



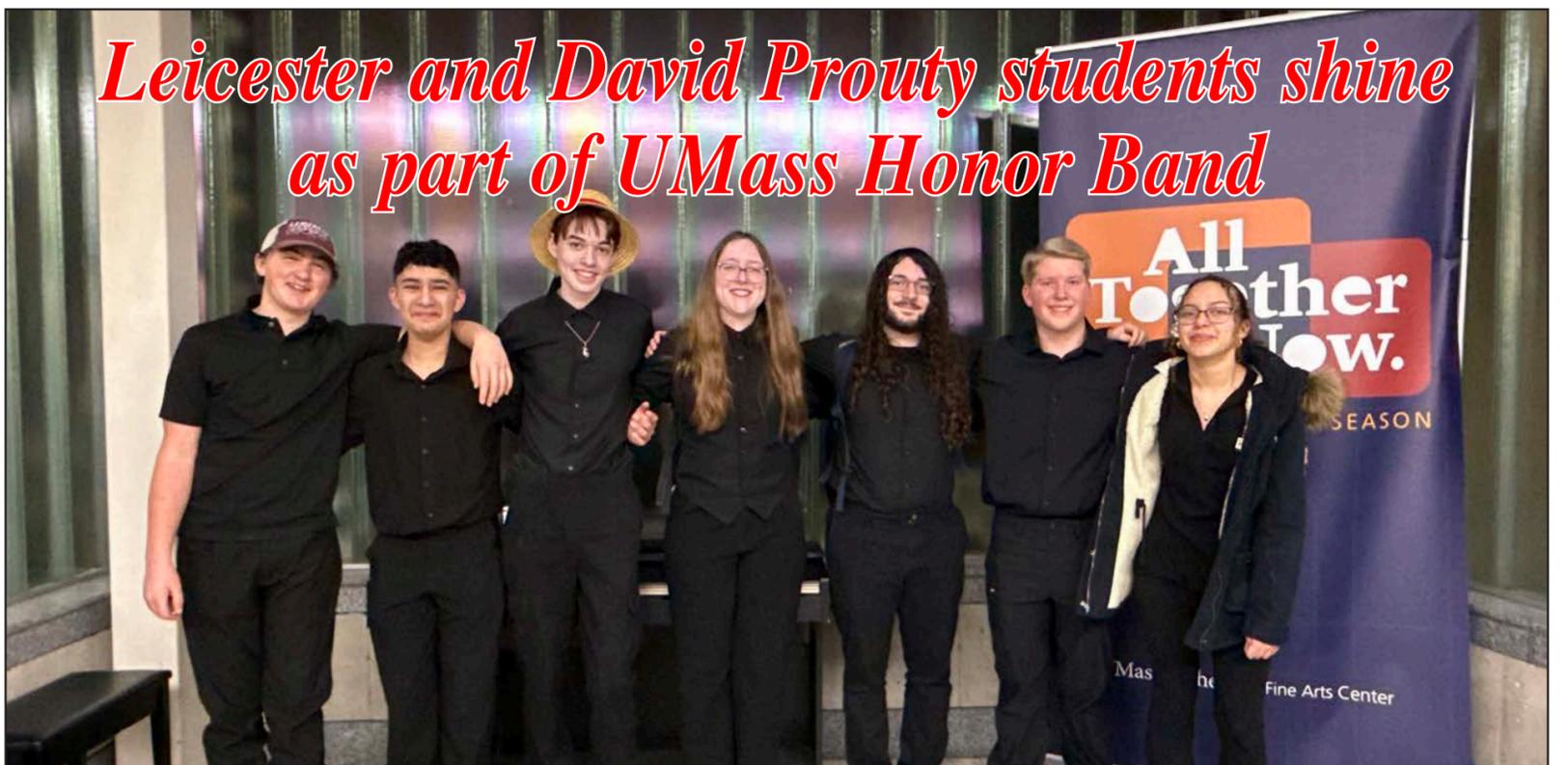
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Free by request to residents of

East Brookfield, West Brookfield, North Brookfield, Brookfield, Leicester and Spencer

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Friday, March 6, 2026



Courtesy

Leicester and David Prouty students shine as part of UMass Honor Band

Left to right: Russell Baker, Gr. 10; Trevor Moorghen, Gr. 10; Ryan Sweeney, Gr. 10; Dakota Zinkevich, Gr. 12; James Hanlan, Gr. 12; Jacob Beaulac, Gr. 11; and Jaedyn Perry, Gr. 9.

LEICESTER — To cap off their break on a high note, six students from Leicester High School and one student from David Prouty High School traveled to University of Massachusetts Amherst for an immersive musical experience.

While on campus, the students rehearsed three challenging works, including a piece by guest composer Michele Fernández, whom they had the unique opportunity to meet and work with

directly. Participants were divided into three ensembles led by UMass faculty members Dr. Matthew Westgate, Dr. Lindsey Bronnekant, and Dr. Daniel Albert, each providing expert instruction and mentorship throughout the experience.

In addition to rehearsals, students attended performances by UMass ensembles and heard from current university musicians about postgraduate study opportunities, gaining valuable

insight into the next steps in their musical journeys.

Ms. Alexis Phillips, music director at Leicester High School, expressed her pride in the students' accomplishments.

"I am always so proud of these students. They continue to go above and beyond," she said. "In our small communities, it is very common that these students will never hear a full band until this moment. It was amazing to see them all on stage."

Junior, Jacob Beaulac shared his sentiment, "It was such an honor to be part of this experience. I was able to meet new people and learn so many new skills on my instrument. Dr. Westgate was an amazing teacher, and getting to be part of this experience was an incredible opportunity."

with such a short amount of

time," Says senior Dakota Zinkevich. For these young musicians, the trip was more than just a workshop — it was an inspiring glimpse into the possibilities that lie ahead.

For these young musicians, the trip was more than just a workshop — it was an inspiring glimpse into the possibilities that lie ahead.

if 150 students together

Brookfield Library Trustees to seek tree removal for ADA parking

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

BROOKFIELD — The Brookfield Library Trustees are seeking the removal of a tree on the property of the town's Library Annex that they say will allow for the addition of handicap parking to make the building ADA compliant.

The request came forward from Trustees President Shelby Hill who explained the pending removal is part of a larger effort by the library to enhance the access and usability of the Annex at 18 Common St. The Select Board eventually approved moving forward with the process and scheduled a public hearing

for the removal for April 2.

Hill said that the Library Trustees have put plenty of work into exploring ADA compliance for the Annex, and the removal of the tree is an important step to adding new parking for that purpose. The tree is described as a Norway Maple and would be cleared to install a 16' X 16' parking area for ADA accessible parking for the Wood Room and meeting room as well as program space in the Annex barn and its removal is considered essential to reaching the ADA compliance standard.

"The tree has been there for a long time, but the only way we're going to be able to use this building is if we

put in the handicap parking spot," explained Hill.

The Select Board debated how to move forward, deciding to give their blessing on proceeding with the process while scheduling the April 2 meeting with a pole hearing for the removal which has officially been posted on the town's Web site. While the trustees manage the Annex building, the Select Board has the authority over the property around the building including the removal of the tree.

Select Board member Richard Chaffee recused himself from the discussion as he volunteered to help remove the tree. It was recommended that due to the

Turn To PARKING page A9

Spencer fire leaves seven injured, several pets dead

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

SPENCER — The Spencer Fire Department is investigating the cause of a tragic structure fire on May Street that caused seven injuries, including occupants and a firefighter, and took the lives of several animals inside.

According to details released on the Spencer Fire & Emergency Services social media pages, crews responded to a report of a structure fire on May Street on Monday, Feb. 23 in the middle of a historic blizzard that stuck the tri-state area. When they arrived on site, they found a large home fully involved. Firefighters from several towns helped attack the fire, resulting in at least one firefighter being

Turn To FIRE page A9



Courtesy

Firefighters from Spencer and other surrounding departments tackled a multi-alarm fire during the blizzard on Feb. 23.



Courtesy

Left to right — Back row: Students Kaidyn McDowell, Abigail Valinski, Madelyn Schrader, Jacob Beaulac, Andrea Colibri Auburn Youth Services Librarian, Michael Zeller Auburn Librarian Leicester EEC Teacher Nina Ryan. Front row - Avianna Bongovio, Vocational Monitor Leicester High and Leicester student Estefania Aguirre.

Leicester High School partners with local libraries

LEICESTER — A new partnership between Leicester High School and both the Leicester Public Library and Auburn Public Library is creating meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities for students in the school's Early Education and Care (EEC) Chapter 74 technical program, while also enriching programming for local families.

The collaboration began at the start of the school year when Career Technical

Vocational Program Director William "Billy" May met with EEC teacher Nina Ryan and Vocational Monitor Avianna Bongovio to outline goals for the year. Together, the trio focused on expanding real-world learning opportunities for students preparing for careers in early childhood education.

One of their first accomplishments in the Fall was the creation of a child lab adjacent to the main EEC classroom at Leicester

High School. The lab was thoughtfully outfitted with age-appropriate materials designed to simulate learning environments for children from preschool through second grade. From literacy and imaginative play materials to hands-on manipulatives, the space allows high school students to practice lesson planning, classroom setup, and child engagement strategies in a realistic setting.

The lab materials and Turn To LIBRARIES page A12

School District accepting applications for Kindergarten & Preschool

SPENCER — The Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District is now accepting Kindergarten & Preschool applications for the 2026-2027 school year.

Kindergarten (for children who will reach the age of five years old by Aug. 31) Letters were mailed out last week to all families that listed their eligible child(ren) on the 2025 town census and emails were sent to all resident families that have a child currently enrolled in our Cubs' Corner Preschool program that will be of age by the cut-off date.

Kindergarten is offered at both Wire Village School in Spencer and East Brookfield Elementary School in East

Brookfield. Students are enrolled at the school in their town of residence, in accordance with District policy. School hours are 8:25 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. There is no registration deadline.

