

SPENCER NEW LEADER

Free by request to residents of East Brookfield, West Brookfield, North Brookfield, Brookfield, Leicester and Spencer

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North Brookfield launches Opioid Task Force

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

NORTH BROOKFIELD — North Brookfield is launching an Opioid Task Force to guide the use of money obtained through the national opioid litigation settlement.

The town’s Board of Selectmen discussed the formation of the Task Force on Oct. 6 where Chair Jamie Gilman noted that several stakeholders in town were invited to the table to launch the group. The Task Force will help determine how to best use the settlement money which is under the charge of the town’s Board of Health.

Gilman said a recent meeting of these stakeholders resulted in positive traction for how North Brookfield plans to proceed.

“We had a good discussion. I learned a lot about opioid addiction and what it means to North Brookfield,” Gilman told his fellow selectmen. “The discussion was to kind of kick off how we put together the town’s recommendations for how to spend that money, staying within the seven strategies.”

The seven strategies are guidance points for how the money should be used to best tackle opioid abuse in their community.

In addition to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Health, local EMS, the school district, the library, and others are involved in the task force, each with their own ideas of how to utilize the funds but all targeting the same goal of providing resources to help reduce opioid abuse. Gilman said he was impressed by the involvement of some of these stakeholders, especially the library.

There is also an intertown agreement that Gilman said looks to tackle opioid abuse on a larger scale.

“There is an agreement amongst the eight communities within our region that we would be contributing to a study that would help fill in that data landscape so that it somewhat identifies what the situation is, what the needs may be, and some suggestions based off that,” Gilman said.

He admitted that he was skeptical about this study at first, but after gaining a new understanding of opioid abuse from his meeting with the Task Force, he felt it was a good idea for the town and the region.

The Opioid Task Force has only just begun its work, but its members are eager to get things off the ground. With both local and regional goals in mind, only time will tell what priorities and programs will arise from this new effort to tackle the large-scale struggle that is opioid abuse prevention.



LEICESTER — Leicester Elementary School recently welcomed students and their families for Curriculum, Community, and Connection Night, an evening filled with learning, laughter, and community spirit!

Students and their families embarked on a treasure hunt throughout the school, making connections with

Curriculum, Community, and Connection Night held at Leicester Elementary School



Spencer Fire and EMS seek union recognition

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

SPENCER — Members of the Spencer Fire Department are seeking official recognition as a union citing their growing staff and hazards of the job in their discussion with the Board of Selectmen on Oct. 13.

The request is not rooted in any controversy, but rather an attempt by employees to join under one voice to represent them when negotiating with the town. Firefighter Brandon Muller represented the fire and EMS staff while Rob Green, a District Field Service Representative for the International Association of Fire Fighters, served as a complimenting voice for the cause.

Muller said all members of the EMS and eight of nine members of the fire department have signed cards expressing their desire to unionize. Their request is for voluntary recognition from the Board of Selectmen which would

Sheriff’s Office delivers fresh produce to local communities



WCSC Community Staff deliver fresh organic produce to the East



Brookfield Senior Center. WCSC Community Staff deliver fresh organic produce to the West Brookfield Senior Center.

RECIPIENTS INCLUDE WEST BROOKFIELD AND EAST BROOKFIELD SENIOR CENTERS

REGION — Thousands of pounds of fresh, organic produce grown at the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office have been distributed to food pantries, senior centers, community refrigerators, and other charitable organizations throughout Worcester County this growing season.

Amongst dozens of other stops throughout Worcester County, the WCSC Community Outreach teams visited many senior centers, including the West Brookfield, East Brookfield, and Sturbridge Senior Centers.

“Every delivery represents fresh produce going directly to an organization serving people in Worcester County,” said Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. “At the

Spencer Exchange Club to present 18 Under 18 Youth Leadership awards

SPENCER — For the sixth consecutive year, the Exchange Club of Spencer will in November announce the recipients of their 18 Under 18 awards to those under the age of 18 who reside in the towns Spencer or East Brookfield. The Exchange Club membership has annually been made aware of young men and women whose impact on their communities may have gone unnoticed. They are not necessarily the highest academic achievers, star athlete or the most popular among their peers. They are those unassuming young adults who demonstrate attributes of leadership,

passion, a caring and supportive nature, selflessness and citizenship. They are making a difference to others and their communities.

The Exchange Club has acknowledged and awarded nearly 100 young adults with the 18 Under 18 award over the past five years who were nominated by their teachers, employers, school counselors or others who felt they made a difference in their communities. Award recipients were recognized with citations and presented with monetary awards. This year’s award ceremony will be held during a Worcester Railers

game at the DCU Center in Worcester on Sunday, Nov. 22.

The Exchange Club membership is purposefully invested in the present and future of the Spencer and East Brookfield communities. They wish to highlight t h e

innate talents that our youth exhibit unselfishly every day in what sometimes seems like the simplest of actions of caring and the ability to relate to others. They believe that curiosity, analytical thinking, dependability and a strong

work ethic make the greatest difference where we all live, work and play. The club’s vision of the future is that these young men and women will carry on the Exchange’s mission of “Unity for Service.” Application and nomina-

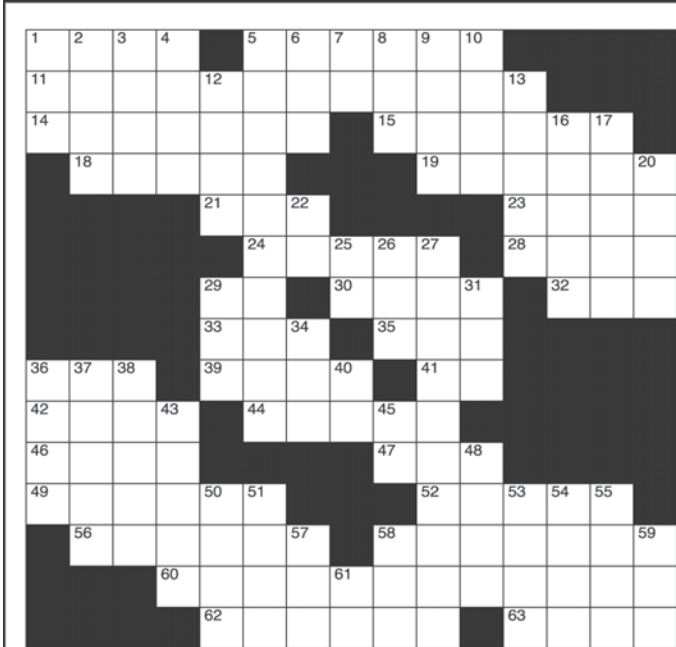
tion forms may be accessed on the Facebook pages of the Spencer Exchange Club, Spencer Bulletin Board or atwww.spencerexchange-club.org. Sponsorship forms may also be accessed at those locations.

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CLUES ACROSS

1. El Dorado High School

5. A sculpture representing a human or animal

11. A type of return

14. Tie the knot again

15. Washington city

18. Hairlike structures

19. Mark used over a vowel

21. Explosive

23. Popular 500 car race

24. Pile up

28. Currency

29. Commercial

30. A minute amount (Scottish)

32. Mass of fish eggs

33. Baseball stat
35. Licensed accountant

36. Japanese classical theater

39. Gasteyer and de Armas are two

41. Blood group

42. Assist in wrongdoing

44. Language of Cameroon

46. Grayish-white

47. A woolen cap of Scottish origin

49. Microorganism

52. Strong social customs

56. Calm and dependable

58. Congressman

60. Force

62. As a result of this document

63. A main branch of Islam

CLUES DOWN

1. Make a mistake

2. American DJ Rick

3. Fictional Asimov planet

4. Coughed out

5. Singing to one's lover

6. Scotland's longest river

7. One of the six noble gases

8. Body art

9. Two-toed sloth

10. Electronic counter-countermeasures

12. A foolish person

13. Of the wind

16. Mansion

17. Sound

20. English river

22. Business symbol

25. Exclamation of surprise

26. Pouch

27. Individually
29. Satisfaction

31. The bill in a restaurant

34. Japanese delicacy

36. Port in southern Japan

37. Double-reed instruments

38. Center

40. "The Mount Rushmore State"

43. Soldier

45. Indicates position

48. Beauty treatment: ___-pedi

50. Nonsense (slang)

51. Republic of Ireland

53. Ballplayers' tools

54. American state

55. Clusters of a fern frond

57. Patriotic women's group

58. A person's brother or sister

59. Breed of sheep

61. Of I

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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North Brookfield Senior Center to host second annual Night of Entertainment Nov. 7

NORTH BROOKFIELD — The Friends of the North Brookfield Council on Aging will present their second annual Night of Entertainment on Saturday, Nov. 7, offering an evening of comedy, magic and musical nostalgia at the North Brookfield Senior Center. The event will run from 6 to 8:30 p.m., and feature performances by comedian and magician Phil Volonino and Elvis Presley tribute artist Robert Black.

Volonino will entertain guests with a combination of comedy and magic, while Black will bring the music and showmanship of the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll to the stage with his tribute to Elvis Presley. The evening is designed to bring community members together for a night of entertainment and socializing while supporting the Friends of the North Brookfield Council on Aging. Light refreshments will be served during the event. Tickets are \$10 per person and may be purchased at the North Brookfield Senior Center. Space is limited, and those interested in attending are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance. Now in its second year, the Night of Entertainment provides another opportunity for residents to gather at the Senior Center and enjoy live performances in a welcoming community setting. The event is presented by the Friends of the North Brookfield Council on Aging, an organization dedicated to supporting the local senior community. For tickets or additional information, residents may visit the North Brookfield Senior Center.

Brookfield groups present new films on New England Indigenous cultures

BROOKFIELD — The Friends of the Merrick Public Library and The Friends of Brookfield will present “New England’s Hidden Landscapes: Acknowledging and Incorporating Our Indigenous Cultures” on Saturday, Nov. 14 from 1 to 3 p.m. in the sanctuary of the Brookfield Congregational Church, 8 Common St., Brookfield. The program is free and open to the public. It is the latest in the Robert Wilder Memorial Presentation series, begun in 2023.

The program features two new films by T.W. (Ted) Timreck, a Peabody Award-winning documentary filmmaker known for his biographies of Thomas Eakins, the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Frederick Law Olmsted (designer of New York’s Central Park), and the composer Charles Ives, among many others, including a series of contemporary interviews for the Kennedy Center. Timreck’s films have been featured on PBS and other networks around the globe. In addition to his work in biographical films, Timreck is known for his anthropological documentaries on prehistoric civilizations in North America, including the widely viewed “The Mystery of the Lost Red Paint People,” a special on the Viking explorations to North America produced for NOVA, and the current series “Hidden

Landscapes.” Timreck has been affiliated with the Smithsonian for more than four decades and is a Research Associate of its Arctic Studies Center.

