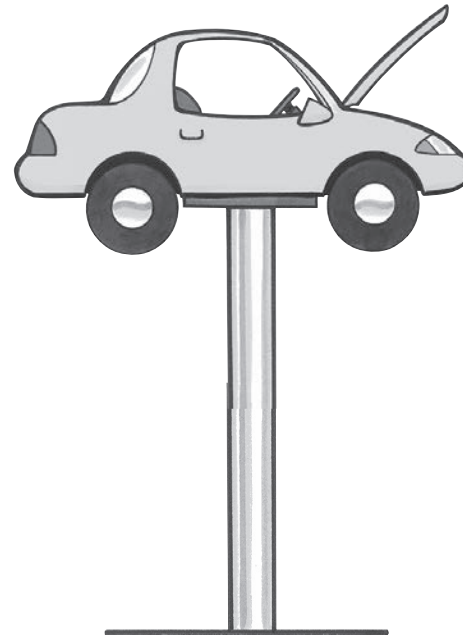
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EDITORIAL

Popular toys
through the years

“Being there for a child is the most noble thing a toy can do.” — Woody

Santa is preparing for his big night, which is just three days away. His elves are always busy working in the toy shop, year after year, and have created memorable toys, that always leave children wide eyed every Christmas morning. Some toys that children found under the tree more than 100 years ago are still popular today.

In 1920, just a mere 101 years ago, the hot toy for Christmas was the Raggedy Ann doll, that sold for \$1. Raggedy Ann and her brother Andy were created by a political cartoonist named Johnny Gruelle. In 1921, Lincoln Logs were the hot ticket. Lincoln Logs originally cost 50 cents.

Tinker Toys were first created in 1922, a toy that was a big hit in the 1980’s as well. In 1924, the Erector Set was a favorite. In 1925, the classic Teddy bear was a popular, and cost 79 cents.

Crayola Crayons date all the way back to 1926. Crayola means ‘chalk and oily’ in French. Noted is that the original crayons were created in 1903, and the box contained just eight colors. The Radio Flyer wagon came out in 1927 and cost \$2.99.

Yo-yo’s were all the rave in 1928, and cost just five cents. This toy dates back to 500 BC. In 1929, pop-up books became popular. In 1930 the Mickey Mouse doll hit stores. Mickey was discovered in the cartoon ‘Steamboat Willie’ that first aired in 1928. During Christmas in 1930, demand was so high for Mickey dolls that crafty mothers ended up creating their own.

Finger pain and sock monkeys came out in 1931 and 1932, respectively. In 1933, tin Marx wind-up toys were the new thing.

In 1935, it was the Shirley Temple doll that had little girls everywhere smiling on Christmas day. Monopoly first hit stores in 1937, inspiring decades of family meltdowns...excuse us, family fun. Some people still get excited if they land on Baltic Avenue.

The original view master that became popular in the 80’s, first came out in 1939.

In 1940, the Red Ryder BB gun cost \$5.00. Everyone loves a good Golden Book and in 1942, they cost just .25. In 1943, green army men became popular. The slinky (who didn’t have one?) first appeared under trees in 1945. In 1946, Lionel Trains cost \$30. Tonka trucks came out in 1947. The original Clue board game first appeared in 1949.

In 1951, Colorforms cost 25 cents. Colorforms were the invention of art students who liked to be artistic, sans the high cost of paint. In 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head hit shelves for just 98 cents. Model cars became popular in 1953. In 1954, Scrabble hit stands and in 1955, Silly Putty could be found in stockings everywhere.

Play-Dough (can you ever forget that smell?) first came out in 1956. Barbie appeared in 1959. Anyone who could keep two Barbie shoes in one place for more than 24 hours was/is a special kind of person.

In 1960, the Etch A Sketch was created. A great toy if you had the patience for it. In 1961, even though it was winter, children everywhere wanted a Slip n Slide.

The Easy Bake Oven first appeared in 1963 for \$15. In 1964, G.I. Joe appeared for \$1.95. Twister appeared in 1966. The Lite-Brite and all its pieces first came out in 1967 for \$10. Hot Wheels came out in 1968 and LEGOs in 1969.

In 1970, Nerf balls were being thrown about in homes everywhere. Weebles were a hoot in 1971. In 1973, Shrinky Dinks were a blast. Stretch Armstrong was popular in 1976 and a year later, in 1977, the Atari hit stores. Skiing is by far the best Atari game invented, and Pitfall.

In 1982, He-Man was a hit, followed by My Little Pony in 1982. In 1983, the infamous Cabbage Patch Doll appeared, complete with all of their bizarre names. Even our Editor had one named ‘Merci Rhonda.’ The original Nintendo Entertainment System appeared in 1986.

In 1995, Beanie Babies took over toy stores everywhere. Some rare Beanie Babies sell for thousands of dollars today. Pokemon cards appeared in 1999. In the early 2000’s, it was Bratz dolls, Xbox 360’s and Playstations. In 2006, the Nintendo Wii almost seemed futuristic. In 2010, the first iPad appeared, and interestingly enough, in 2021, kids old and young have the new version on their Christmas lists.

We hope you all remember this holiday season, that we’re all just a bunch of big kids.

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A joyful life

To the Editor:

What kind of life do you want? Do you want one where you live in fear, hidden away in your house, where the only human contact you have is through Zoom calls? One where the only person you see is that Amazon guy as he drops off packages on your front stoop? Where, when the holidays come around, you ship your loved ones gifts and give them a phone call or video party through the Zoom screen?