Medical forms must be completed by a physician and must detail that your child has been given the following immunizations (including the dates the immunizations were given):

- 5 doses Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus (DTaP)
- 4 doses Polio
- 3 doses Hepatitis B
- 2 doses Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- 2 doses of Varicella Vaccine or Chicken Pox disease

Proof of Lead Screening
Vision and Hearing Screenings

Cubs' Corner Preschool The Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District's Cubs' Corner Preschool will be relocated to the all-new preschool wing at David Prouty High

School starting with the 2026-2027 school year. Our program is an integrated preschool with tuition-paying students, as well as special needs students. The resident rate is \$20/day for half days and \$40/day for full days. The non-resident rate is \$22.50/day for half days and \$45/day for full-days.

Sessions will be filled on a first come, first served basis. The following sessions are offered:

- Monday/Wednesday/Friday: AM, PM or Full Day
- Tuesday/Thursday: AM, PM or Full Day
- Monday-Friday: AM, PM or Full Day

Preschool Eligibility Requirements

Age requirement: Those attending a tuition-based preschool slot must be three (3) years old by the Aug. 31 cut-off date to be eligible to attend the current school year. District residents that qualify for Special Education services may attend once they turn three, regardless of the birth date cut-off.

Toilet Training: All tuition-based preschool students must be reliably toilet trained (no diapers or pull-ups) at the start of school. Children who do not evidence signs of reliable toilet training while in school will be found ineligible for enrollment.

Registration process All student registrations are done online.

If you would like to register your child to attend, please complete the Pre-Registration Form to begin the registration process and select the 2026-2027 school year. Once your form has been approved, you will receive an email with further instructions to create your PowerSchool online parent portal account where you will complete all of the required enrollment forms and upload required documentation. Families must provide a birth certificate (original or copy with a seal), most recent physical/immunization records/lead test (dated within one year of school start date), and two forms of proof of residency from the accepted documents listed on the address form. Tuition-based preschool families must submit a deposit equal to one week's tuition to secure their child's spot.

If you do not have access to the internet to complete the forms, we have a kiosk set up inside the Student Services office at David Prouty High School for families to use. An appointment is required to ensure that the kiosk will be available and a staff member is present to assist. The office is open for appointments Monday through Thursday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Please call 508-885-8515 (opt. 0) with any questions, to schedule an appointment or to provide supporting documentation.

For more information about the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District and to stay up-to-date on the latest happenings across the district, please visit the website at www.sebrsd.org, follow us on Twitter and Facebook, and download the SEBRSD mobile app.

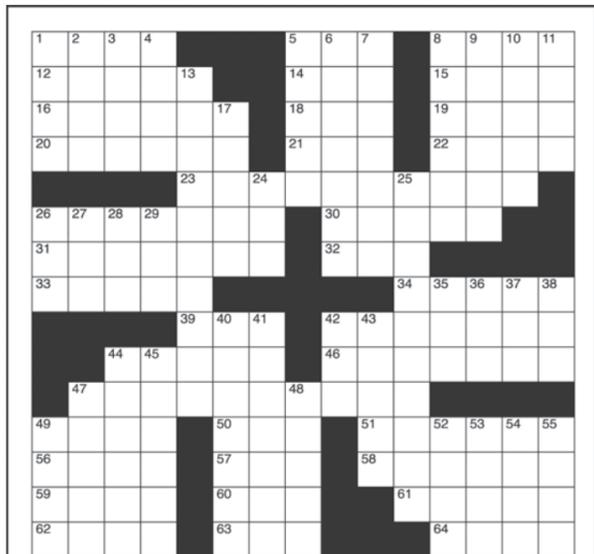


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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Unit of dry measure
- 5. One who defies authority
- 8. Social media giant
- 12. Render holy
- 14. "Much ___ about nothing"
- 15. Computer manufacturer
- 16. Creed
- 18. Immoral act
- 19. Mountain pass
- 20. Winged nut
- 21. Don't know when yet
- 22. Elected officials
- 23. Corrupt tendencies
- 26. Popular adult beverage
- 30. Made a mistake
- 31. Morally correct
- 32. Type of whale
- 33. Portable conical tent
- 34. Native people of the Congo
- 39. More (Spanish)
- 42. Classroom implements
- 44. Cognizant of
- 46. One who tells
- 47. Free from bondage
- 49. Thick piece of something
- 50. Containing two adjacent nitrogen atoms
- 51. Removed from the record
- 56. Legendary singer Turner
- 57. Broke up the earth
- 58. Hunting expedition
- 59. Contributes
- 60. Unit of work or energy
- 61. Wreckage on the sea bed
- 62. Affirmative! (slang)
- 63. Witness
- 64. Scrape (Archaic)

CLUES DOWN

- 1. " ___ and flows"
- 2. Humble request for help
- 3. A position of leadership
- 4. Continent
- 5. Adherent of a particular religion
- 6. Things that can be eaten
- 7. Self-governing Netherlands territory
- 8. Long-tailed crow
- 9. Repeated
- 10. Bluish greens
- 11. Humanities
- 13. Someone who serves in the armed forces
- 17. Labor (Spanish)
- 24. Zero
- 25. Shared by involving three parties
- 26. Queens ballplayer
- 27. Consumed
- 28. Rest here please
- 29. Men's fashion accessory
- 35. American time
- 36. Sound unit
- 37. They ___
- 38. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 40. Places to play video games
- 41. A sudden attack of illness
- 42. When you hope to arrive
- 43. Charges
- 44. Actress Seyfried
- 45. A tributary of the Ohio River
- 47. Omit when speaking
- 48. Armored fish
- 49. Remain
- 52. From a distance
- 53. Adventure story
- 54. Geological times
- 55. Eat dinner

JOY (Just Older Youth) Adventurers offers journey through Canadian Rockies & Pacific Northwest

PAXTON — This journey traces an unforgettable path from Canada's Pacific Coast deep into the heart of the Rockies, blending vibrant cities with some of North America's most awe-inspiring wilderness. Beginning in Vancouver, the adventure opens amid coastal mountains, historic neighborhoods, and lush green spaces before drifting across the Gulf Islands to the charming capital of Victoria. Here, manicured gardens, waterfront views, and rich heritage set an elegant pace.

The landscape soon transforms as the route climbs inland through British Columbia's dramatic highways toward alpine terrain. Highlights include the soaring presence of Mount Robson and the pristine beauty of Jasper National Park, where glacier-fed lakes, rugged peaks, and serene wildlife encounters define each moment. A cruise on Maligne Lake and time along the iconic Icefields Parkway lead to the immense Columbia Icefield, offering rare access to ancient glaciers and sweeping mountain vistas.

Further south, the turquoise waters of Lake Louise and the storybook charm of Banff

National Park deliver classic Rocky Mountain magic, balancing outdoor exploration with relaxed town life. Crossing into the United States, the journey continues through the untamed grandeur of Glacier National Park, where alpine passes, historic lodges, and cultural storytelling reveal the soul of the "Crown of the Continent."

The experience concludes as forests and mountains give way to vineyards, lakes, and the energetic waterfront of Seattle. From coastal elegance to icy glaciers and iconic skylines, this trip weaves together nature, culture, and comfort into a richly layered exploration of western North America.

Pricing: \$7,625 per person (double) - includes 14 days with 20 meals, hotels, and all transfers within tour; but does not include airfare and transportation to airport. Pricing for airfare and ground transportation to airport will be finalized soon, but plan for under \$1,000 per person. For more information, contact Bill Murwin at whmurwin@gmail.com or by phone 508-756-3193.

Quaboag Historical Society welcomes annual award nominations

WEST BROOKFIELD — The Quaboag Historical Society (QHS) requests nominations for the annual Lucy Stone Achievement Award and the Irving and Jane England Award.

Each year, the historical society recognizes its most impressive community leaders and volunteers with these two awards. The Lucy Stone Achievement Award is given annually in observance of the commonwealth's designation of Lucy Stone Day on March 8. Born on Coy Hill in West Brookfield, Stone worked tirelessly throughout her life to get equal rights for all individuals. She was a lecturer for abolitionist and equal rights groups and the founder and editor of The Woman's Journal.

For the Lucy Stone Award, the Quaboag Historical Society requests nomination letters for anyone living in one of the six Quaboag Plantation area towns (the four Brookfields, New Braintree, and Warren). Residents are asked to nominate individuals whose volunteer efforts have helped make their communities better places to live. The nominating letters should briefly explain why the writer believes the nominee is deserving of the award. The name, address, and phone number of both the nominator and the nominee must be included in the letter.

"For this award, we are seeking nominees who have done an exemplary job of giving back through community service," said QHS Co-President Amy Dugas, who described the motto of the Lucy Stone Award as honoring residents who make the world a better place.

The Irving and Jane England Award, also presented annually by the QHS, is given each year to a resident of West Brookfield who has helped better the community through community service. Nomination regulations for this award are the same as those for the Lucy Stone Award.

Dugas and other QHS leaders feel it's important to take a few moments each year to honor those who contribute countless hours to improving their communities.

"Those people willing to put in the time and get involved and make a significant contribution to the community should be recognized," Dugas added.

All award nomination entries should be submitted to the QHS by Monday, April 13.

Nomination letters should be mailed to The Quaboag Historical Society, P.O. Box 635, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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SPENCER NEW LEADER PUBLISHED BY STONEBRIDGE PRESS

PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER
FRANK C. CHILINSKI
frank@salmonpress.news

BUSINESS MANAGER
RYAN CORNEAU
860-928-1818 EXT. 102
ryan@salmonpress.news

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
JIM D'NICOLA
508-764-6102
jim@stonebridgepress.news

EDITOR
BRENDAN BERUBE
508-909-4101
news@stonebridgepress.news

PRODUCTION MANAGER
JULIE CLARKE
508-909-4105
julie@villagernews.com

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Kindergarten registration now open; free Integrated Preschool available for Leicester families

LEICESTER — The Leicester School District is pleased to announce that Kindergarten registration is now open for the 2026-2027 school year. We are also excited to continue offering tuition-free enrollment in our integrated preschool program for Leicester residents.

