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Friday, February 27, 2026

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New book pays tribute to a hometown hero



Frank Joseph Bednarz (1918-1943) PO2 USN



Bernice Bednarz with author Michael Rocchetti.

Frank Bednarz

THOMPSON — Accidents, equipment malfunctions, and human error are the bane of military aviators, and were the cause of many fatalities during WWII. Frank Joseph Bednarz (1918-1943), of Thompson, was an Aviation Radioman Second Class assigned to Patrol Bombing Squadron VP-52 at Naval Operations Base, King's Point, Bermuda. The unit was engaged in anti-submarine warfare operations during the Battle of the Atlantic.

During an early morning gunnery exercise on Sunday, Jan. 10, 1943, while attempting a pass over the target area on the water of the Great Sound, a PBY-5 Catalina Seaplane from VP-52, registration number 2367, unexpected-

ly dove into the water at a high rate of speed near Grace Island, causing the plane to crash at approximately 8 km NNE off of the Gibbs Hill Lighthouse in Bermuda. All 8 occupants of the plane were lost — including Frank Bednarz. The cause of the accident was never determined, and is still a mystery.

This loss is still a painful memory for Frank's younger sister, Ms. Bernice Bednarz, a spry 102 year old Thompson resident.

Bernice's friend, Mrs. Jane Jewell Ellison, also of Thompson, noticed the story about Frank Bednarz in a recently published book, "Hometown Heroes of the Quiet Corner — the WW2 Purple Heart Edition — 2025 Volume 2." Ellison reached out to the author, Putnam

resident Michael Rocchetti, and asked if she could buy a copy of the book as a gift for Bernice, she also asked if Rocchetti would be interested in meeting with Bernice at the Thompson Public Library. Rocchetti jumped at the offer.

"It's not very often that you get a chance to meet with someone that is 102 years old!" said Rocchetti. He also added, "The meeting with Bernice marked an occasion of both sadness and joy - sadness over the loss of her brother Frank during WW2, but joy that he hasn't been forgotten."

Frank Bednarz was born April 2, 1918, the son of Andrew and Anna Bednarz of North Grosvenordale. He graduated from Tourtellotte Memorial High School in 1936, and enlisted in the

Navy on July 18th 1940. After he died in the plane crash, the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency classified his remains as unrecoverable. He is memorialized on the "Tablets of the Missing" at the East Coast Memorial at Battery Park in New York City. He is also memorialized with a cenotaph at the Saint Joseph Cemetery in North Grosvenordale.

In addition to his parents, he was survived by three brothers, Ignatius, Pvt. John Bednarz of Fort Riley, Kan. and Corp. William Bednarz of Paterson, N.J., and three sisters (Mrs. Sophie Lachapelle, Josephine, and Bernice Bednarz, all of North Grosvenordale).

"Hometown Heroes of the Quiet Corner" is a book series that honors military veterans from northeast Connecticut. The books

Turn To BOOK page A11

Arrests made in connection with 2024 arson incident

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

THOMPSON — Two suspects have been arrested in connection to an arson incident in Thompson from 2024 with attempted murder also part of the charges.

Police reports identify 42-year-old Walter Lawson of Putnam and 59-year-old James Chenevert of Webster, Mass. as the suspects, each arrested on separate dates but with identical charges stemming from an incident on May 13, 2024, when, according to police, Lawson and Chenevert set fire to a home in Thompson with two individuals inside apparently out of revenge for a prior interaction with the son of the homeowner.

The fire in 2024 occurred at around 3 a.m. in North Grosvenordale, a village in Thompson. Two individuals were inside the home at the time but escaped unharmed. The victim's names and the address of the fire were redacted from the official affidavit. Police later determined the fire was set intentionally, leading to a larger investigation.

The victims attested that the night of fire they heard something hit their house before the smoke alarms went off and they noticed flames. Upon exiting the home, they noticed a "trail-like formation" and flames against the back of the house. The homeowners attempted to douse the flames themselves before firefighters arrived.

A state police K-9 officer eventually alerted investigators to the presence of ignitable liquid, and several possible ignition locations were identified. Police later located a dark colored gas can on a neighboring property, which they determined was likely discarded by the culprits, as well as a cell phone.

Discussions with the homeowners led police to a suspect simply known as "L" who was described as a possible drug dealer who may have had a negative run-in with the female victim's son who occasionally stayed on the property. The affidavit confirmed that the description of "L" led them to the first suspect, Walter Lawson, who was arrested on Feb. 6 on arson charges and two counts of attempt to murder. He was held on a \$500,000 cash/surety bond and arraigned that same day in Danielson Superior Court.

According to court records, Lawson had previously served jail time for possession of drugs with intent to sell. He was also previously charged with manslaughter and conspiracy to commit assault. Both of these charges, as well as his most recent arson-related charges, are awaiting pleas.

Police later identified two more individuals of interest, a female whose identity was redacted in the affidavit, and James Chenevert. An initial discussion with the female individual, who is currently incarcerated in Niantic, revealed that she and Chenevert were present during the fire and that she set the blaze using a can of gasoline. Police later located and interviewed Chenevert who stated that days prior to the fire he had been attacked by five men in Woodstock, among

Turn To ARRESTS page A11

Killingly hoop boys named ECC Division 2 champions



WOODSTOCK — Killingly Basketball (13-6, 7-0) clinched the ECC Division 2 Championship last week with a victory over Woodstock (12-7, 6-1) on the road!