Not me. The only thing that makes life worthwhile is the ability to interact with others. Through this whole pandemic, I chose to go into the office. I like getting up in the morning, getting ready, and driving in. It requires you to move, get up, make yourself presentable. Even just driving your car, you’re interacting. You yell at the guy that cuts you off. You see the kids waiting for the bus or the crazy guy walking by himself wearing a mask. Then you get in the office. Get a coffee, discuss the game with your co-worker or tell him a joke. That’s what life’s all about. Work is a place to go and be in a social setting. Even if it’s stressful, it is a whole lot better for you than staying home and talking to the dog. You’re engaging in personal interactions. That’s healthier for you than any vaccine.

How about Christmas? How much is seeing the joy on a kid’s face worth to a grandma or grandpa? How much is it worth to see the faces and smiles on your loved ones’ faces? How much is it worth to sit around with your brothers and sister, mothers and fathers, aunts, and uncles? To feel their presence, to feel their little nuances or ticks. Some that drive you crazy. To me, they are priceless. These are the things we struggle for our lives for. I would rather die than be reduced to a hermit that stays in their house, too scared to venture out. To live behind curtains

and wait on the UPS driver. To sit at the computer screen and see your family through a screen. Nope, not for me.

Shopping in stores during the Christmas season was, to me, one of the most wonderful parts. The stores and mall with their elaborate displays. The workers with a smile. The mall Santa. I was out at Cracker Barrel for lunch Sunday. The store parts were packed with people., A little old lady in line grabbed six of the MM tubes with a Christmas tree on them. I’m sure she couldn’t wait to give them to her grandkids and see the smiles come across their faces and give their granny a big hug. That, my friends, is what makes life worth living. ‘Tis the season for you to make the choice. Choose a joyful life of living to the fullest with celebrations in person with family and friends. The “It’s a Wonderful Life” type Christmas. Wasn’t that the whole message of that movie? The most precious part of life is in being with the ones you love. The other option is the leftist Biden Christmas special. A cold, dark, fearful life with a Zoom Christmas. Just staying at home, waiting to die. A life where many receive the joyful Christmas news of termination of employment because they refused the vaccine mandate. A life where your banker boss says you’re fired because you didn’t wear your mask. The gift of continuing restrictions and news of new variants while the elite have huge parties and vacation at will, all while wearing no masks. A Not So Wonderful Life for you plebes. I know what my choice is. I will continue to have a holly jolly Christmas where I say hi ho to friends and foe and have a cup of cheer. After all that’s what makes life worth living! Merry Christmas to All.

MARK ROBILLARD
SPENCER



A container with drainage holes, potting mix, and a few spring flowering bulbs planted pointed side up is all you need to create a colorful indoor garden.

Bring a bit of spring
color indoors

Pot them up, give them a chill and enjoy spring flowering bulbs indoors or outside on a patio, deck or porch. This is a great way to enjoy any bulbs that didn’t make it into the ground this season or take advantage of late season discounts on bulbs.

Larger flowering bulbs like tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, and alliums put on quite a display in your home or in a window box or container. Add some smaller bulbs like crocus, squills, and grape hyacinths to the mix for added beauty.

All you need is a container with drainage holes, potting mix, and a few bulbs. Shorter varieties work well or give taller varieties a bit of support with twigs or decorative stakes when displaying indoors.

Cover the bottom of the container with soil. Set several bulbs, pointed side up, on top of the potting mix. Set the tallest bulbs in the center surrounded by shorter varieties when creating a mixed garden. Place tulips with the flat side of the bulb facing out for a better display. Cover the bulbs and fill the container with potting mix.

Enjoy weeks of colorful flowers by



GARDEN
MOMENTS
.....
MELINDA
MYERS

selecting a variety of bulbs that bloom from early through late spring. Layer the bulbs to maximize your planting space. Place larger bulbs on top of the soil layer at the bottom of the container. The tallest of these will go in the center skirted by shorter varieties to maximize the display.

Cover this first layer of bulbs with potting mix, leaving just the tip of the bulbs exposed. Add smaller bulbs like squills, crocus and grape hyacinth bulbs to the next level. Plant them close together between the tips of the larger bulbs. Cover this layer with soil, leaving enough space for watering.

Water the freshly planted container thoroughly, then move it to a cool location, about 35 to 45 degrees for at least 12 to 15 weeks. This cold period is needed to initiate flowering in these bulbs. A spare refrigerator or in colder regions, an unheated garage works well. Or if the ground hasn’t frozen, sink the pot into a vacant space in the garden. This works for those gardening in areas where winter temperatures are cold enough to provide the needed chill. Mulch the soil once the ground starts

Turn To **MYERS** page **A7**

Don’t avoid
‘taboo’ topics with
older parents



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If your parents are getting close to retirement age, or are already retired, it may be time to talk with them about financial and aging issues, some of which may involve difficult conversations. For the sake of everyone in your family, don’t avoid these “taboo” topics.

You’ll need to be careful about approaching these subjects with your parents. Mention ahead of time that you’d like to talk to them about their future plans and reassure them that you want to understand their wishes, so their affairs will be taken care of as they would like.

If your parents are agreeable, choose a location comfortable for them and ask whom they might like to invite (or not invite). Then, think about how to open the conversation, preferably not with what they want to do with their money – this could be interpreted as your seeking information about your inheritance or being skeptical about their financial decisions. Instead, build a broad-based discussion about their vision for their aging years. A series of shorter conversations may allow you to cover topics more comfortably, one by one, rather than trying to solve everything at once.