The first film, the hour-long “Acton,” premieres in Acton, Massachusetts, on Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2026, sponsored there by the Friends of Pine Hawk. The film continues Timreck’s “Hidden Landscapes” series and highlights new developments in the discovery of Native American ceremonial landscapes in the Northeast. Collaborating with archaeologists and tribal representatives, Timreck presents multiple lines of evidence for early migrations; stone prayers, structures and markers; and astronomical and cultural sophistication, suggesting that New England’s Indigenous cultures are far older and more complex than popularly believed. Rather than offering definitive conclusions, the film points to promising directions for further investigation.

In the second film, the 20-minute “Crossroads New Lebanon,” Timreck, recently appointed Town Historian of New Lebanon, N.Y., proposes a vision for the town’s economic future built on its heritage of Indigenous knowledge and culture.

This memorial series honors the work and memory of Robert (Bob) Wilder (1933–2015), a Brookfield resident, author, historian, cartographer, Old Sturbridge Village interpreter, U.S. Marine Corps veteran and, for twenty-five years, an aerospace engineer. “Bob Wilder’s dedication to studying and teaching history inspired many of us to continue his work. He worried history would be forgotten,” said Dan Hamilton, actor and Emmy-winning director, who helps present the series. “We hope these presentations will remind us of Brookfield’s place in early America, and of its significance as home to Native people who have lived here for thousands of years. I think the Town of Brookfield, which is also facing questions of how best to honor its own Indigenous sites and cultures, could profit from the examples shown in these films.”

SPENCER ALMANAC

REAL ESTATE

BROOKFIELD

\$275,000, 11 Lincoln St, The Roman Catholic Bishop, to Emmanuel Orthodox Church.

EAST BROOKFIELD

\$315,000, 183 W Sturbridge Rd, Londergan Stephen E Est, and Racine, Melissa, to Guinard, Felicia.

LEICESTER

\$542,500, 310 River St, Filliau, Cheryl L, and Pineo, Lisa M, to Cyr, Melinda. \$535,000, 10 Wesley Dr, Morton, Jason, and Morton, Jennifer, to Winkler, Cynthia, and Feltman, Christopher L. \$325,000, 30 Second St, Firmin, Anthony, to Qualey, Ryan. \$240,000, 31 Winslow Ave, Batstone Ft, and Batstone, Geoffrey J, to Envision Realtyllc.

NORTH BROOKFIELD

\$365,000, 130 Summer St, Lajoie Jr, Richard, and Lajoie, Alexandra, to Loftus, William, and Papp, Katherine. \$219,900, 21 Guyot St, Bho Realty LLC, to Schlegel, Wayne. \$120,000, 9-B Bell Rd, Cote, Robert, to Richard, Kathleen.

SPENCER

\$675,000, 30 Roys Dr, Floss Ft, and Floss, Peter, to Prokop, Jan, and Prokop, Lorena. \$425,000, 16 Smithville Rd, Driven Realty LLC, to Laracuenta, Luis Toro, and Fulgenclo, Jose Toro. \$350,000, 9 Wood Ln, Mcneil, Jo Anne, and Costgliola, Thomas J, to Mckenzie, Jennifer Lynn.

WARREN

\$987,000, 1139 Southbridge Rd, Giguere Martha E Est, and Giguere, Monique T, to Giguere Leandre W Est, and Giguere, Monique T. \$565,000, 845 Town Farm Rd, The Assistant Presidentst, to Schumcher, Margot C. \$565,000, 845 Town Farm Rd, The Assistant Presidentos, to Schumacher, Margot C. \$450,000, 2301 Southbridge St, Vaill, Milton, to Wall, James F. \$410,000, 59 High St, Then, Juan Ramon, to Piecheota, Caroline, and Piecheota, Francis Stephe. \$365,000, 23 Southbridge Rd, Laska Phillomena J Est, and Plankey, Nancy, to A J Realty Group LLC. \$55,000, 22 South Rd, Plankey, Nancy, to A J Realty Group LLC. WEST BROOKFIELD \$560,000, 5 White Birch Rd, Pagan, Irisram, to Firmin, Cindy. \$115,000, 9 Kimball Ct, Poole, William S, to Blais, Sally C.

SPENCER NEW LEADER

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Spencer announces early voting, state election and Special Town Meeting dates

SPENCER — Spencer residents will have several important civic dates to keep in mind this fall, with in-person early voting beginning in October, the state election scheduled for Nov. 3 and a Special Town Meeting following two days later.

The Town of Spencer has announced that in-person early voting for the 2026 state election will begin Saturday, Oct. 17, and continue through Thursday, Oct. 29.

Early voting will take place at Spencer Town Hall, 157 Main St. The hours will vary during the early voting period, and residents are encouraged to consult the town's website for the complete schedule before heading to Town Hall.

The early voting period gives registered

voters an opportunity to cast their ballots before Election Day rather than visiting the polls Nov. 3.

Election Day itself is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 3. Spencer voters will cast ballots in the Great Hall at Town Hall, with polls scheduled to be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Town officials are encouraging eligible residents to participate in the election.

The November election will be followed closely by another important date on Spencer's municipal calendar.

The town will hold a Special Town Meeting on Thursday, Nov. 5, beginning at 7 p.m. Town Meeting provides registered voters with the opportunity to consider and

vote on municipal matters placed on the meeting warrant.

Additional information about the Special Town Meeting, including the warrant and matters scheduled for consideration, is expected to be available through the town as the meeting approaches.

The Town Clerk's Office oversees election and voter records in Spencer. Town Clerk Sandra Fritze's office is located at Town Hall and can be reached at 508-885-7500, ext. 150. Regular Town Clerk's Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and 7:30 a.m. to noon Thursday.

Residents seeking the latest election information, including the complete sched-

ule of early voting hours, should check the town's website as the dates approach.

Richard Sugden Library offers support group for widows

SPENCER — The Richard Sugden Library invites widows to an informal conversational group.

"Every ending has a beginning." "He's in a better place." We've heard it all. But, we have experienced a loss that was unique, equal to no other. We've also experienced love like no other. The Widows Group (WG) intends to build a community of love, support, patience, and understanding.

Please join us Wednesdays (the first and third of each month) beginning Sept. 2 from 1 - 2 p.m. Lifting hearts, one-at-a-time. September get-togethers will be Sept. 2 and 16 at the Richard Sugden Library, Spencer.

A Haunted Story Swap will be held at the Richard Sugden Library on Sept. 10 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Share your eerie experience. We're gathering a record

of otherworldly experiences that have occurred in Spencer and want to hear from you! Our main goal is to collect cemetery-based accounts, but other stories will also be noted afterwards. Please join us for this exchange of tales of trepidation and haunted happenings! Sponsor: Spencer Historical Commission and hosted by Prof. Garret D. Langlois, Ph.D.

Grow Happiness with Wendy O'Leary at the Richard Sugden Library, Spencer. Adult Happiness Club kicks off Sept. 17 from 1-2 p.m. Monthly schedule: Oct. 29, Nov. 19, Dec. 17, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 18, April 15, May 13, and June 17. The in-person group will have an optional activity following the session from 2-2:30 p.m. Sign up with Wendy O'Leary at wleary25@gmail.com. Sponsor: Friends of the Library.

Traditional Folk Music in the 21st

Century will be held at the Richard Sugden Library on Thursday, Sept. 17 from 6 - 7 p.m. Music is an essential part of connection. Derek Piotr, folklorist, performer, and composer shares his Fieldwork Archive, featuring more than 2,000 recordings of "non-singers" poems, hymns & songs. Sponsor: Friends of the Library.

Sound Healing experience at the Richard Sugden Library, Spencer. Immerse yourself in therapeutic sounds that calm the mind, heal the body, and uplift the spirit. Adults are invited to join us as Allison, from Friendly Ass Farm, leads this time of relaxation. Join us on Sept. 23 from 6-7 p.m. Tune into wellness. Vibrate with Harmony. Sponsor: Friends of the Library.

P.E.T. of the Week
Sponsored by Leicester Veterinary Clinic, LLC
MEET GINGERBREAD!
This sweet older guy came to us when his previous owner could no longer care for him. He is a friendly boy, and a staff favorite! He has gotten along with other respectful cats and dogs in the past, so may be ok living with one again. Shortly after he came into our care he was diagnosed with diabetes. Fortunately, he is currently in remission which means he does not currently need insulin injections but he does need to stay on a consistent diet. He was also diagnosed with a heart murmur that will need to be monitored every 6 months by a vet. Gingerbread is currently in a foster home, but if you would like to meet him give us a call at 508-867-5525 to schedule an appointment.

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Dr. Colm P. Scanlon
Veterinarian

Take your puzzle game to the next level at Leicester Public Library

LEICESTER — Calling all jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts -- take your puzzle game to the next level. Grab a few friends or family members and see if you can complete a jigsaw puzzle faster than your friends and neighbors. Each team will receive the same 500-piece puzzle provided by the library.

The team that finishes first or completes the most before time is called wins! If you don't have a team, email the library at library@leicesterlibrary.org and ask if there is room on the library team. Adults, teens, and families with children aged 8+ are welcome to participate. Registration is required- only one person from each team should register. Teams can have up to four members. Register through the calendar at www.leicesterlibrary.org.

Upcoming Puzzle Races are Thursday evenings, Oct. 22, Nov. 12 and Dec. 10 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at the Leicester Public Library, 1136 Main St.

Town of Spencer is seeking private snow plowers for the 2026-2027 Winter Season.

If interested, please contact the Office of Utilities and Facilities, 3 Old Meadow Road, Spencer, MA Monday-Thursday 8:00am – 5:00pm, call 508-885-7515

or on the Town website www.spencerma.gov

Applications should be submitted as soon as possible. The Town of Spencer is an equal opportunity employer.

HYDRANT FLUSHING TOWN OF SPENCER

The Town of Spencer Water Department will be flushing fire hydrants throughout the eastern part of the distribution system starting October 13th thru October 30th 2026. Flushing removes sediment from the water mains to help maintain water quality. When the Water Department staff is in the immediate area, residents could experience loss of pressure and short periods of rusty water. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause. A daily list of the flushing locations will be posted on the Spencer town website www.spencerma.gov each day by 8:00AM (click on Departments, then click Water Department, then click Hydrant Flushing 2026). If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact the Spencer Water Department office at 508-885-7525. Thank you.