Final score: 75 - 50!

Quin Crowley led all scorers with 27 points and 7 rebounds! Ethan Hall chipped in 14 points, while Greyson Marquez had 12 points and 11 assists!

Quinn Summer added 10 points and 14 rebounds for

his 10th double double of the season! Aiden LaMotte hit 2 threes for 6 points, while Jake Beaudreault had 4 points, 5 rebounds, and 3 assists!

Drake Abdullovski had 13 points for Woodstock.

Brian Gosselin receives Killingly Environmental Award



Brian Gosselin was named the recipient of the Killingly Conservation Commission's 2025 Environmental Award for his work maintaining local cemeteries.

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

KILLINGLY — The Killingly Conservation

Commission presented its annual Environmental Award on Feb. 10 before the Town Council and the public at large.

This year's recipient was Brian Gosselin, who was honored for his dedication to maintaining and caring

Turn To AWARD page A10

Poets At Large to present special International Women's Day reading March 8



Fred Gerhard



Meg Smith



Karen Warinsky

Photos
WEBSTER — The public is invited to a spoken word/poetry reading to celebrate International Women's Day on Sunday, March 8 organized by Poets at Large. The free event will be held at The Rose Room, 4 E. Main St., Webster, from 1-3 p.m. Featured readers will be Fred Gerhard, Meg Smith and Karen Warinsky. There will be an open mic as well. Donations are welcome.

Fred Gerhard is the author of *Drifting to "Hello"* (Khotso Publishing, 2023), and *"Lilacs Still Bloom in*

Ashburnham" (Local Gems Poetry Press, 2023). His poems have been published in *Amethyst Review*, *BlazeVOX*, *Entropy Magazine*, *Friends Journal*, *Pif Magazine*, *POETICA REVIEW*, and other magazines and anthologies. He is one of the 2023 winners of *Poetry in the Pines* in New Hampshire, is the 2024 poetry winner for *Art on the Trails* in Massachusetts and serves as an editor for *Quabbin Quills* and for *Smoky Quartz*. Gerhard is one of the founders of the *New Dawn Writers' Group* in Ashburnham where he runs poetry workshops and open mics. Gerhard will also read some poems written by his mother, *Rena Gerhard*. Mrs. Gerhard was a published poet who wrote for much of her life, composed hymns and counterpoint musical pieces and taught *Logic* at the Penn

State Campus in Altoona, Pa.
Meg Smith is a first-generation Irish-American poet living in Lowell, Mass. Her poetry has been published widely including in *The Cafe Review*, *Muddy River Review*, and *Lowell Review*. She currently serves as content editor for *Worcester Magazine*, and as science columnist for the *Telegram & Gazette*. She is producer of *Poe in Lowell*, celebrating *Edgar Allan Poe's* visits to Lowell. She welcomes visits to meg-smithwriter.com.

Karen Warinsky is the author of: *"Gold in Autumn"* (2020) and *"Sunrise Ruby"* (2022), both from *Human Error Publishing*. *"Dining with War"* (2023 *Alien Buddha Press*), and her new release *Beauty & Ashes* (Kelsay

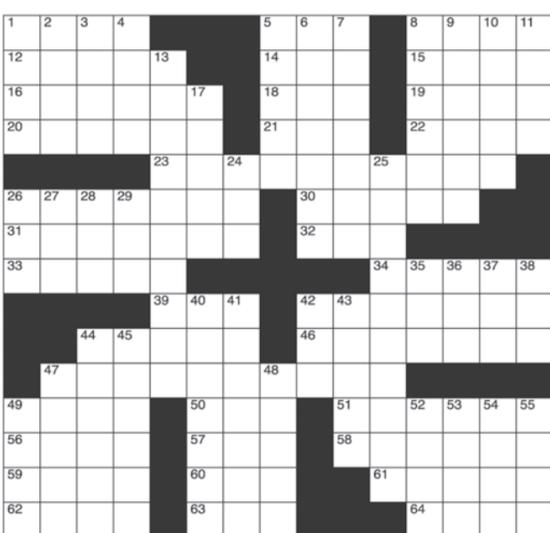
Books 2025), and she has published widely in numerous journals and lit magazines. Her poem "Mirage" won first place in the 2024 Ekphrastic Poetry Trust, she is a Best of the Net nominee and a former finalist of the Montreal International Poetry Contest. Warinsky coordinates spoken word events in MA and CT under the name *Poets at Large*, in various venues, including *The Vanilla Bean Café* in Pomfret, Conn. She is retired from careers in media and teaching.

Woodstock based *Poets at Large* is a project of *Windham Arts*. All events are ADA compliant and are recommended for ages 16 and up. Contact karen.warinsky@gmail.com to sign up for the open mic; five-minute max as time allows.