Try to address these areas:

Health care – You’ll want to learn if your parents have established the appropriate health-related legal documents – a health care power of attorney, which gives someone the authority to make important decisions about their medical care if they become unable to do so themselves, and a living will, which spells out the extraordinary medical treatments they may or may not want.

Independence – As people age, they may begin to lose their independence. Have your parents considered any options for long-term care, such as a nursing home stay, or the services of a home health aide? And do they have plans in place? If they plan to receive support from family members, do their expectations match yours?

Financial goals – Focusing on the personal and financial aspects of the legacy your parents want to leave can be a valuable conversation. Have your parents updated their will or other arrangements, such as a living trust? Have they named a financial power of attorney to make decisions on their behalf if they become incapacitated? Do they have the proper beneficiary designations on their insurance policies and retirement plan accounts? If you can position these issues as being more about your parents’ control over their financial destiny, rather than “who will get what,” you’ll more likely have a productive conversation.

Last wishes – You’ll want to find out if your parents have left instructions in their will about their funerals and last wishes. Express to them that you, or another close family member, should know who is responsible for making sure their wishes are met.

Money, independence and aging can be sensitive topics. Don’t think you have to go it alone – you can enlist help from another close family member. Or, if you know your parents are working with a trusted advisor, such as an attorney or financial professional, you could see if they’d be willing to have this person participate in your talks. You might even be able to introduce them to one of your advisors.

In any case, keep talking. These conversations can be challenging, but, if handled correctly, can be of great benefit to your parents and your entire family.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Jeff Burdick, your local Edward Jones Advisor in Sturbridge at 508-347-1420 or jeff.burdick@edwardjones.com.

READING
NEWSPAPERS
IS A QUEST
LIKE NO OTHER

More bad news for cod fishermen



THE GREAT
OUTDOORS
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More bad news for the fishermen that do a little cod fishing, or a lot of cod fishing. The regulatory New England Fishery Management Council is recommending a reduction of the Georges Bank cod limits catch at their Dec. 10 meeting. The 2.4 million pounds allowed this year will be reduced to 540,000 pounds at the Georges Banks next year if it is approved. Georges Banks is one of the richest areas for cod & haddock to live and spawn. The Gulf of Maine is also being targeted, but will remain at their 590,000-quota next year, for now if passed. A statement from U.S.FISH & Wildlife that fishermen caught more than 100 million pounds of cod in the '80's is now down to two million pounds this year.

There are fewer adult fish that are spawning every year, and concerns of the cod stocks crashing have been echoed for years. This writer was fishing aboard a charter vessel 10 or 12 years ago, and was fishing on the cod spawning grounds. We were among a fleet of charter boats that were hauling in huge

50- to 60-pound cod. They were loaded with eggs and never had the chance to spawn. A fish biologist was on board that day, and stated that we would not be fishing in the cods spawning grounds again for some time. He was right, as the area was off limits to any fishing the following years, and still is today. It was wrong for us to be there. Sportsmen have been restricted to one fish daily for the last few months ,but were also not allowed to catch and retain a single cod while fishing in the above two mentioned areas. Haddock stocks were in the same predicament not that long ago, but their stocks have rebounded. Over fishing by commercial draggers will soon deplete the haddock fish stocks again, if action is not taken.

The problem with draggers is that most fish that are brought aboard a large vessel are often thrown back, but rarely survive. It is a disgrace that the same thing continues every year, not only in the gulf of Maine but, also along the Massachusetts & Rhode Island coastline. They should be keeping their bycatch which is often allowed, but many discard them and drag for a more lucrative fish. Every year, I watch draggers on the Rhode Island coast discarding fish on their way to port. One year, they were throwing half dead stripers over the side of their boat , obviously because they had to many pounds of

fish. We motored over to the area that they were discarding the fish and was outraged at the waste of such a valuable resource.

This year, we observed draggers in Rhode Island discarding seabass, and we were soon surrounded by a floating mass of sea bass and stripers. Recreational anglers are annually suffering more cuts in their daily bag limit or size. The new law regarding a slot limit for stripers is outrageous, and when you see the waste by the commercial draggers it seems like a losing battle to help the species rebound. Most reports by fish biologist admit that many fish that are caught by recreational anglers and released will not survive. If they were allowed to retain one striped, they would stop fishing and head out to fish for other species. On & On it goes, but it is all about the money and politics!

The Primitive arms season seems to have started out slow this year at least in the valley area. Many hunters are waiting for a little bit of snow to do some tracking, as they have been hunted for weeks now and are a bit skittish.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year and a Merry Christmas.

Be sure to get your vaccine to keep you safe from Covid.

Take A Kid Fishing & Keep Them Rods Bending.



Photo Courtesy

This week's picture shows some of the cod that never were able to spawn again after being caught by rod and reel anglers. It did not seem wrong at the time!

Classic Holiday Traditions

The Yuletide brings with it a host of traditions, many of which have been carried on for generations. From simple holiday symbols to familiar family rituals, ushering in the annual festivities is a joy of the season. This week's column highlights a few classic holiday traditions that continue to promote glad tidings each year.

The Wassail Bowl

Modern holiday parties that include a Wassail bowl toast are practicing a centuries old English tradition to celebrate the promise of health, wealth and good fortune.

Like many old rituals, the Wassail bowl boasts several origins, but the tradition traces its roots to old England, where the toast "Wes Hal," meaning "good health," was a common holiday toast.