Children who turn five years old on or before Aug. 31 are eligible to enroll in Kindergarten at Leicester Elementary School. School hours are 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. There is no registration deadline, and families are encouraged to register as soon as possible to help us prepare for the upcoming school year.

To enter Kindergarten, students must provide:

Proof of a lead screening

with results

A physical exam dated within 13 months of the start of school

5 doses of Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP)

4 doses of Polio
3 doses of Hepatitis B
2 doses of Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)

2 doses of Varicella vaccine or documentation of chickenpox disease

Families are invited to attend Kindergarten Information Night on Wednesday, April 8, from 5-7 p.m. at the Leicester Middle School Fine Arts Center. The evening will include an informative presentation, a question-and-answer session, and a tour of Leicester Elementary School. It is a

wonderful opportunity for families to learn more and begin building connections within the school community.

Registration information can be found at: https://leicester.k12.ma.us/for_parents/student_registration.

In addition to Kindergarten registration, Leicester is proud to offer a tuition-free integrated preschool program for in-town residents. Children who turn three or four years old on or before Aug. 31 are eligible to apply. District residents who qualify for special education services may begin attending once they turn three, regardless of the birthdate cutoff.

Children enrolling in the preschool program must be independently toilet-trained

(no diapers or pull-ups), unless a specific special education service requires otherwise. Children who are not yet independently using the restroom during the school day will need to wait to begin the program until they are developmentally ready.

More information about the integrated preschool program can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/lpsma.net/leicester-integrated-preschool?usp=sharing>.

For questions about Kindergarten or Preschool registration, please contact Leicester Elementary School

at (508) 892-7050.

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Donations needed for Community Baby Shower

LEICESTER — Organizers are seeking donations for the Leicester Regional Public Health Coalition's Community Baby Shower for expectant parents coming up May 7 from 1-4 p.m. at the Leicester Town Hall Gym, sponsored by Walmart, Hannaford, Deja New, and C.A.R.E. Leicester.

Items needed include diapers (newborn to size three), baby wipes, rash cream, clothing (onesies), sleepers, sleep sacks, hats, socks, and newborn outfits), hygiene & health items such as baby wash, shampoo, lotion, manicure sets, thermometers, and hand sanitizers), feeding equipment (bottles), formula, burping cloths, bibs, nursing pads, and pacifiers), gear & bedding (swaddle blankets, crib sheets, pack 'n plays, strollers, and car seats), and safety items such as outlet covers and cabinet locks.

Donation drop-off bins are located at the Leicester Public Library, Town Hall, Senior Center, and Deja New.



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Friday's Child



Jeycen is a happy and friendly child who brings joy wherever he goes. He enjoys getting out into the community — even everyday outings like going to the grocery store are exciting adventures for him. Jeycen thrives when he has opportunities to explore his surroundings and engage with the world around him. He loves hands-on activities and learning through play. Swimming is one of his favorite activities, and he also enjoys counting cubes and stacking blocks, showing his growing curiosity and problem-solving skills. Jeycen likes to play a variety of games, including peek-a-boo, Marble Run, and building with LEGO, where he can create and experiment in fun, creative ways. Jeycen has a special interest in drawing and especially loves building roadmaps and highways. He is fascinated by how roads connect and enjoys designing his own imaginative routes and pathways. With his bright smile, playful spirit, and creative mind, Jeycen continues to discover and explore the world in his own unique way.

Jeycen
Age 9
Registration #8755

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21181580424>

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. As an adoptive parent, you won't have to pay any fees, adoption from foster care is completely free in Massachusetts.

The process to adopt a child from foster care includes training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you. These steps will help match you with a child or sibling group that your family will fit well with. To learn more about adoption from foster care visit www.mareinc.org. Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) can give you guidance and information on the adoption process. Reach out today to find out all the ways you can help children and teens in foster care.

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BRENDAN BERUBE
 EDITOR

EDITORIAL

The value of local information

There was a time when most residents learned what was happening in town by word of mouth. A conversation at the post office. A notice pinned to a bulletin board. A neighbor leaning over a fence to share the latest development from a board meeting.

Those moments still matter. But today, the flow of information is far more complicated.

In communities like Spencer, Leicester, and the Brookfields, decisions made at town hall can shape daily life in immediate ways. A change in trash collection policy. A road closure for construction. A vote on a school budget. A zoning amendment that affects a neighborhood.

The challenge is not whether information exists. It does. Agendas are posted. Minutes are recorded. Budgets are published. The challenge is whether residents are seeing it, understanding it and engaging with it before decisions are finalized.

Local government operates best when residents are informed early, not after the fact. When a planning board reviews a proposal or a select board debates a contract, the groundwork has often been laid weeks or months in advance. Those details are available, but they require attention.

That is where reliable, consistent local information becomes essential.

It is easy, in a digital age, to become distracted by national headlines and state-wide controversies. Those stories have their place. Yet the issues that most directly affect property taxes, school programming, public safety staffing and neighborhood development are decided close to home.

Access to clear reporting on those topics is not a luxury. It is part of civic health.

In small towns, transparency tends to be strong. Meetings are open. Officials are accessible. Many residents know board members personally. That closeness can be an advantage, but it also makes accurate information even more important. Rumor travels quickly in tight-knit communities. So does misunderstanding.

When residents have access to verified details, debate improves. Questions become more precise. Discussions become more grounded in fact than assumption.

There is also a generational component to consider. Younger families may rely heavily on digital platforms. Longtime residents may prefer printed materials or in-person meetings. Ensuring that information reaches across those preferences is part of modern municipal responsibility.

Schools, too, benefit from engaged audiences. Enrollment shifts, curriculum updates and extracurricular offerings often prompt strong opinions. When families are informed about the reasoning behind decisions, dialogue becomes more productive.

The same holds true for public safety initiatives, infrastructure projects and economic development efforts. Clear communication builds trust. Silence or confusion erodes it.

None of this suggests that every resident must attend every meeting. Life is busy. Work schedules vary. Families juggle responsibilities. But making an effort to stay informed about major issues can prevent surprise and frustration later.

Local officials can continue to strengthen communication by presenting budgets in accessible formats, summarizing key proposals and welcoming questions. Residents, in turn, can take advantage of the tools already available, from posted agendas to public forums.

Healthy towns are built not only on roads and buildings, but on shared understanding.

In the end, informed communities make better decisions. They are less reactive and more deliberate. They disagree thoughtfully rather than impulsively. They approach change with context rather than confusion.

The work of staying informed may not feel urgent day to day. Yet over time, it shapes the tone and direction of civic life.

In towns where neighbors still recognize one another at the grocery store or on the sidelines of a school event, the quality of local information remains one of the quiet foundations of trust.

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

“KAOS” is here... “KAOS” is Trump

To the Editor:

A lot of people of a certain age will remember the comedy TV show “Get Smart.” The show ran from 1965 through 1970, and starred Don Adams as secret agent 86, Maxwell Smart. The show was a parody of the James Bond movies and Maxwell Smart’s arch enemy was a lawless group known as “KAOS” — an international organization of evil people dedicated to spreading chaos and anarchy.

We now have a real-life “KAOS” in the form of Donald Trump, his stooges and the MAGA cult. Trump has no real plan, has no real agenda. He has no idea what he’s doing and he just spews out his verbal crap for the MAGA cult to swallow hook line and sinker. Every day with him is another adventure into real CHAOS. His Modus Operandi is to stir the pot, keep the America people off balance, insult our allies, rename the Gulf Of Mexico, add his name to the Kennedy Center, gripe about not being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, invade Venezuela, blah, blah, blah...

He knows that the more garbage he throws out the less the American people will be able to keep up with his chaos.

Remember the Epstein files? Remember bringing the Ukraine war to an end in one day? Remember how Trump made a big deal about the alleged killing of white people in South Africa eight months ago? Notice how Trump has since dodged that issue? Do you hear of that now?

Now Trump has graduated to being judge, jury and executioner of Americans who get in the way of him and his ICE circus. Renee Good and Alex Peretti will not be the last victims of Trump’s version of Nazi SS Stormtroopers. This so-called President is without a doubt the biggest liar and con man of all time. And the MAGA cult just keeps on eating up his usual garbage.

What a mess.

ANTHONY FERNANDES
 WEST BROOKFIELD

The Apprentice returns

To the Editor:

After watching the State of the Union last week, for the whole time, it appears that our leader feels some jealousy towards the awards shows because that was most of the content of this speech. Except for a rebuke to the Supreme Court for not understanding the Constitution, noting that 25,000 soldiers a month are dying in Ukraine (no apology for blowing off the day one promise), an elaborate demonstration of disgust that Iran is killing demonstrators en masse. (I guess he prefers the one at a time ICE program.) Just out of curiosity, since you prefer regime change, and have assembled an armada off their shores, wouldn’t any military action be as fatal as the demonstrations? Do you plan to just bomb them again without congressional approval, or commit to boots on the ground? Having interacted with Iran a long time, why do we think any incursion would not prompt a terrorist style response?

The meat of the show were the awards — two Congressional Medals of Honor, two Medals of Freedom and one Purple Heart Medal. These included elaborate depictions of heroism, blood and guts. We were told to focus on the illegal bad behavior by a few immigrants, but the only mention of citizen criminals is that we are controlling them better.

He fell back on his old standby lies a few times, saying this should be his third term, because the second was stolen, that prices in general are way down, that foreign countries pay tariffs, that gasoline can be had as low as \$1.88 a gallon, that his new healthcare plan, after obliterating Obamacare access and Medicare/

Medicaid access for many. The new plan is send you money so insurers do not rip you off. My Blue Cross and med/pharma ran \$10,000 last year. How much will he send?