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CLUES ACROSS

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. What travelers must do | 34. Ancient capital |
| 5. Calendar month | 39. S. American wood sorrel |
| 8. Hopefully quickly | 42. General discomfort |
| 12. Once more | 44. Philippine island |
| 14. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! | 46. A witty saying |
| 15. "Cheers" actress Perlman | 47. One who summarizes |
| 16. Astronomy unit | 49. Covered in |
| 18. Savings vehicle | 50. Mimic |
| 19. Get your ducks in this | 51. Henry was a notable one |
| 20. Right away | 56. Daughter of Hera and Zeus |
| 21. Popular sports league | 57. Retired NFLer Newton |
| 22. Containers | 58. Playground equipment |
| 23. Entireties | 59. Concept |
| 26. One who wassails | 60. Satisfaction |
| 30. Turned-up position | 61. Fishing net |
| 31. Extreme modesty | 62. Hammer end |
| 32. Writing utensil | 63. A father's male child |
| 33. Rewards (archaic) | 64. Japanese drink |

CLUES DOWN

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Off-Broadway figure | 29. Not even |
| 2. Gelatinous substance | 35. A way to drop |
| 3. Concern | 36. Title of respect |
| 4. "Lick It Up" rockers | 37. World leader |
| 5. Serbian river | 38. Georgia rockers |
| 6. Part of a hat | 40. National capital |
| 7. Bowl-shaped drinking vessel | 41. Great Plains people |
| 8. Semitic language | 42. Duck-sized dinosaur genus |
| 9. Utter a shrill cry | 43. Architectural recesses |
| 10. Long times | 44. Member of U.S. Navy |
| 11. Animal parts | 45. Mountainous |
| 13. Causing annoyance | 47. Kite bird |
| 17. Amorous talker | 48. Sweetheart (archaic) |
| 24. Attempt | 49. Popular snack made of potato |
| 25. Harmonic effects | 52. 70s songsters The Bee |
| 26. Cost per mile | 53. SE China port |
| 27. They | 54. Something to fill up |
| 28. Bitterly regret | 55. League of Legends character |

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Adventure Park at Storrs kicks off 2026 season March 27



STORRS — Adventure is officially back! The Adventure Park at Storrs, the region's premier outdoor zipline and climbing

destination, will open for the 2026 season on Friday, March 27.

A favorite spring tradition for families, teens, and thrill-seekers alike, The Adventure Park invites guests to climb, zip, and explore 9 aerial trails and 28 ziplines set high among the trees.

special Spring Break hours from April 11-29:

- Sunday – Thursday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Spring fun continues with the return of the popular Easter Egg Hunt in the Trees. Guests can search for hidden "eggs" while climbing through the Park's trails, and at the end of their adventure, enjoy a sweet treat from the Park Store. The Easter Egg Hunt is free to participate in with the purchase of a climbing ticket.

The full Spring 2026 schedule and hours are now available at <https://myadventurepark.com/location/storrs-ct/hours-calendar/>.

About The Adventure Park at Storrs

The nine trails at The Adventure Park consist of various challenges in the trees, including bridges, tightropes, ladders, and 28 ziplines. Participants wear harnesses with clips that connect to the trail's safety system, ensuring that they are always locked on to the course until they reach the end. The main trails are designed for ages 7 to adult, and an Adventure Playground provides a low-to-the-ground adventure experience for little climbers ages 3-6.

Non-climbing participants are admitted free of charge to share the experience on the ground and enjoy the property's nature trails, picnic tables and community firepit.

The Adventure Park at Storrs is open to the general public and is located minutes from the UConn Campus. The address is 2007 Storrs Rd. Walk ins are welcome on a space available basis, but guests are encouraged to book ahead on the Park's website or by calling 860-946-0606.

"We're excited to kick off another season of outdoor adventure and welcome both returning climbers and first-time guests," said Jesse Pasacreta, Park Manager. "After a long winter, there's nothing better than getting outside, challenging yourself, and having fun in the fresh air."

Guests that visit between Friday, March 28 and Sunday, April 5 can purchase the Season Starter Deal: buy a General Admission ticket and receive a free General Admission ticket to return anytime in 2026. Terms and conditions apply.

To celebrate the season, the Park will offer

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Nurse Practitioner Anna Honore advances patient access at Westview



Anna Honore

DAYVILLE — Anna Honore, APRN, FNP-C, is the newest member of Westview Health Care Center's in-house team of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses.

Honore brings a strong commitment to patient advocacy, preventative care, and expanded access to medical services in joining the staff of the Dayville facility. As part of Westview's General Nurse Practitioner Program, she provides care to patients in both inpatient and outpatient settings; working alongside Kerri Sauer, APRN-DNP, and James Allentuck, AGNP-C to support continuity of treatment across the organization's skilled nursing and outpatient rehabilitation services.

Honore earned both her Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology and Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Southern Connecticut State University through the institution's Accelerated Career Entry program. This academically intensive pathway helped prepare her for challenging and diverse clinical experiences. Just after completing her undergraduate degree, she began her career as an Emergency Medical Technician in New Haven. In this role, she responded to patients from a wide range of backgrounds and medical needs. Upon her certification as a Registered Nurse, Honore worked in the Emergency Department at Yale New Haven Hospital; in the Urgent Care Clinic at Cornell Scott Hill

Health Center; and in the Medical/Surgical Inpatient Nursing Units of the Hospital of Central Connecticut.

Continuing to find experiences that strengthen her abilities to support patients through complex medical and social challenges is a strong part of Honore's motivation. She has provided specialized care in addiction treatment settings and carries enduring empathy from that work as she looks to help underserved patient demographics. Honore went on to complete her Master of Science degree as a Family Nurse Practitioner at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences in Worcester; further expanding the patient population she serves.

Honore maintains a focus on closing gaps in health care access and helping patients navigate barriers that may prevent them from receiving consistent treatment. She emphasizes preventative care and patient education while remaining prepared to address acute medical concerns as they arise. Her approach centers on understanding the full context of each patient's needs and advocating for the resources necessary to support long-term wellness.