The practice expanded to include a Christmas Eve door to door caroling or "a wassailing" to visit friends and neighbors. Today, the tradition of Wassail continues at holiday get-togethers, where a punch bowl or wassail bowl of refreshment typically precedes a round of neighborhood caroling.

Wassail Punch

This modern recipe is easy and delicious, yet retains the essence of the traditional Wassail bowl.

Ingredients: 3 cups pineapple juice; 3 cups apple juice; 1 1/2 cups water; 3/4 cup brown sugar; 1 cinnamon stick; 1 tablespoon whole cloves; 1 tablespoon whole allspice

Directions: Mix pineapple and apple juice, water and brown sugar into the bottom of a perculator. Place all the spices into the top. Perculate according to the directions of your pot.

Stovetop or Crockpot method:

Simmer juices and spices over low heat. Strain and serve hot.

**

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

In these modern times, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer plays a novel role in our Christmas culture. But it was in post war 1949, when cowboy crooner Gene Autry's title hit topped the music charts, and soon after merchandising of the endearing deer was in full swing with books, toys, clothing, holiday décor and more.

Perhaps it's fitting Rudolph's catapult to commercial success began as the brainstorm of an ambitious Montgomery Ward ad man. In 1939, Advertising copywriter Robert May wrote the holiday story as a promotional campaign for Montgomery Ward stores. The marketing strategy was a huge success as booklets of Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer were distributed to happy little shoppers throughout several holiday seasons.

The popular story was transformed to song after World War II, when May's songwriter brother-in-law Johnny Marks penned the catchy tune and set it to music. First sung by Gene Autry, the classic song has enjoyed over six decades of popularity, recorded by such musical masters as Burl Ives, Perry Como, Ray Charles, Guy Lombardo, The Supremes and many more.

**

Holiday Plants: Traditional Greenery Sets Stage for the Season

Greenery has long been used to "deck the halls" for the yuletide season, and plants associated with the holidays such as Christmas Cactus, Mistletoe,



TAKE
THE
HINT

KAREN
TRAINOR

and Poinsettias traditionally adorn homes at holiday time. Some plants become festive favorites because they bloom during the Christmas season; others have histories steeped in religious roots.

Christmas Cactus: The hardy plant is a favorite potted houseplant for its endurance and annual winter blooms. The delicate flowers on the upright weeping cacti typically make their appearance in December; just in time for the holiday season.

Legend has it long ago a boy from the Amazon jungle had asked God for a sign of his faith. He awoke on Christmas morning to find the cacti that surrounded him had come to bloom, transforming the green jungle into a floral flourish.

Poinsettia: The striking rich, red leaves of the plant serve as mock "flowers", filling pots and centerpieces with a lush holiday hue of bright red and green leaves, making Poinsettias the hallmark plant of the holidays.

The plant, a native of Mexico was named after Joel R. Poinsett, U.S. ambassador to Mexico who brought the plant to America in 1828. But legend dates its history back to Christ's time. According to folklore, a Mexican child on his way to visit the Christ child, lamented he had no gift for the newborn king. Picking branches along the road, he presented a bouquet of green leaves at the holy manger: The leaves turned into beautiful red flowers, adorning each branch with the star shaped blooms.

Mistletoe: It's ironic the waxy white berries and dark evergreen leaves of Mistletoe, considered toxic in quantities, has become a holiday symbol of

affection.

Kissing under the mistletoe likely originated from the belief the plant bestows fertility. In some parts of the world mistletoe was considered a "peace plant," under which truces were made by enemies or fighting friends. In the 1700s, the English adapted the mistletoe to adorn a kissing ball. During the Christmas season a single lady who stood under the embellished ball of greens could be kissed without hesitation. Today, the ritual continues as Mistletoe is suspended in doorways and entrances and "kissing under the Mistletoe" remains a popular holiday tradition.

**

Win Dinner for Two at the Publick House – Contest has resumed!

Your tips can win you a great three course dinner for two at the historic Publick House Historic Inn in Sturbridge! Simply send in a hint to be entered into a random drawing. One winner per month will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renowned restaurant, located on Route 131 across the town common in historic Sturbridge. Because I'm in the business of dispensing tips, not inventing them (although I can take credit for some), I'm counting on you readers out there to share your best helpful hints!

Do you have a helpful hint or handy tip that has worked for you? Do you have a question regarding household or garden matters? If so, why not share them with readers of Stonebridge Press newspapers? Send questions and/or hints to: Take the Hint!, C/o the Southbridge Evening News, PO Box 90; Southbridge, MA 01550. Or email KDRR@aol.com. Hints are entered into a drawing for dinner for two at the historic Publick House Inn.

FUNDING

continued from page A1

infrastructure, healthcare, education systems, and small businesses."

Among other goals, the latest federal aid package is intended to support urgent COVID-19 response efforts, replace lost revenue, support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses, and address public health and economic challenges in Massachusetts cities and towns.

"The funding allocated in this bill addresses crit-

ical areas of need across the Commonwealth, from addiction services to housing availability to environmental infrastructure," said Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito. "This relief will play a crucial role in the ongoing recovery of our residents and communities, especially those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and we are eager to put it to work."

Highlights of the latest funding package include \$150 million to finance the statewide production of housing for various populations, including seniors and veterans; \$115 million for rental housing production; \$400 million for addiction

treatment and related behavioral health services; \$260 million for fiscally stressed hospitals; \$200 million for local and regional public health systems; \$50 million for workforce retention and capital improvements at nursing facilities; \$500 million to support the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund; \$500 million for premium pay for low-income essential workers; and \$107.5 million for workforce and career technical skills training.