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Friday's Child

Joshua
Age 14
Registration #8744

Joshua, who likes to be called Josh, is a friendly, active, outgoing, and talkative young boy with a great sense of humor. He loves to tell stories, make others laugh, and connect with the people around him. Josh is also very helpful and enjoys being given jobs or responsibilities because he likes knowing that he can contribute and be helpful to others. He is thoughtful toward others and even makes a point of waving goodbye to each of his teachers when he leaves school each day. Josh enjoys encouragement and does well when he is given opportunities to participate and be involved. He forms bonds quickly and enjoys spending time with others. Josh is an active kid who loves playing video games, jumping on his trampoline, and swimming. He also enjoys playing sports, especially soccer and basketball. Josh has participated in a soccer league and is currently signed up to play on a basketball team. Josh has a fun-loving personality and enjoys keeping those around him smiling and laughing. He has plans for his future and dreams of becoming a police officer someday.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21191377413>

Can I Adopt?
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
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EDITORIAL

A community response to a crisis that touches every town

The opioid epidemic has left its mark on communities across Massachusetts, and small towns have certainly not been spared. Behind the statistics are families struggling to help loved ones, emergency responders confronting the consequences of addiction, and individuals working to rebuild their lives. Addressing such a complicated problem requires more than funding. It requires cooperation, understanding and a willingness to recognize that addiction is a community concern.

That is why North Brookfield’s decision to establish an Opioid Task Force represents a meaningful step forward.

The town has received funding through the national opioid litigation settlement, money intended to help communities address the damage caused by the opioid crisis. While those funds cannot undo the suffering experienced by individuals and families, they offer an opportunity to invest in prevention, treatment, education and recovery.

The challenge now is determining how to put that money to work where it will make the greatest difference.

During the Oct. 6 Board of Selectmen meeting, Chairman Jamie Gilman described an encouraging initial discussion among representatives of several town organizations. The Board of Health, emergency medical services, school district, library and other stakeholders have been brought together to consider how the settlement money might best serve North Brookfield.

That broad participation is particularly important.

Opioid addiction does not exist in isolation, and neither should efforts to combat it. Schools may recognize opportunities for prevention and education. Emergency medical personnel understand the immediate dangers associated with overdoses. Public health officials can identify resources and approaches to treatment. Libraries, often overlooked in discussions about public health, serve as accessible community centers where residents can find information and connect with assistance.

Each perspective offers something valuable, and bringing those perspectives together increases the likelihood that the town will develop a thoughtful, effective strategy.

Equally encouraging is Gilman’s acknowledgment that his understanding of the problem evolved through conversations with those involved. He admitted that he initially questioned the value of a proposed regional study examining opioid-related needs across eight communities. After learning more about the challenges involved, however, he came to recognize the potential benefits.

That willingness to listen and reconsider is an important quality in public leadership.

Too often, discussions surrounding addiction become entangled in assumptions about personal responsibility, criminal behavior or the effectiveness of treatment programs. Those debates can distract from the practical question facing communities: What can be done to prevent addiction, reduce overdoses and help people find lasting recovery?

North Brookfield’s task force has an opportunity to approach that question with open minds and reliable information.

The proposed regional study could prove especially valuable. Smaller communities may lack the resources or data needed to identify patterns and service gaps on their own. By cooperating with neighboring towns, North Brookfield can gain a clearer picture of the challenges affecting the region and potentially identify solutions that would be difficult to implement independently.

Still, gathering information must eventually lead to action.

As the task force develops its recommendations, transparency and measurable goals should remain priorities. Residents deserve to understand how settlement dollars are allocated, what programs receive support and how the town intends to evaluate their effectiveness.

There should also be opportunities for people directly affected by addiction, including individuals in recovery and family members who have experienced its consequences, to contribute their perspectives. Their experiences can reveal needs that statistics alone might overlook.

Perhaps most importantly, the task force should help reinforce the understanding that seeking assistance for addiction is

Turn To EDITORIAL page A10

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Brilliant

To the Editor:

I just read a post from the fearless leader, claiming a 1,775 IQ. I think he missed the decimal point (17 and three quarters).

I really thought we would be done with this guy after watching his covid briefings, but he is really outdoing himself these days. He is asking those who elected him, to pretend he is on the ballot. It would be foolish to think he isn’t because those who have enabled him are. He just held a rally, where he had previously drawn 30,000, but got only 3,000. At some point, even his most ardent fans, buy gas, food , healthcare and utilities, so realize promises were broken. Of particular note, is his plan to put boots on the ground in Iran after the election. His real boy puppet Mikey, shut down congress, to avoid the impeachment vote on Kegs breath, know the votes are there for removal.

His promises of eliminating deficits, no never ending middle east wars, lower costs across the board and too much winning, have given way to mindless rants threats and announcing illegal acts in advance thinking that makes them legal. I would fear him having the nuclear codes after hearing suggest using them on weather systems. It is clear that he stays up all night posting foolish things, explaining why he

sleeps through his daytime tasks (except golf). He is now flying his Qatari palace to campaign stops, costing three times as much to fly as the former AF #1, and using taxpayer dollars for his WH information network, the information being campaign ads.

Millions for golf, billions for war, vanity projects only he wants, all while his family gifting increased the debt 66 percent, and his net worth 300 percent. Martha Stewart has to be scratching her head at stock purchases today, massive government contracts tomorrow. In addition, they have confirmed how quickly classified info gets to Putin. He is already assisting Iran targeting us, and I still have not heard the official announcement that all of our middle east bases were destroyed (more billion and deaths), and it is costing us bigly to appease the nations that had them. Pure logic explains why our NATO allies never consulted, have no interest in joining the target list.

I am told that Elon is purging the voter lists. I hope that as soon as a valid voter is erased, we lock him up. He has already said he got us Trump. If there is not a blue wave, there will be blood. Make America great again, vote blue.

KEN KIMBALL
BROOKFIELD

Question 10 in Leicester

To the Editor:

While there are nine state questions on the election ballot, there is a 10th question for residents of Leicester. Voters will decide whether or not to renovate the current Leicester High School also known as the former Becker College campus by debt exclusion. A debt exclusion is different from a tax override because it is temporary. In other words, once the borrowed money is paid back, the tax increase goes away.

The Leicester School Building Committee has been working on this project for the past several years. Terva Corporation is the project manager, Raymond Design Associates is the architect and Commodore Builders is the Construction Management firm. To date, Leicester has already invested \$1,000,000 in this project. This project has unanimous support from the Board of Selectman, the Capital Improvement Committee, the School Committee and majority support from the Finance Committee (4-1).

The total cost of the project cannot exceed \$49,800,000. The Massachusetts School Building Authority has partnered with the Town of Leicester and will pay

69.74 percent of the cost (approximately \$34,315,004). Leicester Public Schools received an additional \$3 million grant to start new programs in HVACR and plumbing raising the total reimbursement rate to approximately 75 percent. Leicester is responsible for the remaining 25 percent, or approximately \$13 million.

The estimated tax effect of the building project is 46 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The estimated impact for a home assessed at \$453,231 is \$207 per year or \$51.8 per quarter. The loan is not paid back until the project is complete. Therefore, there will be no increase in taxes until 2028, the estimated end of the construction project.

A Web site has been developed to serve as the central hub for transparency, community engagement, and progress tracking throughout this major capital construction/renovation. The link for the Web site is https://leicester.k12.ma.us/news/what_s_new/msba_school_building_project.

DR. BRETT M. KUSTIGIAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
LEICESTER

There is only one choice for those who love America

To the Editor:

Enough with the constant negative drumbeat from the K’s and other leftist letter writers. There is only one choice for citizens who love America this election: Vote

straight Republican, or see your country fall to the Communists and jihadists.

SUSAN GILLMEISTER
BROOKFIELD

How you can help reverse global warming

To the Editor:

Unchecked, global warming can destroy everything we care about, by a century from now, as I explained two weeks ago.

First, remember: the costs we pass on to our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren - to take all our CO2 out of the air, to make Earth livable for after mid-century - are very large and not for emissions they chose to make. To make Earth livable for them requires removing almost all the CO2 humans have added to the air since before we were born. That costs roughly 9 percent of the gross world product, every year for a century. That is huge, more than twice the world’s military spending.

It is far cheaper to not put CO2 into the air than to take it out. (Not putting CO2 in often costs less than zero.) We owe it to them not to saddle them with that expense, which dwarfs our government’s national debt.

The biggest things we can do to avoid putting carbon in the air are (1) heat your house with a heat pump instead of a furnace, (2) make all your future vehicles electric and trade in your gasoline-powered vehicles for electric ones, and (3) buy carbon-free electricity. We owe it our grandchildren and great-grandchildren (if we still have any left) to do so sooner rather than later.

My wife and I have been using a heat pump for 11 years. Only once, for five minutes, have we needed to use our old furnace for backup. It gets rid of winter dry-mouth and furnace noise. We have driven electric cars for 9 years. Very reliable, maintenance costs are mostly just for tires, and acceleration is incredible. I like getting 202 miles to the gallon-equivalent now and saving money. Chevy Bolt goes for \$25,000 to \$30,000, Telsa Model 3 \$35,000. Ford plans to soon come out with a \$25,000 pickup. Heat pumps and electric vehicles save us money, especially when gas prices are high.

Other actions can help a bit: make any gasoline vehicle efficient. Reduce, re-use,

recycle. Compost. Combine errand trips. Fly less. And so forth.

But the big problem is that we have made Earth darker by heating it up. As I said two weeks ago, over the past 25 years, recent darkening has caused over twice the warming as recent emissions.

It’s not something you can do much about. But you can ask your elected leaders to reverse global warming, by supporting development and implementation of global cooling: stratospheric aerosol injection, marine cloud brightening, re-freezing Arctic sea ice, cirrus-cloud thinning, white roofs, mirrors, tiny white particles on the sea surface. Those reverse the warming caused by loss of clouds, ice, snow and sulfate aerosols.

The biggest joint action we can take is to elect leaders who try to make the world livable for our children and grandchildren: cut our atmospheric CO2 back to a safe level under 300 parts per million (for one degree Celsius). Ed Markey, Jim McGovern and Richard Neal, among others, support that. They can support the cheapest, fastest, simplest, fairest and most thorough policy to drive CO2 emissions down to almost zero: a rising fee on carbon where it enters the economy, with the proceeds returned in equal amounts to all Americans. About 70 percent of Americans get more money back than they pay in carbon fees. Oil companies will trick you, by saying you pay more money for gasoline - while neglecting to admit that most of us get back more than we pay in.