Westview's General Nurse Practitioner Program is certified to provide care for patients ages 13 and older; expanding access to primary and follow-up medical services for residents of the surrounding community. Westview Health Care Center continues to advance its mission of "Caring for Generations" by growing its team of nurse practitioners and broadening treatment pathways for patients and families throughout the region.

Westview Health Care Center is a 103-bed inpatient skilled nursing facility, which includes a distinct and self-contained 28-bed sub-acute short term rehabilitation unit and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapies including: Sports Medicine, Adolescent/Pediatric, Adult, and Aquatic Outpatient Centers, all dedicated to providing outstanding quality health care services. The Dayville, Connecticut facility is consistently ranked among the top nursing facilities in the nation, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as well as U.S. News and World Report, consecutively for the past 18 years.

Local student contributes through service learning

BOSTON, Mass. — Sofia Thurber of Thompson recently made an impact in the lives of young Bostonians through service learning.

Thurber contributed during the fall session of The Great American Experiment, an entry-level course at the School of Education that focuses on the history of education in the United States, plus a service-learning component to supplement classroom learning with real-world experience.

Students in the Great American Experiment contribute at the Mission Grammar School, the Sister Mary Hart afterschool program, or the 3 Point Foundation.

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

Dean's List honors announced at Tufts University

MEDFORD, Mass. — Tufts University recently announced the dean's list for the fall 2025 semester. Dean's list honors at Tufts University require a semester grade point average of 3.4 or greater.

Shawn Mentzer, Class of 2027, of Pomfret Center

Ben Gordon, Class of 2026, of Woodstock

Tufts University, located on campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, Mass., and in Talloires, France, is recognized among the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.

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OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Quiet Corner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Correction on Pomfret tax increases

To the Editor:
 Recently, I submitted a letter to the Woodstock Villager that described a number of issues with the Pomfret budget process and recommendations for solutions.

In the letter, I incorrectly stated that Pomfret property taxes have increased by more than 10 percent per year on average over the past five years. That would mean a five-year average of almost 50 percent, and that is clearly incorrect and even too much for our Town's tax-and-spend leadership, who complained about my statement.

The correction is that, over the last five years, the compound average of our property tax increases is over 10 percent.

All the other statements remain true and are more relevant than ever;

The new "affordable housing" laws are a threat to our open space and property values and are likely to drive up property taxes long term if

Pomfret is forced to build infrastructure,

Taxes increases for open land are hiding in plain sight, only recently temporarily abated by Lamont as an election year gimmick,

The over 1,400 unfunded state mandates are crushing Town budgets,

The primary education funding mechanism ECS (Education Cost Sharing) formula, has been frozen in time. While every cost has increased, towns are forced to pay the difference, and

Connecticut is poised to move ahead as one of the most expensive states in the nation.

We welcome and encourage more taxpayer engagement and participation to demand a better way forward. The alternative is another year of more spending and increased taxes.

MARTHA EMILIO
 POMFRET

Making Racism Great Again

To the Editor:

America just can't seem to put its dark history of racism behind it. Recently, President Trump's social media posting that depicted former President Obama and Michelle Obama as apes is just the latest of his deplorable pronouncements and acts. Hopefully, your readers don't need a regurgitation of the enormous number of his racialized attacks on Black and Brown immigrants, Muslims, Obama, judges, and elected officials to accept this fact. His warm words for, and refusal to condemn, openly anti-Semitic demonstrators and rioters further prove the point.

For many years, it seemed that presidential racism was waning despite its long history. A large number of presidents were slave holders. Woodrow Wilson, among others, was a notorious racist. As governor of California, Ronald Reagan, on a phone call to President Nixon, called African delegates to the UN "monkeys." Nixon chuckled.

Trump's open racism has spawned a whole raft of openly racist right-wing podcasters and influencers and converted X, formerly Twitter, into a cesspool of white nationalist garbage. Hate is being mainstreamed under the guise of the First Amendment.

Politicians, commentators, and others often like to proclaim, "this is not who we are," when asked to react to the resurgence of open racism in America. I feel sick every time they do because, unfortunately, this is exactly who we are. Everyone knew exactly who Trump was and elected him anyway. The rest of the world understands it despite Trump's efforts to rewrite history. It's time for Americans to come to terms with our history and loudly repudiate racism and our racist president.

BILLY G. TAYLOR
 KILLINGLY

We must never forget the patriots who came before us

To the Editor:

The most urgent task facing our nation today is the preservation of our under attack democracy. We need to secure our heritage for future generations, as I fear many young people are growing up without a real understanding of what it takes and truly means to be an American. We must never forget the patriots who came before us who took up arms to defend our freedoms.

It started with ordinary people establishing homesteads in a new land who answered the call to arms when needed. They marched to the aid of Boston in 1775 to join in the revolution and fought the British in Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill to free the 13 colonies from British rule.

Thomas Paine, in "The Crisis," wrote, "those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

Each year, United States and Canadian Americans have special days to commemorate the extraordinary efforts of their citizens who had the courage to step forward when their country needed them. We must expect every American to appreciate the sacrifices that were made by previous generations so you and I could live in a free and prosperous nation, the greatest nation on earth.

I enlisted in 1957 under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, just after the Korean Conflict had ended. It was peace time—all was well.