The package also includes \$135 million to support cultural facilities and tourism assets throughout Massachusetts.

For infrastructure improve-

ments, \$100 million will fund grants for water and sewer system upgrades. Another \$100 million will be allocated for the improvement of culverts, dams, and other environmental infrastructure.

Additional relief funds include \$50 million to help close the digital divide and increase broadband internet access; \$44.8 million to combat food insecurity; and \$105 million for a variety of educational supports, including recovery grants for state universities and community colleges.

"The Commonwealth has worked diligently over the past two years to deploy bil-

lions worth of federal support to strengthen our economic recovery, support those in disproportionately impacted communities, and get people back to work," said Secretary of Administration and Finance Michael Heffernan. "We appreciate the collaboration of our colleagues in the Legislature on this bill to invest in healthcare, housing, and the Massachusetts workforce, and we look forward to even more critical investments in 2022 with the remaining ARPA funds."

To learn more about the latest funding package, visit www.mass.gov.

MYERS

continued from page A6

to freeze with evergreen boughs. This will make it easier to remove the pot in early spring.

Eliminate this step by purchasing pre-chilled bulbs. These have received the needed cold treatment and are ready to pot up and grow indoors or outdoors in warmer regions.

Check stored bulbs regularly for early sprouting and move to a colder location if needed. Water the bulbs in storage whenever the soil is thawed and dry.

Once the cold treatment is complete, you can move the forced bulbs to their

final location where you can enjoy the spring flowers. Place the container in a cool location with bright indirect light indoors. Water thoroughly as needed and watch for flowers to appear in about four weeks. Remove one pot a week from cold storage to extend your enjoyment.

Monitor spring growing conditions before moving forced bulbs into outdoor planters. Once the weather is suitable for bulbs to sprout and grow outdoors, it is safe to move forced bulbs into the landscape.

When they are done flowering, you can compost the bulbs or for those suited to your growing conditions add

them to the garden. Remove the faded flowers and water the plants like your houseplants or other container gardens. Fertilize with a dilute solution of flowering plant fertilizer or apply a low nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer. This helps replenish the nutrients used in flowering.

Move indoor forced bulbs outdoors as soon as the danger of frost has passed. Those in containers outdoors can remain in the pots until the foliage fades or the garden is ready for planting. Or store the bulbs in a cool dark place for summer and plant in fall with other hardy bulbs. Then be patient as it can take two years for these to flower.

Forcing spring flowering bulbs is a great way to add beauty to your indoor décor, patio, balcony, or deck. They also make a great gift for gardeners of all experience levels.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including The Midwest Gardener's Handbook and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the nationally-syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine. Her Web site is www.melindamyers.com.

🌿 🌿 🌿 Friday's Child 🌿 🌿 🌿



Nathan
Age 11

Hi! My name is Nathan and I like to give high fives!

Nathan is a curious boy who loves to smile and give high fives! He loves to draw and color and he is a very talented artist. He also loves when adult draws with him. Nathan likes playing with play-doh or putty, and gets excited when adults interact with him with these materials. He plays independently on the playground and with yoga balls in school. Nathan is the type of child that does not need much teaching to enjoy play or toys;

he is independent with most leisure activities!

Nathan is legally free for adoption and will require a family with lots of energy and some experience with children on the spectrum. A two parent family would be preferred due to the level of supervision Nathan requires. If there is a single parent with a large engaged support system and experience with children with special needs, they would be considered as well. As part of the Open Adoption Agreement, Nathan needs to maintain regular sibling visitation therefore a family in Massachusetts or the New England area will be considered.

Who Can Adopt?

Can you provide the guidance, love and stability that a child needs? If you're at least 18 years old, have a stable source of income, and room in your heart, you may be a perfect match to adopt a waiting child. Adoptive parents can be single, married, or partnered; experienced or not; renters or homeowners; LGBTQ singles and couples.

The process to adopt a child from foster care requires training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you, and if so, to help connect you with a child or sibling group that your family will be a good match for.

To learn more about adoption from foster care, call the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) at 617-964-6273 or visit www.mareinc.org. The sooner you call, the sooner a waiting child will have a permanent place to call home.



DPHS

continued from page A1

MSBA guidelines. The auditorium is used not only for school, but also for community programs."

The building project at Prouty has been long-awaited by school officials and the community. In 2011, the district conducted a feasibility study to explore the renovation or replacement of DPHS. That process ended unsuccessfully in 2012.

In 2018, the district reapplied to the MSBA for admission into the organization's core grant system and was accepted back into the program. In 2019, residents of Spencer and East Brookfield voted to fund the feasibility study.

"The process of a public school building project with the MSBA typically takes at least seven years from start to finish," Haughey said. "We are very much at the beginning of this process. We have formed a School Building Committee, hired a project manager, and hired a team of architects and

engineers."

Additionally, an enrollment study was completed in October. During the current schematic design phase of the process, specific details of the project will be developed further with architects and engineers.

Over the next several months, district leaders look forward to engaging residents in all aspects of the process. This will include additional public meetings and informational sessions.

"The public forum went great. We had many community members there, as well as elected officials," said SEBRSC Chairman Jason Monette. "There was a lot of positive discussion about the project. Our next steps moving forward are within schematic design and working together as a Building Committee and community to put our ideas together. There will be many more public forums coming up in the near future."