But Donald Trump and many of his supporters support enriching the oil companies instead. Their policy, if followed for long, will destroy the United States - by turning it into a thinly populated hot desert, where food and water are very scarce. And do the same for all the other countries on Earth. Make your vote count.

DR. GENE FRY
BROOKFIELD

How to make the most of open enrollment this year

Every fall, an email lands in Maya’s inbox announcing open enrollment. And every year, she quickly clicks “renew” and moves on.

Open enrollment is when you choose your medical and other workplace benefits



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for the coming year. Most companies hold it in the fall. Once it closes, you usually can’t make changes unless there’s a major life event, like marriage, divorce, or a new child.

This year’s decisions may carry more weight than usual. Many workers are facing higher health care costs, making it especially important to understand what you’re paying for and what protection you’re receiving in return.

It’s tempting to renew last year’s choices, but you owe your future-self more. Your employer’s plans, providers, or costs may have changed, and your life might look different from a year ago, perhaps with a new dependent or new medical needs. A fresh look helps ensure your benefits match your life.

Compare health plans. Employers often offer more than one health, dental or vision option. Rather than simply glancing at the monthly premium, look at the total potential cost of each plan, including deductibles, copays, coinsurance, and out-of-pocket maximums.

Check whether your doctors are in network, your prescriptions are covered and what you’d pay out of pocket for visits and medications. If you and your spouse both have coverage, compare the plans. Some employers charge a fee if you enroll a partner who has their own workplace coverage.

Check your life insurance. Many employers provide basic coverage, often one or two times your salary, with the option to buy more. If your family has grown or your responsibilities increased, make sure that amount still fits your needs. If you’ve maxed out employer coverage, consider supplementing it with an individual policy.

Consider disability coverage. Short-term disability coverage, along with paid sick leave and emergency savings, should help bridge income gaps for up to six months during recovery from surgery, illness, or childbirth. Long-term disability insurance should protect you if you can’t work for an extended period, up to age 65. Ideally, it should replace up to 100 percent of your after-tax income.

Look for tax-friendly accounts. Flexible spending accounts (FSAs) and health savings accounts (HSAs) let you use pretax dollars for eligible medical expenses. If you have dependents, ask about a dependent care FSA to pay for care costs. Remember that FSAs are use-it-or-lose-it, so contribute only what you expect to spend. HSAs, available with high-deductible plans, allow unused funds to roll over and can help supplement retirement savings.

Consider your retirement plan. While your retirement plan usually isn’t part of open enrollment, this is a good time to revisit it. Make sure that, at a minimum, you’re contributing enough to earn any employer’s match.

Back to Maya. This year, she sets aside an hour, pours a cup of coffee and reads her options. She’s adding more life insurance and increasing her HSA contribution. Open enrollment may never be thrilling, but time spent now can mean a more confident year for you and the people who count on you.

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@edwardjones.com. Edward Jones, Member SIPC.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks to & Trump

To the Editor:

Thanks to Ken Kimball for pointing out That I missed Ballot Question 9 on this year’s list of Massachusetts ballot questions.

I am in full agreement with his “Yes” vote on retaining and improving gun safety laws. Saying this, I learned a lot from the former New Leader Hunting and Fishing writer about the joy of those hobbies and the many values of managing our deer population (I also learned a good bit about writing in the New Leader from a former area teacher and coach).

The big reasons I will vote Yes are two. Under the existing law:

guns are available and can be safely used for sport etc.

the law also very well prevents deaths from gun misuse by suicide and harm to children. In 2023 the USA had nearly 47,000 gun deaths with almost 60 percent of those or 28,000 by gun suicide. Likewise almost 4,500 children were either killed or injured by guns.

Massachusetts’s on-the-books gun safety laws helped make us among the lowest in of such gun deaths and injuries.

Support Leicester CTE School project

To the Editor:

Like many homeowners in the area, I’ve had to do large scale maintenance projects to my house to ensure it will last for years to come, projects that weren’t cheap. I’ve had my oil tank changed to ensure it won’t develop an expensive oil leak, roof striped and replaced, and a perimeter drain system installed to keep my cellar from flooding. I know other homeowners who have had some of these projects done too, along with heating system replacements, the installation of mini-split systems by many homeowners reaping the benefits of attractive financial rebates being offered. “Why should I use my money to pay for mini splits when I can get rebates to cover the costs?” many a homeowner has asked, and I can’t blame them. Leicester voters have to ask themselves the same question regarding the upcoming CTE School project and its funding.

Leicester’s CTE School project wants to build a steel building addition for its HVAC programs and do much needed upgrades and repairs to four other buildings, roof, heating and ventilation, doors, and window replacements mostly. Various state agencies are willing to give Leicester 75% of the costs to do these needed repairs, an

Likewise with “Shock,” I will vote yes for ballot questions 3 to eliminate separate political party primaries. This “Yes” will make elections more competitive. It should also make politicians more open and responsible, not to “insiders,” but rather to the people of our state.

Thanks too, to Judy Rose for her well written and thoughtful Oct. 2 letter.

Finally, thanks also to Gene Fry for his much better than me explanation of why and how Global Warming and Climate Change will so badly impact all of now and even more in the future. It is now too late to make it “better.” Trump and his administration have committed great present and future Climate Change damage to us not in this but in so many other destructive, chaotic and corrupt ways.

Let us hope and work towards fair and free November elections so that we can begin to reduce the harm done and put the pieces of our damaged democracy and country back together again.

KEVIN KANE
SPENCER

Every individual should have access to affordable health care

To the Editor:

I enjoy this time of year, with the crisp and cool temperatures, sunny days and emerging beauty around us. At least I did until last week, when I received some concerning news.

My health insurance plan that has been coupled with Medicare and served me very well since I retired, will no longer be available. The supplemental plan that I carefully chose in 2017 is ending on Dec. 31 of this year. The existing plans left for me to choose from do not offer the same costs and benefits and there is no guarantee that I can retain my current health care providers.

Moving on to our existing healthcare system, many Americans choose to forgo insurance altogether because of cost. Some have already lost their benefits through federal cuts. Medical costs have skyrocketed, and if you are unfortunate enough to suffer from a catastrophic illness, you will probably incur massive debt. And what is the current administration doing to help Americans afford their health insurance? With more federal healthcare cuts looming, many more will lose the insurance they desperately need. That is why we need a state senator in the Worcester and Hampshire district who will fight for quality affordable healthcare right here in Massachusetts and why I am voting for Shannon Teabo! Shannon believes affordable and quality healthcare is a right for every individual, family, child and senior citizen in Massachusetts and in America. So do I.

In my opinion, our current state senator does not appear to share these concerns or support those same values. Nor does he support Medicare for All, something that would help all Massachusetts residents. Please join me in voting for Shannon Teabo on Nov. 3!

ANN TOOMEY-DOANE
WEST BROOKFIELD

When did calling someone become rude?

I committed a minor social offense the other day. I called somebody on the telephone. Without warning.

No advance text message. No appointment. No carefully worded inquiry asking whether it might be convenient to speak for a few minutes. I simply looked up the number, pressed the little green button and waited.

You would have thought I’d shown up at the fellow’s house at three in the morning carrying a trumpet.

He answered after several rings, sounding slightly alarmed.

“Everything OK?”

“Sure,” I said. “Why?”

“Well, you called.”

Apparently, that’s enough to suggest an emergency these days.

I remember when calling somebody was considered a perfectly ordinary way to communicate. In fact, for a considerable portion of my life, it was the only practical way to communicate with someone who wasn’t standing directly in front of you. You picked up the telephone, dialed a number and hoped the person you wanted was home. Sometimes, somebody else answered. Sometimes, you had to make polite conversation with a parent, spouse or sibling before being handed over to the intended recipient. And sometimes, nobody answered at all. In those cases, you simply tried again later. Nobody assumed the unanswered call represented a personal

LANTERNS
ALONG
MAIN
STREET
By CHARLES

rejection or the collapse of a friendship.

Today, the rules appear to have changed. A telephone call without a preliminary text is apparently

an intrusion. A voicemail is an unexpected burden. And leaving a message that says “Call me when you get a chance” can produce enough anxiety to warrant a family conference.

My wife understands these new customs considerably better than I do. She recently watched me leave a voicemail for someone and shook her head.

“Why didn’t you text him?”

“Because I wanted to talk to him.”

“You could have texted him to see if he was available.”

“Wouldn’t calling him accomplish the same thing?”

She gave me the look she reserves for moments when explaining modern civilization to her husband seems like an unreasonable use of her remaining years.

I don’t object to texting. It’s a wonderful invention for certain purposes. If I need to tell my wife I’m stopping for milk, a text is ideal. If I want to know whether somebody has arrived safely, a text works beautifully.

And if someone sends me a photograph of a dog wearing sunglasses, I can respond with the appropriate expression of amuse-

ment without interrupting either of our afternoons.

But there are conversations that don’t fit neatly into little rectangular bubbles on a screen. A story, for example.

A proper story requires timing. It requires pauses, interruptions and the occasional “You’re not going to believe what happened next.” It requires the ability to hear someone laughing before you’ve even reached the funny part. Try accomplishing that through a series of text messages.

By the time you’ve finished typing the setup, the other person has responded with a thumbs-up symbol, which could mean anything from enthusiastic agreement to “Please stop contacting me.”

I have also discovered that punctuation has become a delicate matter. Apparently, ending a text message with a period can sometimes make you sound angry. I learned this after responding to a perfectly innocent question with the words, “Sounds good.” A younger acquaintance later explained that the period made the message seem unnecessarily stern. I had no idea.

For more than six decades, I’d been under the impression that periods were simply how sentences ended. Now, evidently, they are tiny symbols of disapproval.

I’ve started wondering what other grammatical offenses I’ve been committing

Turn To LANTERNS page A11

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.

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Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance offers Dance Discovery Week

WEST BROOKFIELD — Betty Gundersen, director of the Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance, is pleased to announce that the studio will be holding Dance Discovery Week from Oct. 26 through Oct. 31.

“During Dance Discovery Week, current students of the studio are invited to ‘Bring a Friend’ to take a free class and experience what we’re all about,” says Gundersen. “And, if you or your child don’t yet have a friend at the studio, you are welcome to join us too! We offer classes for children starting at pre-school and continuing through high school and above.”

The Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance offers a full range of classes designed to nurture local boys and girls at every age and stage. All classes in the studio’s regular schedule — jazz, acrobat-



Courtesy

Students at the barre in the Betty Gundersen Studio of Dance.

ics, contemporary, hip-hop, ballet, tap and adult tap, Zumba - will be available

for this free-trial participation.