Is anyone’s heat and utility cost going down? Mine isn’t. Are your groceries cheaper? What, if anything, can you cite are going down? Gasoline and eggs are footballs, bouncing every which way, but I venture not many of us are finding life more affordable. Even if you have 401Ks or investments, unless you are privileged enough to have so much invested that higher costs just roll off your back, you are certainly better off than most of us.

Our POTUS, whose salary is half a million a year (that he claims to donate without any evidence), has reportedly increased his worth over \$1.5 billion this year. While Jimmy Carter had to sell his peanut farm, this guy has ignored the emoluments restrictions since day one. I think he may experience an unwelcome surprise, when his voter ID regs cut his voters as much as Dems. He accused Dems of trying to cheat elections, when it aligns more with his plans. The Stalin plan is that it matters not who votes and how, only who counts the votes. We all need to do our civic duty to make sure what we vote for is what we get. I am sort of expecting Tulsi Gabbard to announce she found the 11,780 votes.

He knows he will lose bigly in the midterms, and hopefully in both houses. When his second impeachment only got 57 of the 60 votes needed, he called it exoneration. That is not a rerun I want to view again.

KEN KIMBALL
 BROOKFIELD

Democracy doesn’t defend itself

To the Editor:

Dear members, supporters, and local Democrats, this is not politics as usual.

On Monday, March 9, we are not just holding a caucus. We are taking a stand.

The Leicester Democratic Town Committee will hold its Town Democratic Caucus beginning at 5 p.m. at the Leicester Public Library, 1136 Main St. Doors open at 5 p.m. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. The caucus convenes at 6 p.m. Registration closes promptly at 6:15 p.m.

Right now, across this country, we are witnessing a coordinated effort to weaken our democracy from the inside. Donald Trump continues to push the lie that our elections cannot be trusted. He has backed voter roll purges, supported restrictive voter ID measures designed to suppress turnout, encouraged intimidation at polling places, and aligned himself with efforts to hand partisan actors more control over election certification.

Let’s call this what it is: an attempt to decide who gets to vote and whose voice counts.

When powerful people try to limit participation, the answer is not retreat. The answer is mobilization.

Democracy does not defend itself. Rights do not protect themselves. If we want to preserve the freedom to vote, the freedom to speak, and the freedom to live without fear of political retaliation, then we must show up in force, enacting in our own town.

Local action is not a small action. It is the foundation. The caucus is where we organize. It is where we choose delegates. It is where we send a message that Leicester Democrats will not be silenced

and will not be intimidated.

We need a room full of voices. We need energy. We need conviction. We need people who understand that history does not remember those who stayed home.

Bring your outrage. Bring your hope. Bring your belief that this country belongs to all of us, not just the powerful few.

Monday, March 9. Be there. Be counted. Be loud.

If we do not stand up now, we risk waking up one day to find that the rights we assumed were permanent have been quietly stripped away.

We will not let that happen here.

In solidarity and in action,

ELIZABETH M. ZITO
 CHAIR
 LEICESTER DEMOCRATIC TOWN
 COMMITTEE

Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author’s name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author’s name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.

It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

How outdated beneficiary choices can derail your plans



FINANCIAL
 FOCUS

TREVOR
 NIELSEN

When you open a retirement account or buy a life insurance policy, you’re asked to name a beneficiary. It might seem like just another form to fill out, but this simple step can affect your family’s future.

Many people don’t give beneficiary designations much thought after signing the initial paperwork. It may have been years ago, and life has moved on. But this might surprise you: These designations can override what’s in your will or living trust. That means your retirement accounts and insurance proceeds could end up going to someone you didn’t intend, creating what professionals call an accidental inheritance.

Life changes quickly. You might get married, divorced, or remarried. You might have children or stepchildren. A loved one might pass away. You may decide to give to your favorite charity. Any of these events could mean it’s time to update your beneficiaries.

The rules can get complicated. For example, after a divorce, some (but not all) states have laws that automatically revoke your beneficiary designations for IRAs, bank accounts and insurance policies. But no matter where you live in the U.S., the designations for 401(k) plans and pensions stay in place until you change them. In community property states, couples must split 50-50 the assets they acquired during marriage, adding another layer of complexity.

There are other considerations, too. It’s a good idea to name a primary and a contingent beneficiary. If your primary beneficiary dies before you do, the contingent beneficiary receives your assets. Without this backup plan, your carefully considered wishes could go awry.

Naming minor children as direct beneficiaries isn’t usually a good idea. Children can’t legally receive and control assets until they become adults, so a court would have to get involved and appoint a guardian for managing the money. Instead, you might set up a trust or name a custodian to oversee the funds until your children are mature enough to handle them responsibly.

For family members with special needs, you’ll want to be especially careful as about choosing your beneficiary. Some choices may jeopardize their eligibility to receive government benefits such as government disability payments or Medicaid. An estate attorney can help you make important beneficiary decisions.

One major benefit of proper beneficiary designations is that they can help your loved ones avoid probate, a time-consuming and potentially expensive legal process.

For these reasons and others, it’s important to review your beneficiary designations regularly, especially after major life events. Contact your retirement account administrator or insurance company to update any outdated information.

A financial advisor can help you understand how your beneficiary choices fit into your financial strategy and ensure your assets go where you want them to go. It may also make sense to work with a legal professional who can help you ensure your beneficiary designations align with your plans for transferring your estate assets.

Don’t leave these important decisions to chance. Taking time now to review and update your beneficiaries can help give you a sense of security and protect the people you love.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Trevor Nielsen, your local Edward Jones Advisor in Sturbridge at 508-347-1420 or trevor.nielsen@edward-jones.com. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I Want America back!

To the Editor:
Does anyone know how America got away? I am searching for it every day, but it continues to elude me. Where could it be? Did it take a vacation, a respite from the constant turmoil, cruelty and hatred visited upon all of us from this strange new entity called administration, but lacking any similarity to democracy? Perhaps our beloved America has been deported to another country, imprisoned, forgotten, never to return.

I once knew America very well. I saw its imperfections. While, at times, this brought unfairness, wealth inequity, homelessness and discrimination, I also saw the collective struggle for America to do better for all of its people and finally rising to become a beacon of freedom and equality. Those were the best days of America.

I see now that America had to leave. It could no longer pretend to be the America

we all knew. It had become shamed and broken. The rule of law was gone. In its place was anger, greed, violence, lies and clamors for locking up and destroying anyone who disagreed or was called "immigrant," legal or not. These chilling changes forced America to flee, much like immigrants and our own ancestors coming here from other countries did due to famine, poverty or even a threat of death. How ironic.

I still cling to the hope that America will come back. I hear a whisper that grows louder each day signaling hope and resolution to bring back kindness, empathy and fairness as well as the rule of law...and love of country. Only We The People, as a united front, can change our outcome from despair to hope. It is not too late to bring America home. Are you ready?

ANN TOOMEY-DOANE
WEST BROOKFIELD

The Butterfly Effect revisited for assisting free & fair elections & our American voting rights

To the Editor:

From Trump and collaborators, we hear again and again that our elections have been "stolen" when the opposite remains. They go on to say that ways solve this includes having the national government take them over from the states and to have our armed forces provide control at voting places.

All of this goes in the wrong direction, and would allow Trump and cronies to violate our 250-year-old Constitution.

Yet again, the task to protect our country and our right to free and fair elections seems enormous. But again, like butterflies going about their business in smallest of ways, we together can have a big effect. We can do this by providing little bits of assistance and support to non-profit, non-partisan organizations that promote and protect voting rights.

What follows are a couple lists plus an additional personal favorite

- The Charity Navigator list, which because of its in-depth analysis, I consider the best.
- Vote Riders
- Brennan Center for Justice
- American Civil Liberties Foundation
- Fairvote
- The Voter Participation Center and
- The Common Cause Education Fund

In addition, the conservative magazine

Forbes lists these election non-profits that businesses can support

- Rock the Vote
- When We All Vote
- Vote.org
- HeadCount
- Power the Polls
- Voto Latino
- League of Women Voters
- Black Voters matter
- Turbo -Vote (Democracy Works)
- I am a Voter

Then, my selection, the Carter Center, named after an American President who actually won and deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. Also non-profit and non-partisan, the Carter Center has, for decades, internationally assisted, monitored and reported on elections.

Now as the Trump and collaborators try to pull us away from free and fair elections, they will well do the same in the United State. A current effort example - with the former Republican President's Gerald Ford's Foundation is monitoring and reporting on elections in Michigan.

So "butterflies fly."

Much needs to be said about President Trump's disastrous, personal and unconstitutional war of choice which began, but will not end in Iran.

KEVIN KANE
SPENCER

The sound of a real conversation

LANTERNS
ALONG
MAIN
STREET
By CHARLES

The other morning, I found myself at a local diner, the kind of place where the coffee arrives before you've fully settled into the booth. The waitress called everyone "hon," and nobody seemed to mind. The grill hissed, forks clinked against plates, and someone near the window was explaining, in great detail, how to fix a snowblower carburetor.

It was a symphony of ordinary life.

At the table behind me sat a father and his teenage daughter. He had the newspaper folded in quarters. She had her phone propped against the sugar dispenser, eyes fixed on the screen, thumbs moving at a speed that suggested great urgency.

The father tried. "So, big game Friday?" he asked.

"Mmm-hmm," she said, not looking up.

"You starting?"

"Probably."

He sipped his coffee. Cleared his throat. "That's good."

I felt for him. I've been on both sides of that exchange over the years. I've been the distracted one, and I've been the one hoping for a few more words than "probably."

After a moment, the waitress came by and refilled their cups. She looked at the girl and said, "You playing shortstop again? You made that great throw last week."

The girl's head came up. "You saw that?"

"Of course I did. Whole place was talking about it."

And just like that, the phone went face down on the table.