Officials thank students with the DPHS Chapter 74 Business/Marketing program, who helped promote the public forum by creating a postcard to be mailed out to local homes.

MIAA

continued from page A1

mandate even applies to fully vaccinated students, and there are no exemptions for schools that have reached an 80-percent vaccination threshold, as the state allows in schools.

Since Thanksgiving, COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have increased sharply across the state and nation. Several days during the last week-plus have topped 120,000 new cases nationwide, and MIAA officials aren't taking any chances with winter sports, especially with the emergence of the omicron variant.

Over the last three weeks, local athletic directors have met with coaches and team leaders to emphasize the importance of following the rules and maximizing safety. The ultimate goal is to ensure that every sport completes its schedule without postponed or canceled games due to COVID-19.

"Given that we didn't play basketball at all last year, we support anything that will allow us to get this season in safely," said Quabog Regional Middle High School Athletic Director David

Bouchard. "We wanted to convey to our athletes that they all have an important role to play in making sure we are able to have a full season."

The DESE indoor mask mandate for public schools remains in effect through at least Jan. 15. MIAA officials said a new decision on masks for winter sports athletes could come then, depending on COVID-19 conditions. First, athletic officials will wait for DESE leaders to make their evaluation and then consult with them.

"The department will continue to work with medical experts and state health officials to evaluate the mask requirement beyond January 15," read a statement released by DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley.

For now, local athletic directors and coaches are following the regulations and focusing on safety this winter.

"If the guidance changes, we would act accordingly. Right now, we are wearing masks inside the building and making sure we are doing the right thing," Bouchard told the New Leader.

Added David Prouty High School Athletic Director Charles Fahey, "We are just following DESE regulations heading into the winter."



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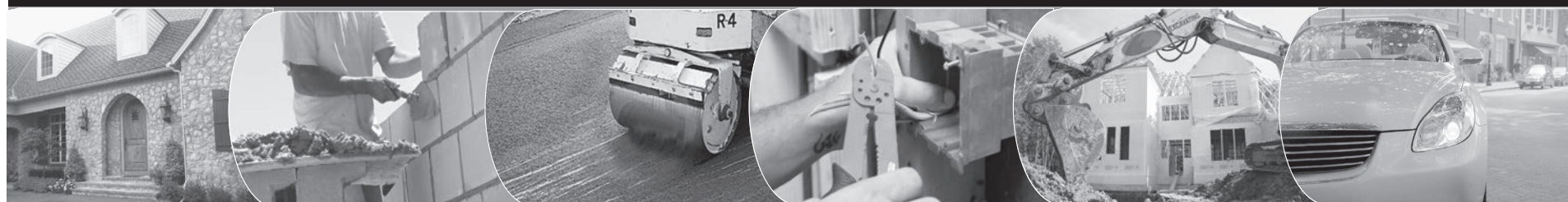
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OBITUARIES

Annette M. Brown, 83

Brookfield - Annette M. (Lacaire) Brown, 83, of Brookfield died on Friday, December 10, 2021.



She leaves her son, Jeffrey Brown; two daughters, Karen Hubert and Barbara Palmer. Seven grandchildren, Melissa and Christine Palmer, Jessica Forcier, Ashley Istre, Jason Brown, and Kara and Aidan Brown; eight great-grandchildren, several nieces, a nephew and many friends. She was predeceased by her husband, Alvin L. Brown, Jr., her son, Alvin L. "Skip" Brown, III and her brother John Lacaire, III. She was born in Spencer, daughter of the late John and Gabrielle Lacaire, and has lived in Brookfield for nearly 63 years.

Anne was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and friend. Her greatest joy was spending time with her family and friends. Anne always had a

revolving door; there were so many people in and out. She always welcomed anyone that entered. Anne loved card night with family and friends as well as scratch tickets. Anne worked as the Office Manager at Brookfield Motors for 25 years.

She was a former member of St. Mary's Church and the Brookfield Rod and Gun Club.

A Funeral Mass for Anne was held on Saturday, December 18, 2021 at 10 am in St. Mary's Church, Lincoln St., in Brookfield. Burial was in the Brookfield Cemetery following the mass. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Shiner's Hospital for Children, 516 Carew Street in Springfield, MA 01104 or Brookfield EMS 6 Central St., Brookfield, MA 01506.

Varnum Funeral Home, Inc., 43 East Main St., in West Brookfield is assisting her family with arrangements.

An online guest book is available at varnumfuneralhome.com

Matthew D. Frazier, 22

Warren - Matthew D. Frazier, 22, of Warren died peacefully in his sleep on Saturday, December 11, 2021, after a long fight with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy.



He leaves behind his mother, Theresa L. (Sisco) Frazier of Warren; his father, David L. Frazier of West Brookfield; his two brothers, David J. L. Frazier of Warren and James D. Frazier of Fort Hood, TX; his sister, Elizabeth A. Mellor and her husband Paul of Largo, FL; his niece, Gabriella; his two nephews, Jayden and Matthew; his special friend, Cindy O'Leary as well as his two dogs, Daniel and Alyssa and his two cats, Jzargo and Chuckles. He was predeceased by his grandparents, Leon Sisco, Joseph Frazier and Barbara L. Frazier.

Throughout the years Matt has made many friends and touched the hearts of everyone he met. Matt would strike up a conversation with anyone and ask

his favorite question "what kind of car do you drive?" He loved to sit and talk about cars, trucks and anything with a motor. He knew more about cars and trucks than most people. Matt's favorite subject was fire engines and he would want to know what different towns had for their equipment.