“Dance is for everyone,” says Gundersen. “This week is our way of opening

our doors — no pressure, just movement, music, and meeting new people. This

is a great opportunity to meet our talented instructors, explore a dance style you’ve never tried, see our facilities and perhaps begin a dance journey — or simply have fun and see what it feels like.”

Parents of interested students may view the entire week’s schedule online at bettygundersendance.com to plan which class or style they would like to try. You will also be able to download a copy of the parent permission slip that is required for all participants in Dance Discovery Week.

For additional information, or to reserve your, or your child’s free trial spot in a regularly scheduled class, please call the studio at (508) 867-8925, or send an email to hgstudioofdance@gmail.com and include the name of the participant and their preferred class.

Open poetry reading series coming to Merriam-Gilbert Library

WEST BROOKFIELD — Local poets, readers and lovers of the written word will have a new opportunity to share their favorites when the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library hosts “One Poem,” an open poetry reading series beginning in September.

The program is designed to provide a welcoming venue for writers to share their own poetry while introducing participants to the work of other published poets.

For each original poem a participant reads, organizers ask that the reader complement it with a poem by an established, published writer. Selections can range widely, from Shakespeare and Anne Bradstreet to Charles Bukowski, William Butler Yeats, Rumi, Adrienne Rich and contemporary poets.

Participants do not need to be poets themselves. Those without original work are welcome to read favorite poems by published writers, while community members who would rather listen are equally encouraged to attend.

Readings will take place in round-robin fashion, with participants sharing no more than two poems during each turn. The number of opportunities each person has to read will depend upon attendance. Organizers ask participants to avoid particularly lengthy selections so everyone has an opportunity to take part.

The series is intended to foster a creative community of writers and readers while exposing participants to poets and styles they might not otherwise encounter.

“One Poem” will run from September through May, generally on the third Thursday of each month from 4 to 6 p.m. Some dates may be adjusted because of holidays.

Programs will be held in the upstairs meeting room at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library on Main Street in West Brookfield. The meeting room is accessible by elevator.

The series is open to the Central Massachusetts community.

“Come: read, listen, learn, savor,” organizers invite participants.

Spencer Exchange Club hosting Fall Food Fest Nov. 14

SPENCER — As the cozy sweater weather arrives, the Spencer Exchange Club invites you to enjoy a delightful evening at their annual Fall Food Festival on Saturday, November 14 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Spencer Country Inn! Come and enjoy a variety of delicious food, wine tastings and much more, all prepared by talented local chefs and businesses.

This year’s participants include Yamato Asian Bistro, 308 Lakeside, Black & White Grille, Uncle Sam’s Pizza, The Clambox, Savage Smash Burgers & Brews, Savage Wraps, Savage Catering, The Goods Bakery & Café, Timbervard Brewing Company, Spencer Country Inn, Tijuana Bar & Grill, Hardwick Winery, Rapscaillon Brewery & Taproom.

All proceeds from this event will benefit the Exchange Club’s civic service fund that supports the Mary, Queen of the Rosary Food Pantry, Warm Coats for Spencer East Brookfield school children, sponsorship of area youth sports programs and facilities, support for local scouting groups and many other local, worthwhile projects.

Tickets are priced at \$35 per person and may be purchased at Uncle Sam’s Pizza, Savage Smash Burgers & Brews or from any Exchange Club member.

The Exchange Club of Spencer is a group of volunteers dedicated to making our community a better place to live while building leadership and teamwork skills for its members.

The event is proudly sponsored by Cornerstone Bank. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank’s local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts.

St. Aloysius- St. Jude Church to host St. Jude Feast Day of Prayer Oct. 25

LEICESTER — St. Aloysius-St. Jude Church will hold a special St. Jude Feast Day of Prayer on Sunday, Oct. 25, from 2 to 3 p.m. at the church, located at 491 Pleasant St. in Leicester.

The afternoon observance will include Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, prayers to St. Jude, the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick and a blessing for those in good health.

St. Jude Thaddeus, one of the Twelve Apostles, is traditionally recognized in the Catholic Church as the patron saint of hopeless causes and difficult situations. His feast day, celebrated annually on Oct. 28, provides an opportunity for Catholics to seek his intercession through prayer.

The Leicester observance will offer an opportunity for reflection, prayer and spiritual support, particularly for those facing illness or other personal challenges.

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is offered within the Catholic tradition to those experiencing serious illness or health challenges, while the blessing for those in good health will provide an additional opportunity for prayer.

The St. Jude Feast Day of Prayer is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 25, from 2 to 3 p.m. at St. Aloysius-St. Jude Church, 401 Pleasant St., Leicester.

New support group offered for people with physical disabilities

LEICESTER — A new support group for people living with physical disabilities has been developed by two women who know the challenges that come with physical impairments. Peg Erickson, from Spencer, and Trish McCormick, from Leicester, are each living with physical disabilities. They have experienced the challenges of completing everyday tasks, difficulty accepting their altered bodies, and the fear of what the future may hold. Believing that others with physical disabilities may face the same issues, they decided to join forces to begin a support group.

Their purpose is to create a place where people with physical disabilities can meet and express their feelings, share their experiences, and provide mutual support for each other in a private environment. The intention is to offer an opportunity to feel accepted, share effective coping skills, exchange practical information and resources that will improve their daily lives, and to socialize in a welcoming environment.

Anyone with a physical disability is welcome to attend. The first meeting will be held at the Leicester Public Library, 1136 Main St., Leicester, on Oct. 29 at 5 p.m. The accessible entrance is located at the rear of the building. Contact Peg Erickson at racerpeg@charter.net with questions.

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Workshop13 to host Halloween Dance Party

WARE — Workshop13's house band The Project is hitting the stage for a special Halloween Dance Party, bringing a highenergy performance, great songs, and goodtime vibe that fans love. Known for their lively shows and crowdpleasing playlists, The Project delivers a night full of rock music that keeps everyone moving. The Project features Rich Eichacker on lead guitar, Tom Trudeau on bass, Cindy Colon on lead vocals, Roc Goudreau on keyboard, and Brad Willard on drums. The dance party will be taking place at Workshop13's Urban Hall, located at 13 Church St, Ware, MA. This beautiful second floor space is now accessible via vertical chair lift. The date is Halloween night: Saturday, Oct. 31, from 7-10 p.m. Doors open at 6:30pm. Tickets are available on a sliding scale from \$15-\$25 at workshop13.org. Workshop13 participates in CardToCulture for EBT card holders; email remington@workshop13.org to request a coupon code. Costumes are encouraged but not required. About Workshop13 Workshop13 is a dynamic center where arts, culture, and community converge—expanding access to the arts and nurturing creativity and self-expression in our rural region. For more information visit workshop13.org, or call 413-277-6072.

East Brookfield seeks public input for Open Space and Recreation Plan update

EAST BROOKFIELD — The Town of East Brookfield, with assistance from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), is updating its 2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan and is seeking input from residents. Community members are encouraged to participate in a survey to share their thoughts on open space, recreational opportunities, and priorities for the future. Public feedback will help guide the development of the updated plan, which is required to maintain the Town's eligibility for State grant funding for conservation and recreation projects. Residents can complete the survey online at <https://tinyurl.com/yv7b23fy>. Hard copies are also available at Town Hall, the East Brookfield Public Library, and the Senior Center. The Town encourages all residents to take part and help shape the future of East Brookfield's parks, recreation resources, and open spaces.

Grassroots Central Mass to host skill sharing workshops in Brookfield

BROOKFIELD — Grassroots Central Mass., a local citizens' organization, announces new quarterly workshops focused on teaching specific skills, promoting self-sufficiency, and building community. Each workshop will feature one skill presented by a member of the community with the goal of teaching that skill to anyone who wishes to learn. The first topic will be "How to Make a Fabric Origami Butterfly," and will be taught by accomplished textile artist and seamstress, Sandra Riccio Holmes of West Brookfield. In the workshop, attendees will learn how to make a fabric origami butterfly that can be worn as a pin or used as an appliqué on a garment.

The workshop will take place on Saturday, Oct. 24, 10-11:30 a.m. at the Brookfield Library Barn, 18 Common St., Brookfield. "As a maker, I see sewing as a skill set, a creative outlet and a place for peace of mind," says Holmes. "Sewing is a true passion of mine, and I am looking forward to sharing this skill with my friends and neighbors."

There is no fee for the workshop; however, a donation of \$5-\$10 made directly to the instructor to cover materials is suggested. Space is limited, so pre-registration is recommended. Register here today (<https://bit.ly/OragamiFabric>).

Music & Movement program returns to Merrick Public Library

BROOKFIELD — The Merrick Public Library is once again inviting young children and their families to enjoy music, dancing and interactive fun with the return of its popular Music & Movement with Julie program. The program takes place Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m., and is recommended for children from birth to age five. Led by Julie, the weekly sessions feature familiar children's songs, stretching, movement, singing and dancing. The activities are designed to provide an entertaining experience while helping young children develop important early literacy skills through music and rhythm. Music and movement activities can help children build listening skills, recognize patterns and sounds, develop coordination

and become more comfortable expressing themselves. Singing familiar songs also provides opportunities for children to develop language skills while interacting with other youngsters and their caregivers. The program offers families an opportunity to introduce their youngest children to the library in a relaxed, welcoming setting while encouraging a lifelong interest in learning. Music & Movement with Julie is free and open to the public, and no advance registration is required. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to bring their little ones for a morning of songs, dancing and fun. For more information about the program and other library activities, contact the Merrick Public Library in Brookfield.

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WEEKLY POLICE BLOTTER

Spencer
The Spencer Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Oct. 7-13.
Ryan M. Walsh, age 28, of Charlton was arrested on Oct. 9 for Operating Under the Influence (Liquor), Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle, and a Marked Lanes Violation.
Edison Xavier Minchalo Calderon, age 62, of Spencer was arrested on Oct. 10 for Operating Under the Influence (Liquor), Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle, and a Marked Lanes Violation.

Leicester
The Leicester Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Oct. 8-14.
Jeylani Alize Crespo, age 20, of Leicester was arrested on Oct. 9 for Threatening to Commit a Crime and Criminal Harassment.
An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 11 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle, a Marked Lanes Violation, a Passing Violation, Use of an Electronic Device While Operating a Motor Vehicle (first offense), a Number Plate Violation to Conceal ID, and for operating an Unregistered and Uninsured Motor Vehicle.