Things never stay the same for long. Why Vietnam? Ho Chi Minh established the Republic in 1945 when the U.S. approved military and economic aid to pro French regimes in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in 1950. Soon after the French surrendered to the Communists and the Republic of Vietnam was created. The American Advisory group took over the training of the South Vietnamese forces in 1956. The first two Americans were killed by enemy forces in 1957.

I entered the fray in 1961 as an advisor with a 12 man military police detachment. We didn't know who our real enemy was, as the North Vietnamese government had infiltrated the south as vacationers; some were spies, some got jobs working for us on military installations or stayed on as tourists. However, at night they would steal anything made of steel which could be melted down and used against us. Suffice to say these were dark days of adversity.

General Westmoreland said later, "It was a difficult war against an unworthy enemy." Our government explained that it was a lot of "Plausible Deniability." In fact, at my 12 hour debriefing upon my return to the states, I was ordered by a superior officer "to never admit to having been in a country called Vietnam and never to speak to anyone of this place because

we had never been there." In fact, later I wrote to the National Archives and Records Center in St. Louis, Mo., asking for a copy of one of my commendations. I received a reply in May 1983, stating, "If the record was here on July 12, 1973, it would have been in the area that suffered the most damage in the fire on that date and may have been destroyed."

I held a secret FBI Security Clearance as a police officer and understood going in that this was a clandestine operation and accepted the role. The real story came out later in the release of the Pentagon Papers which awakened the general US public to the truth and the importance of fighting for independence.

We can still be in a state of strong opposition, but let's put war aside and talk out our differences and find a solution to the problem and avoid the pain, bloodshed and carnage of the past. Let's accept people for who they are, and not for who we think they should be.

G. Tod Stevenson
 Woodstock

People who know what they're doing

One of the most reassuring things in the world is encountering someone who clearly knows what they're doing.

Not in a loud or showy way. Not the kind that comes with a lot of talk or self-promotion. I mean the quiet confidence of a person who has done a thing often enough that their hands move before their mouth does.

You see it in small moments. The person behind the counter who doesn't need to check

the screen to know what comes next. The mechanic who listens for five seconds and nods,

already narrowing down the problem. The librarian who can find exactly what you're looking for even when you're not sure how to describe it.

They don't rush. They don't panic. They don't make you feel foolish for asking. They simply proceed.

I've noticed that our little corner of Northeast Connecticut is full of these people, even if we don't always stop to appreciate them. They're the ones who make everyday life run more smoothly than it has any right to.

They are also becoming a bit rarer.

These days, it often feels like everyone is still learning on the job, still checking instructions, still passing problems along to someone else. There's nothing wrong with that, of course. We all start somewhere. But there is something deeply comforting about dealing with a person who has settled into their role and mastered it.

That kind of competence doesn't come from shortcuts. It comes from repetition. From mistakes made quietly and corrected without drama. From years of showing up, paying attention, and caring just enough to do the job right even when no one is watching.

What strikes me most is how little these people usually say about themselves.

They don't announce their experience. They don't frame every task as a burden. They don't explain how busy they are. They simply do what needs doing, and do it well.

There is generosity in that.

When someone knows what they're doing, they lend calm to the situation. They make others feel steadier. They reduce friction without ever calling attention to the effort involved. In a world that often feels chaotic, that is no small gift.

I sometimes wonder if we celebrate the wrong qualities too loudly. We praise speed, novelty, and disruption, but overlook reliability. We admire big ideas while forgetting the value of steady hands.

Yet it's those steady hands that fix the problem before it becomes a crisis. They are the reason many of our days pass uneventfully, which is another way of saying successfully.

At home, I've come to appreciate this more with time. The routines that work. The small systems that hold because someone thought them through years ago. The quiet competence that keeps life from wobbling off its axis.

It's not flashy. It doesn't trend. But it matters.

So the next time you find yourself helped by someone who clearly knows their way around a task, it's worth pausing to notice. Maybe even to say thank you. They may wave it off, but it will land all the same.

Because people who know what they're doing are part of the invisible structure holding things together.

And we are lucky to have as many of them as we do.

A steady hand for a changing time

There are seasons in the life of a town when change feels slow and almost invisible. Then there are seasons when it seems to arrive all at once.

Across Northeast Connecticut, we are living in one of those latter seasons.

Drive through downtown Putnam on a weekday afternoon and you will see new storefronts filling once-empty spaces. Spend time in Killingly or Brooklyn and you will hear conversations about school facilities, infrastructure, and long-term planning. Attend a meeting in Thompson or Woodstock and you will find residents weighing growth against preservation, budgets against needs, and today's pressures against tomorrow's promises.

None of this is unusual. In fact, it is the natural rhythm of small-town life. Communities grow. Buildings age. Systems need repair. Families move in and out. What matters is not whether change happens, but how we respond to it.

That response requires something increasingly rare in modern life: steadiness.

Steadiness means taking the time to read a proposal before reacting to it. It means listening at a public meeting, even when we disagree. It means remembering that the person on the other side of the microphone is also a neighbor who shops at the same grocery store and stands behind us in line at the post office.

In recent months, conversations about schools, signage, local development, and municipal spending have stirred strong opinions in several of our towns. That is healthy. Passion for one's community is not a weakness. It is a strength.

But passion without perspective can easily become noise.

Our towns function best when we pair conviction with courtesy. We can insist on fiscal responsibility while still acknowledging the needs of our children. We can defend free expression while also promoting respectful discourse. We can debate development plans while recognizing that thoughtful growth is not the same thing as reckless expansion.