For the next five minutes, the girl described the play in full color. The slow roller. The scoop. The throw

to first. Her father leaned in, smiling in a way that made him look ten years younger. The waitress nodded like she was reviewing game tape.

What changed? Not the setting.

Not the menu. Just attention.

There is something powerful about being noticed. Not in the loud, public way that comes with likes and shares and digital applause, but in the quiet, steady way that says: I saw you. I remember. It mattered.

In small-town Massachusetts, we still have the advantage of proximity. Our towns are not so large that we disappear entirely into anonymity. The librarian may know what you read last summer. The clerk at Town Hall may recognize your signature. The barber may remember how you like the back trimmed.

These details are not accidents. They are the result of paying attention.

And attention, these days, feels like a scarce resource.

I understand the pull of the phone. It offers news from around the globe, weather updates down to the minute, photos from family miles away. I am grateful for that. I like knowing my daughter made it home safely. I like being able to check in with my son without waiting for the long-distance rates to drop after 9 p.m., as we once did.

But I sometimes wonder whether we are trading depth for volume. We hear from more people than ever before, yet speak less to the ones sitting across from us.

I remember when conversation had a certain rhythm. You asked a question, and you waited. You listened long enough to hear not only the answer but the

tone behind it. If someone paused, you didn't rush to fill the silence. Silence had a purpose. It let thoughts settle.

Now, silence seems to make us nervous. We reach for a device at the first lull, as if quiet were something to be avoided.

My mother, God bless her, had a way of making you feel like the only person in the room. When she asked how you were, she meant it. You could not slip by with a quick "fine." She would tilt her head slightly and wait. That small gesture told you she had time for your answer.

Time is another thing that feels squeezed thin.

Yet I suspect we have more control over it than we admit. We may not be able to slow the news cycle or quiet the endless stream of notifications. But we can choose, in a diner or a market or on a walk down Main Street, to look up.

The father and daughter at the diner left a little while later. As they stood to go, he put his hand briefly on her shoulder. She was talking animatedly now, phone forgotten in her jacket pocket. They stepped out into the cold morning together, still mid-conversation.

The diner returned to its usual soundtrack: dishes, laughter, the scrape of chairs. Nothing dramatic had happened. No speeches were made. No lessons announced.

Just a girl who felt seen. A father who got more than one-word answers. A waitress who took the time to remember a throw from last week.

Sometimes, the sound of a real conversation is the most hopeful thing you can hear.



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Photographer Paulette Adams named Friends of the North Brookfield Town House Artist of the Month



NORTH BROOKFIELD — North Brookfield resident Paulette Adams beautifully captures area landscapes as well as glimpses of wildlife and still life.

Adams was introduced to the field of photography while working for Marvin

Richmond's Color Lab processing business on Harvard Street in Worcester. It was here that she learned how to process slides for color correction.

While living in Germany, where her husband was stationed for over a year,

Adams bought her first 35 mm camera, a "gently used" Agfa, and photographed local landscapes and architecture so she would have memories of her time there. Returning home, she bought an Olympus camera and a Canon Powershot that

were ideal for taking casual, everyday photos, many of them focusing on family life. But as her interest in photography grew, Adams became disenchanted with the photos from the point-and-shoot cameras, and she bought a Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) Nikon D90, which allowed her to experiment with images of wildlife, architecture, landscapes, and photos of her young grandson.

Returning to her processing experience, but this time using digital software, in 2007, Adams worked on vintage photos assembled from the North Brookfield Historical Society, her own collection, and those of other long-time

residents. After converting sepia-toned photos to clearer crisper black and white, she matted and mounted the collection for a Historical Society presentation, and later, an Open

House at the Town House. In 2012, as part of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the incorporation of North Brookfield, the collection was exhibited at the Congregational Church's Fellowship Hall.

Fifteen years ago, Adams and a friend decided to join the Massasoit Art Guild Photo Group. As a member she has enjoyed taking part in photo challenges and workshops over the years and exhibiting her work at the annual Art Guild Show and Sale, Cormier Jewelers, and the Richard Sugden Library. Her work will be on display this year at the Leicester Library in June through July.

While using Nikon cameras for the past 18 years, Adams feels that she has evolved into a more spontaneous photographer who enjoys challenges. She experiences a sense of

accomplishment when others share their appreciation of her work at Photo Group meetings, exhibitions, and on social media.

The Friends of the North Brookfield Town House are happy to add our kudos and our thanks to Paulette Adams for agreeing to be our featured artist for the month of March. You can find examples of Paulette's work on our Web site at nbtownhouse.com/all-featured-artists/paulette-adams.

The Friends of the North Brookfield Town House is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on restoring, preserving, and sustaining the Town House as a cultural center of North Brookfield. Every month this organization recognizes a featured artist in their community.

Celebrate the figure at ArtWorks Gallery

WARE — ArtWorks Gallery invites artists of all applied mediums from throughout the northeastern US to submit works to the fifth annual Celebrating the Figure exhibition. Photography and electronic media are not accepted for this show. This exhibition embraces the diverse ways in which artists approach representing the human form, showcasing pieces that utilize both the clothed and unclothed figure. Submissions should demonstrate an understanding of the human body,

whether through the precision of the nude form or the technical skill required to render fabric while still conveying the underlying form.

The deadline for entry is March 12 by midnight. The entry form and full details can be found on workshop13.org. ArtWorks Gallery is located at 69 Main St. in Ware. The fifth annual "Celebrating the Figure" exhibition will be on display from April 11 through May 9, opening with a reception on Saturday, April 11, from

3-5 p.m. Gallery hours are Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.

The juror for "Celebrating the Figure" is SK Sullivan. SK Sullivan is a figurative painter working primarily in oil. She has held a lifelong fixation with the human body and experience, driven by curiosity and an unrelenting need to create. SK has exhibited throughout the United States and lives in Connecticut, where her practice continues to evolve through daily engagement with the figure.

About ArtWorks Gallery and Workshop13

ArtWorks Gallery is Workshop13's gallery on Main Street. This space features numerous art exhibitions each year and is also available to rent for individual or group shows. Workshop13 is a dynamic center where arts, culture, and community converge—expanding access to the arts and nurturing creativity and self-expression in our rural region. For more information, visit workshop13.org, or call 413-277-6072.



Leicester Democratic Town Committee to hold 2026 Democratic Caucus

LEICESTER — The Leicester Democratic Town Committee (LDTCC) will hold its 2026 Democratic Caucus on Monday, March 9, at the Leicester Public Library, located at 1136 Main St., Leicester.

The caucus will begin promptly at 6 p.m., with doors opening at 5 p.m. Registration

will open at 5:30 p.m. and close at 6:15 p.m. All eligible Democrats are encouraged to arrive early to ensure timely registration and participation.

Democratic caucuses are an important part of the party's grassroots process, allowing registered Democrats to participate in the selection of delegates and alternates to Democratic conventions and to engage directly in party governance at the local level.

Participants must be registered Democrats in the Town of Leicester and meet all eligibility requirements as outlined by the Massachusetts Democratic Party. Same-day party registration may be available in accordance with party rules.

The caucus location is ADA accessible. Individuals requiring other aids are encouraged to contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee in advance at ldtccmass@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The Leicester Democratic Town Committee welcomes community members who are interested in civic engagement, democratic participation, and helping

shape the future of the Democratic Party in Leicester and across the Commonwealth.

For additional information or questions regarding the caucus, please contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee at ldtccmass@gmail.com. or other auxiliary aids, are encouraged to contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee in advance at ldtccmass@gmail.com so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The Leicester Democratic Town Committee welcomes community members who are interested in civic engagement, democratic participation, and helping shape the future of the Democratic Party in Leicester and across the Commonwealth.

For additional information or questions regarding the caucus, please contact the Leicester Democratic Town Committee at ldtccmass@gmail.com.

[www.Stonebridge Press.com](http://www.StonebridgePress.com)

WEEKLY POLICE BLOTTER

Spencer
The Spencer Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Feb. 18-24.

James D. Cobb, age 27, of Spencer was arrested on Feb. 18 for Defacing Property.

Leicester
The Leicester Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Feb. 19-25.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Feb. 24 for Improper Storage of a Firearm.

Leicester Knights of Columbus to hold family dinner

LEICESTER — Leicester Knights of Columbus, 91 Manville St., will have a Family Dinner on Wednesday, March 11 at 6 p.m. The menu includes a choice of corned beef or baked fish. Cost is \$15, and includes salad, entree, dessert and coffee.

Call Don at 508-615-8434 or email at ohno7g7@yahoo.com by Monday, March 9 for reservations. All are welcome.

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Nomination papers for Brookfield town election due March 16

BROOKFIELD — Brookfield will hold its Annual Town Election Monday, May 4, with polls open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Town Hall, 6 Central St.

Nomination papers for the Brookfield Annual Town Election are available until the March 16 filing deadline at the Town Clerk's Office. The following offices and terms are open to candidates:

- Moderator (1 Year Term)
- Select Board (3 Year Term)
- Assessor (3 Year Term)
- Planning Board (5 Year Term)
- Planning Board (4 Year Term)
- Elementary School Committee (3 Year Term)
- Water Commission (3 Year Term)
- Board of Health (3 Year Term)
- Trustee For Merrick Public Library (2 - 3 Year Term)
- Cemetery Commissioner (2 Year Term)
- Cemetery Commissioner (3 Year Term)
- Town Collector (3 Year Term)

Monday, March 16, 5 p.m. Last day to obtain and return nomination papers (49 days before election)

Monday March 30, 5 p.m. Last day for registrars to certify Nomination Papers: (35 Days before election)

Monday, March 30, 5 p.m. Last day for candidates to withdraw (Letter to the Town Clerk)

Please note you can now register to vote online at: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>.

Leicester Senior Citizens Club launches membership drive

LEICESTER — The Leicester Senior Citizens Club is a group of older adults that meets at the Leicester Senior Center twice a month. The club is looking to attract new members from all the area towns and cities.