He loved to ride his four-wheeler and would ride for hours and loved taking motorcycle rides with his dad. But most of all, he loved his family and friends.

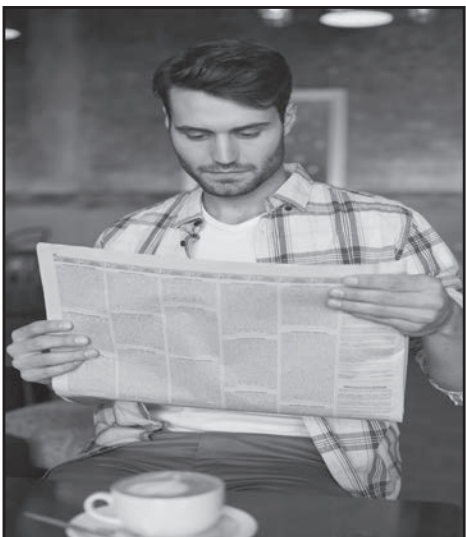
You will be missed by all who knew you.

Rest in peace, Matthew.

Calling hours will be held Tuesday, December 28, 2021 from 3 to 6PM in the Varnum Funeral Home, Inc., 43 East Main Street in West Brookfield. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Muscular Dystrophy Association at MDA.org

Varnum Funeral Home, Inc., 43 East Main St., in West Brookfield is assisting his family with arrangements.

An online guest book is available at varnumfuneralhome.com



**If it's important to you,
It's important to us.**

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Cornerstone Bank makes donation to Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank, a community bank with 12 locations throughout Central Massachusetts, has donated \$2,500 to Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester to support their mission to provide adults with the English language skills they need to thrive. For 48 years, Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester has been providing one-to-one and small group English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tutoring as well as literacy tutoring, and in recent years, adding online tutoring and independent learning.

"In the greater Worcester area, 34 percent of households speak a language other than English at home," said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. "Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester are doing amazing things by providing free ESOL education to adults within our community. The leadership, vision, and dedication of the Board of Directors is key to the organization's success in serving constituents in the Worcester area. We are proud that members of our team volun-

teer their time for this organization and we support their goals any way we can."

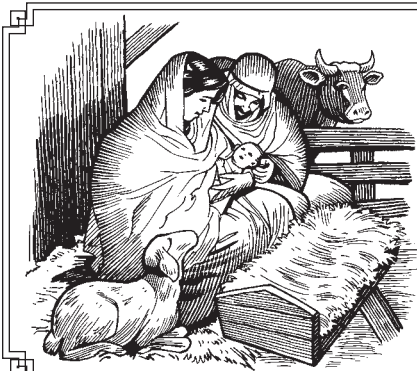
In just the past year, more than 100 volunteers and 12 part-time specialized ESOL teachers dedicated their time to help 382 literacy students and more than 100 tutoring students learn to read, write, and speak the English language. These students are immigrants and refugees representing 52 different countries and speaking 38 different languages.

"The free, flexible, and individualized support students get leads them in the right direction to achieve goals beyond English language proficiency including citizenship, employment, and further education," continued Tallman. "We look forward to seeing Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester continue to create opportunities for people looking to succeed on our community."

To learn more about Cornerstone Bank and their charitable work, please visit cornerstonebank.com.

About Cornerstone Bank

Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank's local presence and community based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities, through a broad range of deposit and loan products, and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank's personal and business banking offerings, please visit cornerstonebank.com or call 800-939-9103.



Christmas in Heaven Memorials

May God Bless You and Your Loved Ones
on this Christmas Day.

*We think about you always.
We talk about you still.
You have never been forgotten,
and you never will.
We hold you close within our hearts,
and there you will remain.
To walk and guide us through our lives,
until we meet again.*

**RICHIE
PAQUETTE**
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*In Loving Memory
at Christmas*

**Patricia
Simakauskas**
**June 2, 1950
August 10, 2014**

Missing you at Christmas & always
Love, the Sima family

My First Christmas in Heaven

I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below,
With tiny lights like Heaven's stars reflecting the snow.
The sight is so spectacular- please wipe away the tear,
For I'm spending Christmas with Jesus this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear,
But the sound of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here.

I have no words to tell you the joys their voices bring,
For it's beyond description to hear the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me, I see the pain inside your heart,
But I am not so far away, we really aren't apart.

So be happy for me dear ones you know I hold you dear,
And be glad I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

I sent you each a special gift for my heavenly home above,
I sent you each a memory of my undying love.

After all love is a gift more precious than pure gold,
It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other
as my Father said to do,
For I can't count the blessing of love
he has for each of you.

So have a Merry Christmas
and wipe away that tear,
Remember I am spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.

Author unknown.

Merry Christmas

Christmas in Heaven Memorial

Paul Burke June 28, 1948- February 5, 2019		Lisa Burke April 16, 1974- October 11, 2005
---	--	--

*Paul & Lisa, you are in our thoughts daily. We miss you both so much.
Our love to you this Christmas & always. — Love Mom & family*



SPORTS

Spartans, ‘the better team tonight, all the way around,’ take care of Quaboag



Quaboag's Brandon Valentin gets past an Uxbridge defender and lays the ball in.

BY NICK ETHIER
SPORTS EDITOR

WARREN — A consistent and methodical scoring approach, coupled with a ball-hawking defense, helped lead the Uxbridge High boys' varsity basketball team past Quaboag Regional on Tuesday night, Dec. 14, by a 61-40 final.