Wildwood Acres Farm hosting Enchanted Forest Winter Faire

WEST BROOKFIELD — Wildwood Acres Farm & Forest School in West Brookfield is hosting a free, family-friendly Enchanted Forest Winter Faire Saturday, Nov. 14 (rain date Sunday, Nov. 14) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wildwood Acres Farm & Forest School invites families to the Enchanted Forest Winter Faire, a wintery Renaissance faire where kids take center stage. Wander a forest village filled with skilled artisans and traditional vendors, plus the Kids Medieval Makers Market, where young merchants sell goods they made themselves. Wandering characters, storytellers and performers bring the woods to life throughout the day, and King Winter will be holding court. Children can try hands-on crafts and make their own magical and medieval treasures, visit the Winter Wish House and toast s'mores by the fire. Food and drink will be available. Costumes HIGHLY encouraged! Kings, queens, fairies, jesters and every kind of magical creature are welcome.

Event page: <https://wwoodacres.com/events>
Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/920945574118394>
Poster (download): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a_tHOCa3MdNXwUqLVkoIo7ihYt_QR19/view
Contact: coop@wwoodacres.com

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

Worcester Chamber announces 12th Startup Worcester cohort

WORCESTER — The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the 10 companies and organizations selected for the 2026–2027 cohort of StartUp Worcester, marking the 12th year of the entrepreneurship program.

StartUp Worcester is a joint program of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and WorcLab designed to help launch and grow new businesses while supporting entrepreneurs in Central Massachusetts. Presented with support from program sponsors M&T Bank and Millstone Law, participants receive a complimentary membership to the Chamber and WorcLab, access to coworking space, and opportunities for mentorship via the program and SCORE, networking, fundraising, and other programming designed to help early-stage ventures develop and scale.

Since its launch, StartUp Worcester has supported entrepreneurs across a wide range of industries, from technology and profession-

al services to food, health, transportation, and social enterprise. Alumni have gone on to secure funding, expand their operations, earn regional and national recognition, and continue growing their businesses in Central Massachusetts.

The members of the 2026–2027 StartUp Worcester cohort are:

Artist Health Coverage: Led by Magdelene Barjolo, Artist Health Coverage is a nonprofit initiative in the early validation phase that helps freelance creatives access affordable healthcare through enrollment assistance, venue partnerships, and member-owned coverage models.

Avanza Ability Partners Inc.: Founded by Mayerling De La Rosa and two partners, Avanza Ability Partners provides bilingual navigation and culturally responsive support for families of individuals with developmental disabilities while preparing for state agency contracting.

Born For More: Founded by Michaelangelo Shavies, Born For More is a youth-empowerment social enterprise that pairs men-

torship with a gamified mission platform, aiming to generate up to \$25,000 this year through curriculum licensing and pilot programs.

Dewar Performance: Founded by Melissa Dewar, Worcester-based Dewar Performance provides transparent SEO and website strategies for local contractors and service providers, aiming to establish repeatable systems and recurring retainer revenue.

Golden Transportation and Logistics LLC: Founded by Navy veteran Maxwell Adu-Boakye, this pre-launch non-medical transit service leverages 13+ years of healthcare contracting experience to provide dignified, dependable transportation for Worcester County veterans, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

Greenhouse Bread: Founded by head baker Vanthara Hill with technical support from David Hill, Greenhouse Bread is a bootstrapped Millbury bakery finalizing its municipal licensing to bring sustainable, artisan sourdough directly to local markets and pop-ups.

Lexagy LLC: Founded by Raymond Carville, Lexagy LLC is a bootstrapped, Worcester-based software company currently in beta testing for its subscription-based family reading and community-sharing platform ahead of a November 2026 launch.

My Collective: Founded by Crystal McGlynn, My Collective blends mindfulness, movement, and art through proprietary wellness frameworks at its Sturbridge studio while actively working to scale B2B corporate wellness packages.

Vanguard Insight: Co-founded by Andrew and Jacqueline Swenson, Vanguard Insight is an early-stage, self-funded Worcester consulting firm utilizing StartUp Worcester

to scale its operations and workforce development services for local businesses and nonprofits.

Wuoti Law LLC: Founded by Amanda Wuoti, Wuoti Law LLC provides accessible, unbundled contract legal services across Massachusetts and Rhode Island, having generated \$45,000 in its first year while serving roughly 30 active clients.

“The 12th StartUp Worcester cohort reflects the breadth of entrepreneurship taking place across Central Massachusetts,” said Mike Kane, of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. “These founders are tackling challenges in areas ranging from transportation and healthcare access to technology, professional services, food, and youth development. We look forward to connecting them with the resources, mentors, and relationships that can help them take their businesses to the next level.”

The 2026–2027 cohort begins programming this month. Throughout the program year, participants will have opportunities to connect with fellow entrepreneurs, business leaders, mentors, and members of the region’s broader startup ecosystem while developing the skills and relationships needed to strengthen their ventures.

StartUp Worcester alumni include companies and founders that have achieved milestones ranging from significant outside funding and facility expansion to national startup recognition. Alumni of the program include: Petricore, Solvus Global, HydroGlyde Coatings, Munq, Wicked Wheels, Wake the Way, the Jewelry Co-Op, and EZBusy.ai.

Trunk or Treat event planned in North Brookfield

NORTH BROOKFIELD — North Brookfield Parks and Recreation is pleased to announce that a Trunk or Treat will be held on the town Common, located on Grove Street, this year!

The festivities start Saturday, Oct. 31, and will run from 5:30 ‘til 7:30 p.m. We will have music, candy, free hot dogs (generously donated by Hannaford’s Supermarkets) on the Common. If you want to set up a trunk, please arrive by 4:45 p.m. Our Fire Department and Police Department will be there to ensure safe celebrating.

The North Brookfield Senior Center, located on Forest Street, will hand out free cookies.

Free fun for everyone! Looking forward to seeing you there!

LEGALS

At the Zoning Board of Appeals public meeting to be held on Tuesday, November 10, 2026, in the McCourt Social Hall of Memorial Town Hall, 157 Main Street, Spencer, MA, a public hearing will be held on the following items starting at 7:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as can be heard:
Notice of Public Hearing – Spencer Zoning Board of Appeals
Public Hearing Special Permits– Applicant: Nikkya Jackson; Owner: 160 Main Street LLC: Location: 160 Main Street, Spencer, MA, Assessor’s Map U07-62. The applicant is seeking a Special Permits under section 4.3.18 (Indoor entertainment and recreational facilities) to open a functional fitness gym and wellness/recovery center. The property is located in the Town Center (TC) zoning district.
October 23, 2026
October 30, 2026

Form 299
Date: October 5, 2026
Attorney General’s Notice Pursuant to G.L. c. 40, § 32
Town of Brookfield -- Case No. 12434 Annual Town Meeting of June 4, 2026 Article# 36 (Zoning)
Attorney General’s Limited Authority to Waive Procedural Defects in the Notice of the Planning Board Hearing
Pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 40, § 32, if the Attorney General finds there to be any defect in the procedure of adoption or amendment of any zoning by-law relating to the form or content of the notice of the Planning Board hearing prescribed by G.L. c. 40A, § 5, or to the manner or dates on which said notice is mailed, posted or published as required by that section, then instead of disapproving the by-law or amendment by reason of any such defect, the Attorney General may elect to proceed under the defect

waiver provisions of G.L. c. 40, § 32. Under those provisions, the Attorney General is conditionally authorized to waive any such defect
Defect Determined in Notice of Planning Board Hearing
The Attorney General has determined that the planning board hearing notice relating to the above A,ticle failed to comply with the notice requirements for such hearing established by G.L. c. 40A, § 5. Section 5 provides in part (with emphasis added):
No zoning... by-law or amendment thereto shall be adopted until after the planning board in a... town has... held a public hearing thereon... at which interested persons shall be given an opportunity to be heard.... Notice of the time and place of such hearing, of the subject matter, sufficient for identification, and of the place where texts and maps thereof may be inspected shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the... town once in each of two successive weeks, the first publication to be not less than fourteen days before the day of said hearing, and by posting such notice in a conspicuous place in the... town hall for a period of not less than fourteen days before the day of said hearing.
Notice of said hearing shall also be sent by mail postage prepaid to the executive office of housing and livable communities, the regional planning agency if any, and to the planning board of each abutting city and town
In cases involving boundary, density or use changes within a district, notice shall be sent to any such nonresident property owner who has filed such a request with the city or town clerk and whose property lies in the district where the change is sought.
Based on the materials submitted to this Office, we have identified the following defect: the Planning Board

hearing notice was not mailed to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and the Regional Planning Agency, as required by G.L. c. 40A, § 5. For this reason, the 90-day period prescribed for the Attorney General’s review of Article 36 is suspended in accordance with G.L. c. 40, § 32.
Attorney General’s Election to Proceed Under the Waiver Provisions of G.L. c. 40, § 32
The Attorney General has elected to proceed under the limited defect waiver authority conferred by G.L. C. 40, § 32.
Suspension of Review of Zoning By-Law Amendments
The 90-day period prescribed by law for the Attorney General’s review of local by-laws is therefore suspended in accordance with the provisions of G.L. c. 40, § 32.
Posting and Publication of This Notice
The Town Clerk shall post a true copy of this Notice in a conspicuous place in the Brookfield Town Hall for a period of not less than 14 days and shall publish a copy once in a newspaper of general circulation in the Town of Brookfield.
Filing of Claim That Defect in Notice Was Misleading or Otherwise Prejudicial
Within 21 days of the date on which this Notice is published in a newspaper of general circulation in the Town of Brookfield, any resident of the Town of Brookfield, or the owner of any real property in the Town of Brookfield, or any other party entitled to notice of the planning board hearing may file with the Town Clerk a written statement that the notice defect was misleading or otherwise prejudicial. The statement must include the reasons supporting the claim that the defect in the Planning Board Notice was misleading or otherwise prejudicial. This statement must be actually on file with the Town Clerk not later than 21 days

from the date on which this Notice is published in the newspaper.
Town Clerk’s Certification of Compliance with This Notice
After the expiration of the 21-day period, the Town Clerk shall submit to the Attorney General a true copy of this Notice with a certification of compliance with the publishing and posting requirements of the preceding paragraph, and a certification that either (a) no claim was filed within the 21-day period, or (b) one or more claims were filed within the 21-day period. The Town Clerk shall submit to the Attorney General true copies of any such claim(s).
Resumption of Attorney General’s Review
Upon receipt of one original copy of this Notice with the Clerk’s certification, the 90-day period provided for the Attorney General’s review under G.L. c. 40, § 32, shall resume. If no claim is made, the Attorney General has the discretion to waive any such defect; if any claim is made, however, the Attorney General may not waive any such defect.
Note: By not filing a claim under this provision, a person shall not be deprived of the right to assert a claim of invalidity arising out of any possible defect in the procedure of adoption or amendment, as provided in G.L. c. 40, § 32, and in G.L. c. 40A, § 5.
Date: October 5, 2026
Very truly yours,
ANDREA JOY CAMPBELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL
By: Nicole B. Caprioli Assistant Attorney General
Deputy Director, Municipal Law Unit 10 Mechanic Street, Suite 301 Worcester, MA 01608 (774) 214-4418
cc: Town Counsels Michele E. Randazzo and Jeffrey T. Blake
October 23, 2026

DA hosts discussion on understanding addiction and supporting recovery

WORCESTER — On Oct. 14, Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. hosted the Prevention and Support Network’s annual event, bringing together community partners for a discussion on addiction, recovery, and the importance of coordinated support to help individuals build stable, healthy lives.