The group meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Meetings begin at 10 a.m. At the conclusion of each meeting, there is a scheduled form of entertainment or informational presentation.

The Leicester Senior Citizens Club is linking older adults with each

other, and to opportunities that improve their health, well-being, and sense of community. It is the club's way of reducing the effects of isolation. We want to offer special programs beyond normal hours, and we need input and ideas from new members to help get us there. Membership is open to all individuals aged 60 and older. The cost

to join is \$10 for an annual membership.

To learn more about the membership drive or to sign up, please visit the Leicester Senior Center at 40 Winslow Ave., Leicester, during operating hours (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.), or call David Wood, Program Director at the senior center, at (508)-892-7016.

West Brookfield Historical Commission announces 2026 scholarship

WEST BROOKFIELD — The West Brookfield Historical Commission is pleased to announce its 2026, 15th annual scholarship in the amount of \$2,000. Qualified students must reside in West Brookfield and may attend Quabog Regional High School, or be school-choice students, home schooled students, and independent school students.

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

The students must be planning to attend either a four-year college/university program or a two-year college with the intent to transfer to a four-year college. The Commission will show preference to study plans with concentration on History and History-related areas. Major or minors may include Political Science, Social Studies, Anthropology, Archaeology, Historical Preservation, Museum Studies, and Education in any of these related fields.

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

Essays are due no later than April 6.

E-mail- info@westbrookfield.org

Mail: West Brookfield Historical Commission, PO Box 372, W. Brookfield, MA 01585.

The application and details can be found on the Historical Commission Web site, <http://westbrookfield.org>.

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West Brookfield Democrats to elect delegates to State Convention

WEST BROOKFIELD — A caucus, open to any Democratic voter registered in West Brookfield, will be held at the West Brookfield Town Hall on Tuesday, March 10 at 6 p.m. to choose delegates to attend the Democratic State Nominating Convention on May 29 and 30 at the DCU Center in Worcester.

Any member of the community may attend, but only registered Democrats may vote. Youth (age 16 to 35), people with disabilities, people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community not elected as delegates or alternates, are encouraged to apply to be add-on delegates at the caucus or by visiting www.massdems.org/massdems-convention. Registered but unenrolled town voters are welcome to change registration ahead of the caucus and fully participate upon enrollment verification.

Voter registration information will be provided.

If you would like to attend the Democratic Caucus for West Brookfield and/or need further information, please feel free to send an email to wbdtc01585@gmail.com, or call Eric von Bleicken at 212-316-5349.

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Ayala of North Brookfield competes on Regis Women's Basketball

WESTON — Serenity Ayala, Class of 2026, and the Regis College Women's Basketball team recently completed the 2025-26 season.

The Pride concluded their season in the Great Northeast Athletic Conference (GNAC) quarterfinals with an overall record of 12-14 and 9-3.

"As our winter seasons come to a close, I want to congratulate our student-athletes on their hard work and determination," said Dean of Athletics Pam Roecker. "The growth they've achieved through competition, discipline, and teamwork will stay with them well beyond the season."

Ayala is majoring in at Regis College.

The Pride are led by five-year head coach, Samantha Crough.

Local student named to Franklin Pierce Dean's List

RINDGE, New Hampshire — Michael Bokis IV of North Brookfield was named to the Dean's List at Franklin Pierce University for the fall semester of 2025.

To qualify for the Dean's Lists at the end of the fall or spring semester, a matriculated student must have completed a minimum of 12 graded credits of 100-level (or above) courses, and received no Ds, Fs, Is, or IPs.

LEGALS

LEGAL NOTICE

The Brimfield Elementary School Committee will hold a public hearing on its proposed 2026-2027 Elementary School Budget on Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at the Brimfield Elementary School, in accordance with the M.G.L., Chapter 71, § 38N. A copy of the proposed budget is available from the Office of the Principal, Brimfield Elementary School. Jennifer Custance, Chair Brimfield School Committee March 6, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE

A public hearing on the proposed Brookfield Elementary School budget for 2026-2027 will be held on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., at the Brookfield Elementary School, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 71, § 38N. Copies of the proposed budget are available from the Office of the Principal at Brookfield Elementary School. Nicole Chaffee, Chair Brookfield Elementary School Committee March 6, 2026

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing on the proposed Sturbridge School District budget for 2026-2027 will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. in the Cafeteria of Burgess Elementary School, in accordance with M.G.L., Chapter 71, § 38N. A copy of the proposed budget is available at the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, 320A Brookfield Rd., Fiskdale, MA. Samantha Kaitbenski Chairwoman Sturbridge School Committee March 6, 2026

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing on the proposed Tantasqua Regional School District budget for 2026-2027 will be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria of Tantasqua Regional Junior High School, in accordance with M.G.L., Chapter 71, § 38N. A copy of the proposed budget is available at the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, 320A Brookfield Rd., Fiskdale, MA. **NOTE: The regular school committee meeting will begin following the Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m.** Michael Valanzola Chairman Tantasqua Regional School District Committee March 6, 2026

BOARD OF HEALTH NOTICE OF AMENDED REGULATION

Notice is hereby given that the Brookfield Board of Health has adopted amendments to its existing regulation entitled "Regulation of the Board of Health Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products", originally enacted on June 15, 2025. The amended regulation was approved by the Board of Health on February 25, 2026, and will take effect on March 13, 2026, in accordance with applicable state and local law. A copy of the full amended regulation is available for public inspection at the Brookfield Town Clerk's Office, 6 Central Street, Brookfield, MA, during regular business hours. It may also be viewed on the Town's official website at <https://www.brookfieldma.us/local-health-regulations>. Any person wishing to appeal this regulation or seek additional information may contact the Board of Health at boardofhealth@brookfieldma.us or (508) 867-2930 ext.22 March 6, 2026

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

Premises: 10 Jones Street, Spencer, MA 01562
By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Amanda M Davin to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Guild Mortgage Company LLC, and now held by

Guild Mortgage Company LLC, said mortgage dated July 11, 2022 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 67888, Page 298, said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as Mortgagee, as nominee for Guild Mortgage Company LLC to Guild Mortgage Company by assignment dated April 9, 2024 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 70394, Page 273 as affected by a confirmatory assignment dated June 4, 2024 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 70607, Page 115; said mortgage was assigned from Guild Mortgage Company LLC to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as Mortgagee, as nominee for Guild Mortgage Company LLC by assignment dated August 13, 2024 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 70903, Page 62; said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as Mortgagee, as nominee for Guild Mortgage Company LLC to Guild Mortgage Company LLC by assignment dated December 19, 2024 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 71491, Page 134; for breach of the conditions in said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at **Public Auction** on April 9, 2026 at 03:00 PM Local Time upon the premises, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

TRACT 1:

The land in Spencer, Worcester County, Massachusetts, situated in the south side of Starr Street, viz, BEGINNING at the northeast corner of the south line of said street by land formerly of H.P. Starr; THENCE by said Starr land, S. 9° W., 99 feet; THENCE by land formerly of Joseph Pope, N. 86 1/2° W., 66 feet; THENCE still by said Popeland, N. 9° E., 99 feet to the south line of Starr Street; THENCE by said street line, S. 86 1/2° E., 66 feet to the point of beginning..

TRACT 02:

The land in Spencer, Worcester County, Massachusetts, situated on the south side of Starr Street, viz., BEGINNING at the northwesterly corner of the south line of said street, at a point 165 feet easterly of the easterly line of Grove Street; THENCE S. 86 1/2° E., by the southerly line of Starr Street, about 82 1/2 feet to land formerly of Eli Jacobs; THENCE S. 9° W., by said Jacobs land, 99 feet; THENCE N. 86 1/2° W., by land formerly of Joseph Pope, about 74 1/2 feet to a point on the easterly side of a two rod private street, now called Jones Street, and 165 feet easterly of the easterly line of Grove Street; THENCE N. 3 1/2° E., by the easterly line of Jones Street, 99 feet to the point of beginning.. Being the same premises as granted to Mortgagor(s) by virtue of a Deed from Sidney Cardona recorded in the Worcester County Registry of Deed Herewith.

The description of the property contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication.

For Mortgagor's Title see deed dated July 7, 2022 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 67888, Page 294.

TERMS OF SALE: Said premises will be sold and conveyed subject to all liens, encumbrances, unpaid taxes, tax titles, municipal liens and assessments, if any, which take precedence over the said mortgage above described.

FIVE THOUSAND (\$5,000.00) Dollars of the purchase price must be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check at the time and place of the sale by the purchaser. The balance of the purchase price shall be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check within thirty (30) days after the date of sale.

Other terms to be announced at the sale.

Brock & Scott, PLLC

23 Messenger Street
2nd Floor
Plainville, MA 02762
Attorney for Guild Mortgage Company LLC
Present Holder of the Mortgage (401) 217-8701

March 6, 2026
March 13, 2026
March 20, 2026

THE TOWN OF EAST BROOKFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing will be held in the Memorial Town Complex, 122 Connie Mack Drive, East Brookfield on Monday, March 16, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. on the application made by Ramkumar Algoo d/b/a East Brookfield Wine & Spirits, LLC, 104 Pleasant Street for an All Alcohol Package Store License

All interested parties are invited to attend.

Andrew Lynch, Chairman
Andrew Levasseur, Clerk
Robert Button, Member

cc: Town Clerk
cc: Ramkumar Algoo
March 6, 2026
March 13, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Worcester Division Docket No. WO26P0514EA INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE

Estate Of:

Albina J. Burdulis

Also Known As:

Albina Joan Burdulis

Date of Death: December 26, 2025

To All persons interested in the above-captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner :

Birute Burdulis of West Brookfield MA

Birute Burdulis of West Brookfield MA has been informally appointed as Personal Representative of said estate to serve without surety on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.