The Spartans' quarter scoring totals were 16, 15, 15 and 15 points. On the other end of the court, they held the Cougars to 9, 8, 11 and 12 points over the four frames.

"It was far from perfect, but we have some depth. We have a lot of depth, actually," said Uxbridge head coach Ryan Hippert before singling out Brodie Fernandes for his timely 3-point shooting, Luke Schollard for his second half production and Drew Gniadek for carrying the team in the first half of play.



Uxbridge's Drew Gniadek flings a pass down the court.

Nick Ethier photos

Fernandes hit two 3-pointers and finished with 9 points, Schollard scored 13 of his game-high 20 points in the second half, and Gniadek netted all 14 of his points over the first two quarters.

After the lead changed hands on six different occasions in the first quarter, Gniadek canned a pair of late 3's to give the Spartans a 16-9 advantage after the initial eight-minute frame.

"I think we have the type of team it takes them a little bit to get into the flow of the game. It kind of happened against BMR, too," said Hippert of his team's games against Blackstone-Millville Regional and Quaboag.

Uxbridge got hot to open the second quarter, as they embarked on an 11-1 run to start the period, surging to a 27-10 lead. The Spartans led at the break, 31-17.

Quaboag cut the deficit down to eight points in the third quarter, but Uxbridge responded and led by 18 (46-28) once the period came to a close. The Spartans then won fourth quarter scoring by a 15-12 margin as they improved to 2-0.

"What I'm most proud of is our first two games were on the road. BMR and then tonight at Quaboag, I'm excited and I'm happy for our team," said Hippert. "This is a great group. They work hard and they have a little swagger to them. What benefited us was playing last year. In the SWCL, there were only four teams that played. We had a very young team last year, so they got to play. This year we're at an advantage against some of these teams...[Quaboag has] had two years off because of COVID."

This was the Cougars' season opener and first game in nearly two years, and head coach Chris Reilly had nothing



Brodie Fernandes of Uxbridge releases a free throw attempt.

but praise for the way the opposition played.

"They outsized us and we couldn't answer or stop them inside. You're fighting them inside and then they stick the outside shot. Their defense overwhelmed us. They were just the better team tonight, all the way around," said Reilly.

Chase Potvin and Owen Stevens both led Quaboag with 9 points each.

Warriors find offensive form, dispatch Uxbridge

STURBRIDGE — Points were at a premium for the Tantasqua Regional girls' varsity basketball team in their season-opener at Northbridge High back on Monday, Dec. 13, when the Warriors scored just enough in a 35-30 victory. A little home cooking then did the trick in Tantasqua's next contest.

Hosting Uxbridge High on Thursday, Dec. 16, the Warriors were sharpshooters as they won a 69-22 decision.

Tantasqua jumped out to a 10-0 lead and never looked back. Seven Warriors scored in the first quarter and by half-

time they had accumulated more points (38) than they did in the entire Northbridge game.

Tantasqua led 38-10 at the half and 52-19 through three quarters.

The now 2-0 Warriors — who knocked down 11 3-pointers — were led by Kelsie Wotten (16 points, 8 rebounds), Maya Gidopolous (15 points), Gabby Scanlon (13 points) and Maggie Johnson (11 rebounds).

Uxbridge, who dropped to 2-1, saw contributions from Morgan Ouellette (10 points), Natalie Orr (8 points) and Kathryn Cahill (10 rebounds).



Tantasqua's Sophie Law takes and makes a 3-pointer.



Nicole Vejack of Tantasqua gets ahead of Uxbridge's defense and finishes off a layup.

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Uxbridge's Chloe Kaeller, left, and

Nick Ethier photos

HIGH SCHOOL NOTEBOOK

David Prouty girls' basketball starts season 1-2

Friday, Dec. 10

David Prouty 50, Main South 30 — In their season opener, the Panthers soundly won. Gabby Soter led Prouty with 17 points, 5 assists and 5 rebounds. Madison Ethier had 11 points and 3 rebounds. Lindsey Soter made 6 of 8 shots for 12 points. Rounding out the scoring was Olivia Pepin with 6 points and Emily Soter with 4.

Monday, Dec. 13


Grafton 42, David Prouty 37 — Gabby Soter netted 17 points and Olivia Pepin added 11 more for the Panthers in a road matchup with Grafton's squad, but it wasn't quite enough. Prouty is now 1-1.


Thursday, Dec. 16

Millbury 52, David Prouty 40 — Gabby Soter (15 points), Olivia Pepin (10) and Emily Soter (9) led the offensive charge for the Panthers, but it wasn't enough to beat the perennially strong Woolies.




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Clue: Gathering crops

C. 21 3 6 7 12 23

Clue: Relatives

D. 26 14 3 22 7 26 7 10 20

Clue: Passing down customs

Answers: A. celebrate B. harvest C. family D. tradition

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			3			1	2	
								8
5			7				8	
6								1
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7	4	2	8	3	5	6	1	9
4	3	5	6	1	7	8	2	9
1	7	9	5	2	8	4	3	6
2	8	6	3	7	4	1	9	5
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Virgin, assist me in this my
necessity. O Star of the Sea,
help me and show me where
you are my mother. O Holy
Mary, Mother of God, Queen
of Heaven and Earth, I humbly
beseech thee from the bottom
of my heart to succor me in
my necessity, (make request).
There are none that can with-
stand your power, O Mary,
conceived without sin, pray for
us who have recourse to thee
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