The event featured Dr. Stephen Loyd, Chief Medical Officer at Cedar Recovery and the real-life physician portrayed by Michael Keaton in Hulu’s “Dopesick,” and Troy Sandifer, founder and CEO of H.U.S.T.L.E. (How U Survive This Life Everyday) Recovery, a Tennessee-based organization that connects individuals with addiction treatment and recovery support services.

Dr. Loyd shared his personal experience with addiction and recovery, while Sandifer discussed H.U.S.T.L.E. Recovery’s respite housing model and its role in supporting individuals as they work toward long-term stability.

Dr. Loyd discussed the complex factors that can contribute to addiction, including genetics, trauma, and underlying mental health challenges. Drawing on his professional



experience and personal journey through recovery, he emphasized the importance of understanding addiction and addressing the underlying factors that can contribute to substance use. He also spoke about the importance of breaking generational cycles of addiction and creating opportunities for individuals and families to move forward.

Sandifer also shared his personal journey through

addiction and the criminal justice system and how those experiences inspired him to dedicate his work to helping others find recovery. Through H.U.S.T.L.E. Recovery, he works to connect individuals with recovery services and employment opportunities that can help them build stability and independence.

The discussion highlighted the importance of a comprehensive, collaborative

approach to addiction that balances accountability with access to treatment and support. Addressing the opioid crisis requires more than a criminal justice response; it also calls for coordination among law enforcement, treatment providers, community organizations, and other partners to help individuals access the resources and opportunities they need to sustain recovery.

“These leaders came up from Tennessee to offer our community successful programs that help save lives. Their work interrupts death,” said District Attorney Early. “They shared with us the importance of having people with real-life, lived experience help people overcome this disease and improve public safety.”

The event offered an opportunity for members of

the Prevention and Support Network to learn from the speakers’ experiences and consider how their approaches could inform local efforts in Worcester County. Their work reinforced that lasting recovery requires more than access to treatment alone. It also depends on coordinated support and a commitment to helping individuals build stable lives in recovery.

Sandifer emphasized the critical step of securing stable housing and employment options for individuals in early recovery, “Treatment is not recovery. Treatment is stabilization. Recovery begins after treatment.”

Early has long been committed to addressing substance use, trauma, and mental health in Worcester County. In 2015, he established the Central Massachusetts Opioid Taskforce, which later became the Prevention and Support Network, which continues to foster collaboration among professionals, law enforcement, and community organizations to address substance use and its impact on individuals, families, and communities throughout Worcester County.



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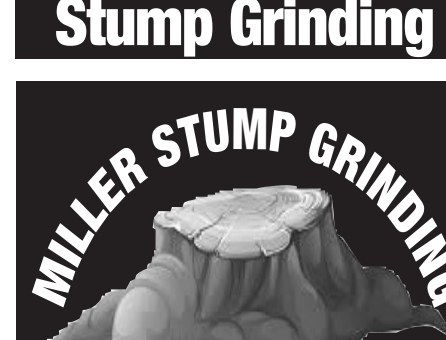
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LEICESTER

continued from page A1

local community organizations, sharing what they are learning in the classroom, playing games, and collecting valuable resources. Upon arrival, each student received a special treasure map to guide them on their adventure. As families visited each station, students collected stickers on their maps. Once their maps were complete, they headed to the treasure chest, hosted by Principal Tracy Steiger and

Assistant Principal Katie Ford. Dressed in pirate costumes for the occasion, the two administrators became “Pirate Steiger” and “Pirate Ford,” adding an extra touch of fun to the evening!

Students and families enjoyed visiting stations hosted by LES educators, including ST Math, Social Emotional Learning, English Language Arts (ELA), Preschool, STEM, Math, a free book giveaway, and Reinforcement. These interactive activities gave students the opportunity to share their learning with their fami-

lies while enjoying hands-on experiences together.

The evening also provided opportunities to strengthen connections with the Leicester community. Families visited stations hosted by the Leicester Police and Fire Departments, the CARE Team and Deja New, the Leicester Public Library, Country Bank, and the LES Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). These community partners shared resources, engaged with families, and helped make the evening a meaningful experience for everyone.

Leicester Elementary School is grateful to its dedicated educators who work so hard to make LES a fun, welcoming, and engaging place to learn. The school also extends its sincere appreciation to the community organizations and partners who continue to support its students and families. Curriculum, Community, and Connection Night was a wonderful reminder of what makes LES special: a community that comes together to support its children!

Tri-Valley, Inc. celebrates 50 years of service, independence and community

DUDLEY — Tri-Valley, Inc. is proud to celebrate its 50th anniversary, marking five decades of service to older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers and families throughout the communities it serves.

Since its founding in 1976, Tri-Valley has grown and evolved alongside the people and communities it serves. What began with a commitment to helping individuals remain independent in their homes and communities has developed into a broad network of programs, services and partnerships designed to promote dignity, choice, safety and quality of life.

“Fifty years represents much more than the passage of time,” said Lisa Prince, CEO. “It represents generations of people who have trusted Tri-Valley, employees who have dedicated their careers to serving others, community partners who have worked alongside us, and leaders who had the vision to build and strengthen this organization. Most importantly, it represents the thousands of consumers whose independence, determination and voices have shaped who we are.”

Honoring the leaders who helped shape Tri-Valley

Tri-Valley’s 50-year history has been guided by dedicated executive leadership, beginning with Mr. Donald Warner and continuing through former Executive Directors Ms. Patricia Clark, Mr. Bernard Gagnon and Ms. Marilyn Travinski.

Each brought different strengths to the organization while carrying forward a common purpose: ensuring that people have access to the services and supports they need to live as independently as possible.

Under their leadership, Tri-Valley responded to changing community needs, expanded services, developed new partnerships and navigated significant changes in aging and disability services. Their contributions established the foundation on which Tri-Valley continues to build today.

Celebrating the staff behind 50 years of service

At the heart of Tri-Valley’s history are its employees.

Over five decades, hundreds of staff members have answered phones, visited consumers in their homes, coordinated services, delivered meals, supported caregivers, advocated for consumers, managed programs and performed the countless behind-the-scenes tasks necessary to keep services available to people who depend on them.

Some employees have devoted decades of their careers to Tri-Valley, carrying the organization’s institutional knowledge and mission from one generation of staff to the next.

Their stories — and those of every employee who has been part of Tri-Valley during the past 50 years — demonstrate that the organization’s greatest resource has always been its people.

Programs that have evolved with the community

Throughout its history, Tri-Valley has adapted its services to meet the changing needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

Programs and services over the years have included our well-known and long-standing

Meals on Wheels program and the original State Home Care program. Program offerings have expanded over the years to better serve the needs of community members. These include the Adult Family Care program, information and referral services, care management, caregiver and Veteran supports, protective services, options counseling, transportation and others.

Today, Tri-Valley continues to provide services that give consumers greater choice and control over how and where they live. Its work includes Personal Care Management functions within the Massachusetts MassHealth system, one example of the organization’s continuing role in supporting people who choose to live independently in their communities.

The programs may have changed, expanded and modernized during the past half-century, but the purpose behind them has remained remarkably consistent: listen to the individual, respect their choices and connect them with supports that help make independence possible.

A community achievement

Tri-Valley’s 50th anniversary is also an opportunity to thank the many people and organizations that have shared in its work: consumers and their families, current and former employees, volunteers, Board members, community organizations, health and human-service providers, municipal leaders, state partners, donors and advocates.

To every person who has been part of Tri-Valley’s first 50 years: thank you.

And as Tri-Valley begins its next 50 years, its commitment remains rooted in the principle that has guided its work for generations — helping people live with choice, dignity and independence in the communities they call home.

Fifty years — and the work continues

As Tri-Valley celebrates its anniversary, the organization is also looking toward the future.

The needs of older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers continue to change. Technology, workforce challenges, health care delivery and demographic shifts are transforming the human-services landscape. Tri-Valley enters its next chapter with the same willingness to adapt that has sustained the organization for five decades.

“As we recognize everyone who helped bring Tri-Valley to this milestone, we are equally excited about what comes next,” said Prince. “Our mission continues because the need continues. We will keep listening to consumers, supporting our staff, strengthening our partnerships and finding new ways to help people live with independence and dignity.”

About Tri-Valley, Inc.

Tri-Valley, Inc. is a community-based human-services organization headquartered at 10 Mill St. in Dudley, Massachusetts. For 50 years, Tri-Valley has connected older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers with programs, services and supports designed to promote independence, dignity and quality of life.

For more information about Tri-Valley and its 50th anniversary, visit www.trivalleyinc.org.

RECOGNITION

continued from page A1

allow them to be recognized as an official union.

“We believe this would give us a collective voice and give us an opportunity to work with the town and have a voice at the table to solidify our current work rules as well as completing language and job descriptions as far as EMS and fire,” Muller said.

Green added that this should not be interpreted

as an issue between the town and the firefighters. This is about having a unified representation in negotiations.

“It puts the new labor organization and the town on the right foot going forward,” said Green. “This is not a union versus the town issue at all. This is a collective voice.”

The group can pursue recognition through the Department of Labor Relations, but Green explained that voluntary recognition by the town is a more popular and sim-

pler process.

Muller and Green both indicated that unionizing would help with recruitment, especially give the inherent dangers of the job. Muller told selectmen that having a union in place creates a dependable tool for members to voice their concerns and the seek proper compensation.

“We believe that with the positions that we’re in and jobs that we’re in, obviously it’s a dangerous career. Sometimes, it can lead to injuries and death.

It’s an unfortunate part of the job. It’s a reality of potential things happening. We believe that if we have a unified voice and advocacy through organized labor, it would be necessary and be a respected thing to have the town allow us to be recognized,” Muller stated.

The Board of Selectmen agreed to table the request to allow them to discuss the matter with their labor counsel. The board is expected to vote on the matter at a later meeting.