March 6, 2026

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

Premises: 65 Maple Street, Units 1 & 2 a/k/a 65 Maple Street, Spencer, MA 01562

By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Joan Namboira Katulege to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as mortgagee, as nominee for Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, and now held by **Village Capital & Investment LLC**, said mortgage dated June 30, 2023 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 69339, Page 132, said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as mortgagee, as nominee for Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation to Village Capital & Investment LLC by assignment dated October 27, 2025 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds in Book 72741, Page 349; for breach of the conditions in said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at **Public Auction** on March 26, 2026 at 01:00 PM Local Time upon the premises, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

A certain parcel of land and buildings situated in Spencer, Worcester County, Massachusetts, being shown as "Lot 43" on a plan of land entitled "Plan of Land of Assessor's Map U04, Lots 41 & 43 Owners: Carl A. & Constance Leinonen & George N. Gouin, 19 McDonald Street & 65 Maple Street, Town of Spencer, Worcester County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, dated September 21, 2021, Scale 1" = 40'. By Levesque Geomatics, Inc., 43 Glendale Road, Sturbridge, MA 01518 which plan is recorded with the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 961, Plan 104 and which plan reference can be made for more particular description. Said Lot contains 12,564 square feet of land +/- according to said plan. For title reference See Deed recorded herewith.

The description of the property contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication.

For Mortgagor's Title see deed dated June 30, 2023 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 69339, Page 130.

TERMS OF SALE: Said premises will be sold and conveyed subject to all liens, encumbrances, unpaid taxes, tax titles, municipal liens and assessments, if any, which take precedence over the said mortgage above described.

FIVE THOUSAND (\$5,000.00) Dollars of the purchase price must be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check at the time and place of the sale by the purchaser. The balance of the purchase price shall be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check within thirty (30) days after the date of sale. Other terms to be announced at the sale.

Brock & Scott, PLLC
23 Messenger Street
2nd Floor

Plainville, MA 02762
Attorney for Village Capital & Investment LLC
Present Holder of the Mortgage (401) 217-8701

February 20, 2026
February 27, 2026
March 6, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Worcester Probate and Family Court 225 Main Street Worcester, MA 01608 (508) 831-2200

Docket No. WO26P0427EA INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE

Estate Of:

David Bruce Woodward

Date of Death: 12/04/2025

To All persons interested in the above-captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner

Dana A Woodward of Groton MA Dana A Woodward of Groton MA has been informally appointed as Personal Representative of said estate to serve without surety on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.

March 6, 2026

PARKING

continued from page A1

tree's sentimental and historical significance, if it is removed the town should

utilize the wood to incorporate a tribute on the property.

The town of Brookfield voted to purchase the Library Annex in 2021 after

years of leasing the space. It currently serves as storage and display areas for historical materials and meeting space for several community groups.

FIRE

continued from page A1

injured. Six occupants were also treated for conditions related to the blaze and unfortunately several pets were confirmed to be deceased.

Spencer Fire & Emergency Services confirmed that by the time their crews were dispatched a large plume of smoke could be seen from the station. Firefighters immediately began tackling the flames with a deck gun. A second alarm brought in crews from Paxton, Leicester, East Brookfield, Brookfield and Southbridge on scene while Charlton and North

Brookfield covered the Spencer station territory.

The report from Spencer confirmed that six residents of the home suffered various injuries although it was not specified the extent of those injuries or the condition of the patients. A firefighter from an unspecified department was also injured. Spencer EMS, East Brookfield Fire EMS, Leicester EMS and Paxton Fire were responsible for transporting the patients from the scene. Department officials also thanked Spencer Emergency Management and Rehab 7 and 8 for their assistance and Spencer and State Police for handling traffic.

Fire officials confirmed that Spencer was able to begin a productive attack on the fire thanks to extra personnel on hand due to the blizzard. Normally only two individuals would have been at the department at that time. The department noted this as an example of the importance of having adequate staff to handle such emergencies.

The fire is currently under investigation by the Fire District 7 Fire Investigation Unit and the State Police Fire Investigation Unit. A suspected cause or source of the fire had yet to be officially presented by fire officials at the time of writing.

OBITUARIES

Harold L. Cortis, Jr., 89



Harold L. Cortis, Jr., 89, passed away peacefully at his home in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, on January 31, 2026, surrounded by family.

Born on November 12, 1936, in Webster, Massachusetts, Harold was the son of Harold L. Sr. and Doris (Briggs) Cortis. He attended Oxford High School and graduated from Worcester Boys Trade High School. A skilled craftsman, Harold owned and operated Cortis Construction for many years, building and remodeling homes throughout Worcester County.

Harold is survived by his devoted wife, Josephine (Przypek) Cortis; his daughter Suzanne (Cortis) Diaz of Orlando, Florida; and his step-sons Thomas Robbins and his wife Lisa of North Brookfield, and Timothy Robbins and his wife Sharon of East Brookfield. He also leaves behind seven grandchildren, numerous nieces and nephews, and many friends.

He is also remembered by his sister Betty Caplette and sister-in-law Diane Cortis. A dear friend and former employee, Brian Blanchette, held a special place in Harold's life.

Harold was predeceased by his daughter Barbara (Cortis) Knight and his brother Lawrence "Larry" Cortis.

In his earlier years, Harold was a drummer in the Oxford Junior Fife & Drum Corps and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout as a Boy Scout. He had a passion for working with his hands—woodworking, gardening, and outdoor projects brought him joy. He also enjoyed showing his custom-made 1957 Chevy in auto competitions.

Harold and Josephine shared a love of travel, exploring destinations such as the Caribbean, Alaska, Bermuda, and Hawaii over the years.

A private graveside ceremony will be held at a later date.

He will be deeply missed by those who knew and loved him.

Emmanuel A. Therrien, Jr., 83

West Brookfield - Emmanuel A. Therrien, 83, passed away peacefully at his home on January 26, 2026. Better known as "JR" to his friends and family, he was a life-long resident of West Brookfield. He was the youngest of 6 children. He leaves 3 sisters, Elaine Perry, Mary Ellen St. George, and G. Theresa Shea. He was predeceased by one sister, Katherine Mundell, and one brother, John Therrien. He also leaves several nieces and nephews. JR was an army veteran who worked his whole

life in local industry. He was an avid reader and enjoyed walking in the Quabbin Reservoir with family and friends. He was a member of the Swift River Historical Society. There will be a burial in the spring in Pine Grove Cemetery in West Brookfield on a date yet to be determined.

Memorial Donations for Emmanuel may be made to the Swift River Historical Society, PO Box 22, New Salem MA. or online at swiftrivermuseum.org

Upcoming activities at the North Brookfield Senior Center

29 Forest St.
(508) 867-0220

March 24 at 1:15 p.m.
Planning Seminar by Varnum-Chabonneau Funeral Home, March 31, 11 a.m.

Free Art Classes: March 5 and 19 at 11 a.m.

Free Drawing Classes: March 12 and 26 at 11 a.m.

Music Bingo: March 16 at 10 a.m.

MassEDP Presentation: March 17 at 11 a.m.

St. Patrick's Day Lunch by Tri Valley (sign up required): March 17 at noon

Ed Spater Medicare Specialist Drop-In Hours: March 24, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Bemis Nursery Workshop (sign up required): March 23 at 1 p.m.

Hip Hop Square Dance Sponsored by the North Brookfield Cultural Council:

Brookfield Council on Aging presents informational program on Tri-Valley Inc. services

BROOKFIELD — Area residents are invited to attend an in-person presentation with Tri-Valley, Inc. on Tuesday, March 10 at 10 a.m. at the Brookfield Council on Aging (located at the Brookfield Congregational Church).

This informational session will provide an overview of Tri-Valley's programs and services available to older adults, caregivers, veterans, and individuals with disabilities, including nutrition services, caregiver support, health insurance assistance, and more.

Attendees can expect a brief presentation, discussion, and free giveaways. All are welcome, and questions are encouraged.

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news

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Cornerstone Bank donates \$5,000 to support Youth Financial Education Expo

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank announced a donation of \$5,000 to support the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Youth Financial Education Expo, a one day intensive program for youth in foster care focused on building essential financial skills.

Cornerstone Bank will serve as a Platinum Sponsor for the event, which will be held at the Marriott in Marlborough and is expected to welcome up to 100 youth participants. The donation will help cover the cost of food throughout the day and a one hour after party, as well as raffle prizes that encourage full participation in the program.

"This expo gives young people practical tools and confidence around managing money, which can have a lasting impact well beyond the event itself,"

said Todd Tallman, CEO of Cornerstone Bank. "We are proud to support an initiative that helps foster youth take meaningful steps toward financial independence."

The expo will feature hands on instruction and individualized support as participants learn to use financial apps and set up accounts. Don Mancini will serve as the primary presenter, building on his previous work delivering financial education programs to youth in foster care.

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, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, 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.

From laundry room to RN

BAY PATH ALUMNA REACHES NEW HEIGHTS IN NURSING CAREER

BRIMFIELD — In the world of healthcare, there are those who study the field, and then there are those who live it from the ground up. Carleen Berthiaume, RN, a 2019 graduate of the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, has officially reached a major milestone in her decade-long climb, successfully passing the NCLEX-RN (take one!) and obtaining her Registered Nurse license this February 2026.

For Berthiaume, the path to "RN" was paved with grit, determination, and a deep-seated commitment to service. Her journey began nearly 18 years ago in 2008, when she first entered the healthcare environment not in a clinical role, but in housekeeping and laundry.

A legacy of excellence at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy

Long before her transition to Registered Nurse, Berthiaume established herself as a standout leader within the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Class of 2019. Her time at the Academy was defined by a relentless drive for both academic and clinical mastery.

During her tenure at Bay Path, Berthiaume was:

- A decorated scholar: Inducted into the National Technical Honor Society and selected as a recipient of the prestigious Horatio Alger Scholarship.