Small towns have always operated on a delicate balance. We want opportunity without losing identity. We want progress without sacrificing character. We want our young families to stay, our seniors to feel secure, and our Main Streets to remain vibrant.

Those goals are not mutually exclusive. They require careful planning, transparent leadership, and active participation.

It is worth remembering that many of the institutions we value today were once the subject of debate. School buildings that now feel like fixtures were once controversial capital projects. Parks and trails we now enjoy were once line items in a budget. Even downtown revitalization efforts that draw visitors and new businesses often began with difficult conversations and narrow votes.

History shows that Northeast Connecticut has a quiet resilience. We may argue. We may disagree. But time and again, when faced with a genuine challenge, our towns find a way forward.

That resilience depends on engagement, not outrage. It depends on citizens who attend meetings, read budgets, ask informed questions, and hold officials accountable without assuming bad faith. It depends on leaders who communicate clearly, welcome input, and remember that public service is exactly that—service.

There is no single issue defining our region this year. Instead, there is a collection of decisions, each modest on its own, that together shape the direction of our communities.

In moments like this, steadiness is not the absence of opinion. It is the discipline to approach each issue thoughtfully, to weigh long-term impact over short-term emotion, and to keep the broader good of the town in view.

Northeast Connecticut has never been defined by flash or frenzy. It has been defined by neighbors who know one another, by volunteer fire departments and youth sports leagues, by local businesses that survive through loyalty and trust.

If we approach the current season of change with that same sense of grounded purpose, there is no reason to doubt our ability to navigate it well.

The future of our towns will not be decided by the loudest voice in the room. It will be shaped by steady hands, clear eyes, and a shared commitment to preserving what makes this corner of Connecticut feel like home.

And that is work worth doing.

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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Putnam Area Foundation presents grant to support Together We Blossom's community mission

PUTNAM — Richard Loomis, on behalf of the Putnam Area Foundation, recently presented a \$1,000 grant to Rhianna Curotto, Founder and CEO, and Wendy Lynch, Director, of Together We Blossom in support of the organization's ongoing efforts to serve individuals and families facing financial hardship throughout the region.

The funding supports the work of the Blossom Boutique, an entity of Together We Blossom. The Blossom Boutique is a donation-based nonprofit dedicated to providing essential clothing, toilet-

ries, and baby equipment at no cost to community members in need. The boutique offers a welcoming and supportive environment where individuals and families can access high-quality, gently used items while maintaining dignity and independence.

Together We Blossom partners with local businesses, organizations, and generous donors to ensure its shelves remain stocked and services remain accessible. Through these partnerships, the organization continues to strengthen community connections while providing vital resources to resi-

dents experiencing financial challenges.

All items at the Blossom Boutique are provided free of charge to residence from the towns of Webster, Charlton, Dudley, and Webster, Mass., along with Killingly, Pomfret, Putnam, Thompson, and Woodstock.

"The Putnam Area Foundation is proud to support organizations that directly improve the quality of life in our communities," said Loomis. "Together We Blossom exemplifies compassion in action, ensuring that neighbors in need have access to essential items and

a welcoming place to turn for support."

The Putnam Area Foundation continues its mission of supporting charitable initiatives that strengthen the greater Putnam area through grants, partnerships, and community engagement.

Together We Blossom is a tax-exempt IRS 501(c) (3) charitable organization. For more information about Together We Blossom, or to learn how to donate or volunteer, please contact Rhianna Curotto @togetherweblossomct@gmail.com or mail to PO Box 369, North Grosvenordale, CT 06255.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAVE Act risks blocking eligible voters

To the Editor:

We all want elections that are safe, secure and accurate. Trump is pushing Congress to pass the SAVE Act, a bill that would require documentary proof of U.S. citizenship to register to vote. Citizenship is already required under federal law, and research consistently shows that noncitizen voting is rare. So, the question is does the SAVE Act solve a real problem or create new ones? "The SAVE Act may sound harmless, but it's a dangerous step toward voter suppression," the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin said.

Volunteers and municipal employees deserve respect

To the Editor:

Pomfret, like small communities throughout northeastern Connecticut and across the country, depends on volunteers, dedicated municipal employees, and active citizen engagement. We are fortunate to have exceptional community members who give their time and talent to serve others. They do an outstanding job, and we support and deeply appreciate their commitment.

Beyond the people who make Pomfret strong, one of our greatest assets is our reputation. The Pomfret Democratic Town Committee recognizes the value of that reputation and is committed to supporting and protecting it and those who have earned it.

The U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 4) gives states primary authority over the "Times, Places and Manner" of elections, while Congress has authority to regulate federal elections. Critics of the SAVE Act argue that the Act would significantly expand federal requirements in an area traditionally managed by states.

The Act would require applicants to present documentary proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, U.S. passport, Certificate of Citizenship, Naturalization Certificate, or Consular Report of Birth

It is easy to tear things down for political gain without considering how that rhetoric affects people, reputations, future volunteerism, and even potential grant opportunities. Words have consequences. Protecting Pomfret's good name is not about politics — it is about preserving the trust, goodwill, and civic spirit that sustain our community.

We challenge the Pomfret Republican Town Committee to engage responsibly and base its statements on facts. Above all, please respect the community members who work hard every day to serve all Pomfret residents.

MARLENE HEALD
POMFRET DEMOCRATIC TOWN
COMMITTEE

Abroad. A U.S. passport currently costs \$165 for first-time applicants. (That requirement to vote represents a form of a poll tax, say critics.) REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses do not, by themselves, establish U.S. citizenship.