PRODUCE

continued from page A1

same time, participating inmates experience the dignity of a full day’s work and the satisfaction of knowing their efforts are helping the same communities many of them call home. The rehabilitative value of this program is tremendous.”

Located at the Worcester County Jail and House of Correction in West Boylston, the Organic Farm spans more than 18 acres and produces approximately 40,000 pounds of fresh produce annually.

Favorable growing con-

ditions during the spring and summer have resulted in bountiful harvests of zucchini, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, summer squash, cucumbers, and most recently, pumpkins and fall squash varieties.

Following each harvest, the produce is sorted and prepared for delivery to food pantries, senior centers, veterans’ organizations, women’s shelters, community refrigerators, and other local nonprofits. A portion of the harvest is also incorporated into meals served to inmates at the facility.

Beyond providing fresh, locally grown food to those in need, the pro-

gram serves an important rehabilitative purpose. Participating inmates are classified as low-risk and nonviolent and typically work between 10 and 25 hours per week, depending on the season and workload. Through their involvement, participants gain valuable work experience while developing responsibility, discipline, and teamwork.

Since Evangelidis took office in 2011, the Organic Farm has undergone several expansions, growing into the largest organic farm operating at a correctional facility in Massachusetts.

The farm is one of sev-

eral initiatives through which the Sheriff’s Office works to address food insecurity and support local families. Earlier this year, several organizations receiving fresh produce also benefited from a separate infant formula distribution initiative made possible through a partnership between the Worcester County Reserve Deputy Sheriff’s Association and the Ocean State Job Lot Charitable Foundation.

For updates on the Organic Farm Program and its community deliveries, follow the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office on social media.

EDITORIAL

continued from page A4

not a source of shame. Stigma can discourage people from asking for help, sometimes until a crisis occurs. A community that makes resources easier to find and conversations easier to have is better positioned to prevent tragedy.

North Brookfield is still in the early stages of this effort. No one should expect a single committee, study or funding allocation to solve a problem that has developed over decades.

But meaningful progress often begins with people sitting around the same table, acknowledging a shared challenge and agreeing to

work together.

The opioid settlement provides North Brookfield with financial resources. The task force provides an opportunity to turn those resources into a coordinated response.

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LANTERNS

continued from page A5

ting. Does a semicolon suggest hostility? Is a colon a threat? Should I apologize for using parentheses?

And don't get me started on the three little dots that appear when somebody is typing a response. Those dots can keep a grown man staring at his phone like he's awaiting the results of an important medical examination. They appear. They disappear. They appear again. Then nothing.

What happened? Did the person change their mind? Did the phone malfunction?

tion? Were they composing a lengthy declaration and decide against sending it?

In the old days, if somebody stopped talking halfway through a sentence, you could at least ask whether they were all right.

Still, I recognize that communication changes with every generation.

My grandparents probably thought answering machines were peculiar. My parents had their own opinions about call waiting. And I distinctly remember a time when people complained about teenagers spending too many hours talking on the telephone. Now we complain because

nobody wants to talk on the telephone. There's a certain symmetry to that.

The other evening, I decided to call an old friend I hadn't spoken with in several weeks. For a moment, I considered sending a text first. Then I decided to take my chances.

He answered on the second ring.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing. Thought I'd see how you were doing."

There was a pause. Then he laughed.

"Well, that's a pleasant surprise."

We talked for nearly half an hour. Nothing especial-

ly important came up. We traded a few stories, complained mildly about the price of things and remembered an incident from years ago that somehow gets funnier every time we tell it. When we hung up, I realized how much I'd enjoyed hearing his voice.

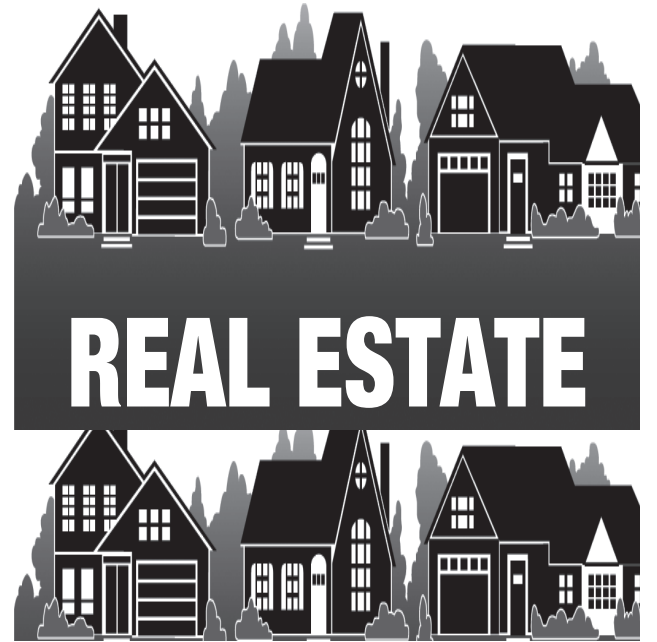
A few minutes later, my phone buzzed. It was a text from him.

"Good talking to you."

I wrote back, "You too."

Then I looked at the message and made one small adjustment before sending it.

I removed the period. No sense starting an argument.



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Webster Lake Waterfront - 86 Bates Point Rd

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Featured New Listing!

*24 Laurelwood Dr
Webster Lake Waterfront*



On the shores of prestigious Webster Lake! Experience ultra-luxury lakefront living with direct water access. This young modern craftsman lake home is masterly designed to maximize panoramic Western views through a two-story architectural tower. The home boasts 3,790 +/- square feet of sophisticated, three-story living space, complete with multilevel waterside decks, a radius stone faced patio, and a tiered landscape with its own waterfall. From morning coffee to sunset gatherings, you will enjoy every minute overlooking your waterfront. The 1,735 +/- square feet main level features a spacious open floor plan, welcoming you into a kitchen, dining, and living area tailored for intimate social hosting. The living room flows seamlessly onto an expansive open deck and into an exquisite sun-drenched sitting room. A magnificent primary bedroom suite offers a private full bath, double sink vanity, walk-in closet and dressing room. The purposely designed lower level delivers effortless, large-volume entertainment, featuring a full second kitchen and a sprawling recreation room that opens to a substantial lakeside patio. With 2 additional bedrooms and bath, this level easily serves as a private guest floor. This Lake property is designed to create long-lasting memories! **MLS#73563787 \$1,750,000**

Webster ~ 33 Slater Street



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Webster Lake ~

60 Wakefield Ave ~ Corner Lot!

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Webster Lake ~ 0 Wakefield Ave



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A Trinity Tradition: Nature’s Classroom

BY ANGELA SYMOCK
PRINCIPAL
TRINITY CATHOLIC ACADEMY

SOUTHBRIDGE — Were you one of the lucky students who attended Nature’s Classroom as a sixth grader? For the past 26 years, I’ve had the privilege of watching Trinity students head off on this special adventure and return with stories, stronger friendships, and memories that last long after the week is over.

A few years ago, I was lucky enough to experience Nature’s Classroom from a different perspective when I had the opportunity to chaperone alongside my daughter’s sixth-grade class. What a blessing! I was able to see firsthand the learning, laughter, teamwork, and joy that takes place through-

out the week. It is so much more than a field trip—it is an experience that challenges students, brings them together, and creates memories they will carry with them for years to come. Nature’s Classroom has become such a cherished Trinity tradition, and each year our sixth graders add their own chapter to that tradition.

To our parents who make sacrifices to ensure their children can have this experience: well done! Your support makes these opportunities possible, and the value of giving our students experiences like this is truly priceless.

Here’s to another generation of Trinity sixth graders learning, exploring, laughing, and making memories at Nature’s Classroom!

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Bank of America volunteers, led by Michael Garand, president of Bank of America, Worcester, joined Bank of America’s 2026 Worcester Neighborhood Builder®, Habitat for Humanity MetroWest/Greater Worcester on October 8, 2026, to help build a home for a local family. The volunteer effort reflects Bank of America’s ongoing commitment to strengthening communities and expanding access to safe, affordable housing across Central Massachusetts through the Bank of America Neighborhood Builder program. Since the program’s inception in 2004, 69 nonprofits have been selected as Neighborhood Builders in Massachusetts, with the Bank investing more than \$10 million into these nonprofits.

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Why Is Reverse So Important Today?

BY RUTA CONVENT

For years, the words reverse mortgage carried an unfair stigma. Many people believed it was only for seniors facing financial hardship or on the verge of losing their homes. That perception couldn’t be further from the truth.

Today’s reverse mortgage has evolved into a valuable retirement planning tool designed to help older homeowners achieve greater financial security.

Americans are living longer than ever before, which means retirement savings often need to last 25 to 30 years or more. At the same time, inflation continues to drive up the cost of groceries, utilities, healthcare, insurance, and other everyday expenses. While Social Security provides an important source of income, for many retirees it simply isn’t enough to cover monthly living costs.

For many homeowners, their house represents their largest financial asset. A reverse mortgage allows qualified homeowners age 62 and older to convert a portion of their home’s equity into tax-free proceeds while continuing to live in and own their home. There are no required monthly mortgage payments as long as the borrower lives in the home, maintains it, and stays current on property taxes and homeowners insurance.

Rather than being a loan of last resort, today’s reverse mortgage is often used as part of a comprehensive retirement strategy. The funds can help supplement monthly income, cover healthcare expenses, make home improvements, create an emergency reserve, or reduce the need to withdraw money from retirement investments during market downturns.

Just as important, today’s reverse mortgage is one of the most highly regulated mortgage products available. Federally insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgages (HECMs) are governed by strict federal guidelines and consumer protections. Every borrower must complete independent counseling with a HUDapproved counselor before obtaining the loan, ensuring they fully understand both the benefits and responsibilities. These safeguards help homeowners make informed decisions that fit their individual financial goals.

As retirement continues to change, so must the way we think about financing it. A reverse mortgage is no longer a product to be feared or misunderstood. For many homeowners, it is simply another financial toolone that can provide additional income, greater flexibility, and peace of mind throughout retirement.

At Mutual of Omaha Mortgage, we specialize in helping homeowners explore how a reverse mortgage could fit into their overall retirement strategy. With over a century of financial strength and a commitment to service, we guide our clients every step of the way - ensuring they understand their options and make informed, confident decisions.

Your home could be the key to a more secure retirement. To learn how a reverse mortgage could work for you, contact Ruta Convent, your local Mutual of Omaha Retirement Mortgage Specialist, and schedule a free, no-obligation consultation. Ruta has over 40 years of finance and mortgage experience. She lives in Uxbridge with her husband John, and pup Coco.

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