- A competitive champion: She proved her clinical mettle under pressure, earning Silver Medals as both a District and State Champion in the SkillsUSA First Aid/CPR competitions.

- A specialized practitioner: Even as a student, she sought advanced training, earning certifications in Infusion Therapy/Central Line Care, Mental Health First Aid, and participating in SafeTALK suicide alertness training.

Her commitment to the "holistic nurse" model was



evidenced by her nomination for the Clinical Excellence Award and her receipt of the Community Service Award.

A heart for the community
Berthiaume's impact at Bay Path extended far beyond the classroom. As an officer of the UNICEF Club, she championed global causes, but her local volunteerism was equally staggering. From the Charlton Senior Center BP Clinic to the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Berthiaume was a constant presence at community health events. Her volunteer portfolio included the Paxton Health Fair, FAFSA Day, Safety Fairs, and multiple educational fairs for Mass EdCo and Bay Path RVTHS.

The long climb

Berthiaume's career is a masterclass in professional evolution. After working as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) starting in 2012, she sought to deepen her clinical knowledge by enrolling in Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy. Following her graduation in 2019, she began her career as an LPN at Quaboag Rehabilitation just as the global COVID-19 pandemic began—a "trial by fire" that solidified her resilience.

In 2022, she transitioned to the medical-surgical floor at UMass Memorial Harrington Hospital. There, she became a trained preceptor and resource/charge nurse, specializing in

advanced skills like ultrasound-guided IV insertion.

Determined to learn
In December 2025, Berthiaume completed the accelerated LPN-to-RN Bridge program at Quinsigamond Community College.

"It's been a long climb to be where I am, and I've learned so much along the way," Berthiaume reflected. Quoting Zig Ziglar, she added, "If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you." I'm determined."

A humbling mission
With her new RN credentials, Berthiaume has accepted a high-stakes Float Pool position at Harrington, cross-training in the Emergency Room and the ICU. Despite her advanced skills, she remains grounded in the philosophy of service.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others," she said, quoting Gandhi. "It's a humbling field that I'm proud to be a part of."

Berthiaume is already looking toward the next horizon, with plans to enter a BSN program within the year. For the faculty, staff, and alumni at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, her story is a powerful reminder that with a foundation in practical nursing and a heart for service, there is no limit to how high a nurse can climb.

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Leicester Public Health Coalition hosting opioid listening session

LEICESTER — Are you affected by opioids? The Leicester Regional Public Health Coalition invites you to an Opioid Listening Session March 10 from 4-6 p.m. at the Town Hall gym.

Your voice matters! Help guide how opioid settlement funds are used in our communities. Opioid abatement funds are settlement dollars provided to Massachusetts communities to support prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction efforts related to the opioid crisis. Come share your ideas and help us explore prevention strategies and programs to address the opioid crisis.

This event is open to everyone — youth, adults, families & friends, loved ones, and those with lived experience. For more information, please call (508) 892-7008.

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Local Emmanuel College students make Dean's List

BOSTON — In recognition of their outstanding academic achievement, Emmanuel College has named more than 950 students to the Dean's List for the Fall 2025 semester. The following local students were named to the Dean's List:

- Kathy Cai, of Leicester. Cai is majoring in Biology.
- Abby Doku, of Leicester. Doku is majoring in Criminology & Criminal Justice.
- Megan Bokis, of North Brookfield. Bokis is majoring in Nursing.

To earn a spot on the Dean's List, Emmanuel students must achieve a grade point average of 3.5 or higher for a 16-credit semester.

With more than 80 majors and areas of study, Emmanuel College combines outstanding classroom instruction and real-world experience to prepare students for lives of professional achievement, lifelong learning, and purpose. Voted the #1 college location in America in 2025 by Niche.com, Emmanuel offers ready access to world class medical, cultural, and business organizations in the Heart of Boston, all with a tight-knit 17-acre campus and 13:1 student-to-faculty ratio. Learn more at Emmanuel.edu.

Local students Named to Holy Cross' Fall Dean's List

WORCESTER — College of the Holy Cross congratulates the students named to the Fall 2025 Dean's List for outstanding academic achievement during the spring semester of the 2025-26 academic year. The following local students made the list:

- Tatiana Coolbaugh of Spencer
- Jenna Dupell of North Brookfield
- Timothy St. John of Leicester

To qualify for the Dean's List, students must pass four or more letter-graded courses with no failing grades during the semester and earn a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

About Holy Cross

The College of the Holy Cross, in Worcester, is among the nation's leading liberal arts institutions. A highly selective, four-year, exclusively undergraduate college of 3,200 students, Holy Cross is renowned for offering a rigorous, personalized education in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. Since its founding in 1843, Holy Cross has made a positive impact in society by graduating students who distinguish themselves as thoughtful leaders in business, professional and civic life.

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* June Cazeault * Laurie Sullivan * Lori Johnson-Chausse * William Gilmore II * Maureen Cimoch * Bryan Pelletier

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LIBRARY
continued from page A1

furniture were made possible through grant funding secured by Assistant Superintendent Rich Lind, demonstrating the district's commitment to investing in high-quality vocational education.

The program strengthened connections with the district's elementary school, creating additional opportunities for students to observe classrooms, support special activities, and gain exposure to authentic early learning environments during select times throughout the year.

As teacher Nina Ryan explains, the library partnership added significant value.

"While the students in the EEC program visit the Leicester Elementary School and preschool, the lessons and observations are different," Ryan said. "Seeing the differences used in the libraries of a multitude of curricula in a hands-on way is paramount in the program and enhances what they see at the Elementary school."

By engaging with a variety of curricula, instructional materials, and classroom management styles, students gain practical insight into lesson planning, developmental expectations, and the progression of academic skills from preschool through high school.

During goal-setting sessions, Mr. May, Ms. Ryan, and Ms. Bongovio recognized that students could benefit from the opportunities offered at local libraries, where they could apply what they were learning by working with children and, in turn, fully develop their skills and confidence. That conversation led to an innovative solution: partnering with the Auburn Public



During our visit to the Auburn Library EEC student, Estefania Agguire is working with a community child in a sensory bin. The letter for the day was "C." The bin was filled with gold coins and the children were instructed to search for hidden letters of the alphabet.

Library and the Leicester Public Library.

Under the leadership of Auburn Library Director Michael Zeller and Youth Services Librarian Andrea Colibrì, Auburn Public Library has welcomed Leicester High School EEC students into its youth programming spaces. The library provides a natural setting for students to engage with young children and families through story times, literacy activities, and interactive learning experiences.

"I am very excited to work with LHC high school students, particularly students interested in youth-focused careers and education. I feel very strongly that high school students should have opportunities to gain hands-on experience for professions they might be interested in pursuing. The Alphabits program I designed is a perfect opportunity for these high school students to observe and assist with because it is very

similar to an early literacy lesson you might find in a preschool or kindergarten classroom," said Colibrì.

"It's been our absolute pleasure to host the students from LHS at a number of our child-focused programs," said Michael Zeller, Director of the Auburn Public Library. "The Auburn Public Library is dedicated to social engagement and lifelong learning, so it's been really wonderful to provide these students the chance to gain experiences and develop skills that will help them better engage with their future careers and the world. As a librarian, I'm always excited whenever I'm able to help someone learn and grow. It's really what the job is all about."

At the Leicester Public Library, Children's Librarian Kaeleigh Hart has also seen the positive impact of the collaboration firsthand.

"Having the EEC students in Storytime at the

library has been a wonderful addition. Seeing them gain confidence in reading and interacting with the children is exactly what we had in mind in collaborating with the school!" she said.

For the high school students, the experience bridg-

es the gap between theory and practice. They are able to implement lesson plans, practice classroom management techniques, and observe child development in action—all under the guidance of their instructors and library professionals.

"Creating opportunities for my students to engage in real-world early childhood settings helped them see the impact of teaching and interactions firsthand. Through partnerships with Leicester and Auburn public libraries, they are able to observe and participate in playgroups that help develop both professional skills and a deeper understanding of child development," said Bongovio.

For the library and community, the partnership expands youth programming while strengthening connections between local schools and public resources. Families benefit from engaging activities, and children gain exposure to enthusiastic future educators.

"This partnership reflects what vocational education is all about," said May. "Our students are learning

not just in the classroom, but from authentic experiences that prepare them for careers in early childhood education."

The collaboration also highlights the power of community partnerships in public education. By bringing together school leadership, district administration, teachers, elementary school partners, and local library staff, the program demonstrates how shared goals can lead to innovative solutions.

As the year continues, both Leicester High School and Auburn Public Library hope to expand opportunities for EEC students to deepen their hands-on experience.

"What began as a conversation about goals has grown into a partnership that benefits students, families, and the broader community alike," said May.

Through creativity, collaboration, and commitment, Leicester High School's Early Education and Care program is helping shape the next generation of educators—one story time at a time.

Leicester Garden Club meets Wednesday

LEICESTER — Last year, the Leicester Garden Club celebrated 20 years in existence with a banquet at the Pine Ridge Country Club. We had Al Deluca as our guest speaker, and he demonstrated arrangements that our members could make.

As we begin a new season, on Wednesday, March 11 at 7 p.m. at the Leicester Senior Center, we will have Christie Higginbottom, guest speaker and member, present our first event. Her presentation will feature how to plan a productive kitchen garden. She will share practical tips on garden design, companion planting, succession sowing and crop rotation. It applies to growing in raised beds and traditional rows. You should leave with a plan to maximize harvest and keep your garden producing all season.

We always accept new members. We begin our season in March, and meet the second Wednesday of the month until November. Most of the meetings are held at the Leicester Senior Center. Once a year, we usually take a trip to a nursery or a garden. We have a great plant sale in June for the public, which is our fundraiser. With proceeds from the fundraiser, we give back to the town with different projects. We always end our meetings with refreshments and time to socialize. Our club would love to welcome you.

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