Voting rights groups and election administrators have raised concerns about the practical effects of these requirements. Millions of Americans do not have ready access to documentary proof of citizenship. Some studies estimate that 9 percent of voting-age citizens may lack immediate access to such documentation. Survey research has also found that many registered voters do not have a passport reflecting their current legal name, and some do not have easy access to their birth certificates.

Married women who have changed their surnames could face additional documentation hurdles if their birth certificates do not match their current legal names. A 2023 Pew Research study found that nearly 80 percent of married women take their spouse's last name, while most married men do not change theirs. If additional paperwork such as marriage licenses or divorce decrees is required to reconcile name differences, that could add fees, delays and added bureaucracy for women simply wanting to exercise their right to vote.

Research also suggests disparities in access to identification. A 2024 study from the University of Maryland found that Black and Hispanic Americans are less likely than White Americans to have a current driver's license. Critics argue that additional documentation requirements could disproportionately affect younger voters (18 - 24) and communities of color.

There is also legal precedent to consider. In 2018, a federal court struck down Kansas's proof-of-citizenship law, finding it violated the National Voter Registration Act. Evidence in that case showed that more than 30,000 voter applications were suspended or canceled after the law was implemented.

The Act could have unintended consequences for election officials and election administration. For voters who register by mail, the Act requires documentary proof of citizenship to be delivered in person to an election office, effectively nullifying the benefits of mail registration.

The Act places election officials in the position of making high-stakes judgment

calls and exposes them to heightened legal and personal risk. It establishes criminal penalties for officials who register an applicant who fails to present documentary proof of citizenship, even if that applicant is in fact a U.S. citizen. The bill also authorizes private individuals to sue election officials under the same circumstances, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center.

The Center reports these provisions could encourage overly cautious behavior (e.g., not accepting applications to register when an election official isn't familiar with the type of documentation provided) and further strain an election workforce already facing low wages, long hours, high turnover and burnout.

"The SAVE America Act requires significant changes to each step of the voter registration process: how voters register, how their identities are verified, and how list maintenance is performed on an ongoing basis. These changes will be costly and time consuming. The Act becomes effective on the date of enactment, giving states no time to adjust processes. It also requires that the U.S. Election Assistance Commission offer implementation guidance to states within just 10 days of enactment. Further, the Act offers NO funding to states to assist with implementation costs." Depending on final bill language and implementation timelines, states may face significant costs and logistical challenges. This would be another unfunded mandate forced upon states and municipalities that already struggle with funding and budgets.

Supporters of the SAVE Act argue that it strengthens election integrity. Opponents contend that it risks creating disenfranchisement and adds barriers for eligible voters without clear evidence of a widespread problem it is designed to solve.

Before Congress imposes a new national documentation mandate, it should answer a simple question: Is this about protecting elections, or about making voter registration harder than it needs to be?

If you are married and have changed your name, are a young voter, or have concerns about documentation requirements, it may be worth reviewing the proposed SAVE Act and contacting your elected representatives to express your views on exercising your right to vote.

LISA ARENDS
BROOKLYN

Have you tried prayer?

To the Editor:

Not the kind that you ask for listing what you want, where you want to control the outcome, but the one that you are inspired to express when inviting a desire for harmony with the Will of your Creator. Faith, instead of Fear... Since they cannot co-exist! The Universal power of All that is seen and unseen. While you're at it, in the moment, you might want to be present in a state of gratitude! Awareness of how blessed we are, is in itself, a blessing!

The radar gave us a clear picture of the blockbuster storm headed our way! The forecasters could have exaggerated a little, but there was no doubt ... we were gonna get clobbered. And yet... we were spared the full brunt of Mother Nature! And the strongest revelation of Divine intervention ...Most of us did not lose power!

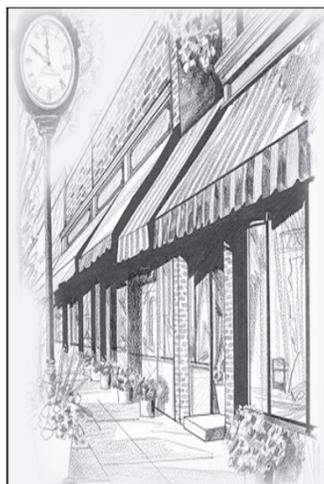
Dare we ponder?

Could it be that for a split moment in time, we were thinking of others instead of ourselves? Could it be that we reached out to family and friends to ask if prep help was needed? Did you feel that, for a moment, there was a Force that united us in harmony with each other, that went far beyond a gold medal in Olympic hockey? There are so many distractions from the awareness of blessings.

Yet...there are blinking lights on our dashboard that demand our attention, our awareness of neglected priorities.

I believe that the moderate storm that visited us recently, is a blinking light. It was letting us know that our spiritual gage needs a tune-up! That we need to start being grateful in prayers of harmony, and stop calling it luck!

LYDIA RIVERA-ABRAMS
DAYVILLE



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Political unrest & market trends: What can history tell us?

Investing is an inherently optimistic activity. Investors are essentially betting that the economy and companies' earnings will be better in the future than they are today. But it can be hard to feel optimistic after reading about the unrest at home and abroad.

At home, folks are protesting in Minnesota against the behavior of immigration agents, and the country as a whole seems divided between folks who like and dislike President Trump. Abroad, Ukraine and Russia are at war, the US arrested Venezuela's leader, China has threatened reunification with Taiwan, the US is threatening Iran's leadership, and Gaza is buried under rubble after the Israeli/Palestinian war.

Despite the protests and wars, the US economy and corporate earnings have continued to grow this year, propelling the stock market to record levels. Historically, this isn't uncommon. Most selloffs in the wake of war or civil unrest have been short-lived and provided buying

opportunities for those with nerves of steel.

Let's take a look at some of the conflicts throughout history and how the stock market has reacted.

World War II

The US entered World War II in the days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The US stock market fell in the three years prior to the US declaration of war, -5.5 percent in 1939, -15.3 percent in 1940, and -17.9 percent in 1941. But in each of the four years after the US entered the war, the stock market rallied (12.4 percent in 1942, 19.5 percent in 1943, 13.8 percent in 1944, and 30.7 percent in 1945).

Shocking events

There have been many sad events in US history, including assassinations, but they haven't had much impact on stock prices. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, and the market ended that year up 18.9 percent, and it gained 13.0 percent in 1964. Rev.



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Martin Luther King was killed on April 4, 1968, and yet the market gained 7.7 percent.

Civil unrest has also failed to keep stocks down for long. There were civil rights marches in the South in 1965, but the S&P 500 ended the year up 9.1 percent. Anti-Vietnam War protests spanned many years, but some of the largest occurred from 1965 through 1970. And yet the market was up in four of those six years. There were massive riots in Los Angeles after four police officers were acquitted of beating Rodney King in 1992, and the S&P 500 gained 4.5 percent. The market ended 2021 up 26.9 percent after the year began with supporters of President Trump attacking the Capitol

after he lost the 2020 presidential election.

9/11

If the economy is already in a recession, a war or protests haven't helped matters. Consider September 11, 2001, when terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania. The US responded by sending troops into Afghanistan. The attack occurred roughly a year after the Technology bubble burst, leading many small tech companies to file for bankruptcy in the ensuing years and sparking a recession that ran from March 2001 through November 2001. The S&P 500 fell 10.1 percent in 2000, 13.0 percent in 2001, and 23.4 percent in 2002, only to mount a strong rally in each of the next five years.

Pandemic of 2020

Just six years ago, the world shut down due to an unknown, deadly virus. The Covid Pandemic kept us learning and working

from our homes, buying hand sanitizer by the case, and learning how to Zoom. Thanks to government subsidies, Internet shopping, and the development of a vaccine, the S&P 500 ended 2020 up 16.3 percent after recovering from a sharp selloff in February and March.

The world has experienced numerous periods of uncertainty, and the stock market has continued to climb over the long run. Cool-headed investors, who have stayed the course through market volatility, have historically been rewarded.

Our team at WHZ is here to help. Call us at (860) 928-2341 or schedule a complimentary discovery session now with our team. Together, we can create a strategy designed to give you Absolute Confidence. Unwavering Partnership. For Life.

Authored by WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors Senior Partner & Chief Investment Officer Laurence Hale.

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Mining newspapers for tidbits about our ancestors' lives

Inclement Weather: In case of snow, freezing rain or mixed precipitation please listen to WINY for notices about the Killingly Historical Center closings. You may also call the Center's phone about 10:15 a.m. or later and see if anyone answers.

The Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar is open by appointment. It will be open Feb. 28 during Fire & Ice from noon to 4 p.m. Stop in with your children or grandchildren and enjoy making a craft. For additional information, please call (860) 207-6044 and leave a message.

Rescheduled: Pomfret Historical Society Fireside Chat. Feb. 27, 7-8 p.m. Vanilla Bean Café. Topic will be The Amazing Mrs. Whistler, the mother of artist James Whistler. For more information contact windsong@snet.net or call 860-465-7228.

Fish Fridays: Support Killingly Grange #112, an historic property (the old Killingly Centre schoolhouse) 801 Hartford Turnpike. Feb. 27, March 6, 13, 20, 27, and April 3 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Meal 1: Baked or Fried Fish dinner \$18-10 oz. fish fillet, potato, coleslaw, roll, dessert, drink. Meal 2: Clam cakes & chowder, \$12-6 clam cakes and 1 bowl

of clam chowder. Al la Carte while supplies last: clam strips \$10; Clam cakes: 6 for \$8, 12 for \$14; clam chowder, \$6/bowl; Fried fish sandwich-\$5; Onion rings-\$4; French fries-\$3; Cheese sticks-\$3. Limited number of meals. Call or text Terry at 860-885-1813. At the door pay by cash, credit card or check payable to Killingly Grange.

\$1 per meal discount if you bring a nonperishable food item for the food pantry.

Wednesday, March 4. 6-7:30 p.m. "Hometown Heroes of the Quiet Corner, World War II Purple Heart Edition 2025, Vo. 2." Author talk and book signing. Michael Rocchetti, American Legion Post 13 Commander. Putnam Public Library.

Saturday, March 7. Mary Dixon Kies of Killingly and Her Times. 12:30-1:30 p.m. Putnam Municipal Complex. Sponsored by Putnam Public Library and the Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam. Join Killingly Municipal Historian Margaret Weaver for a Women's History Month program. Mary is



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MARGARET
WEAVER

considered the first woman to receive a U.S. Patent in her own name. Reflect on why she applied for the patent and how life was changing in Northeastern Connecticut in the early 1800's. There will be time for questions and discussion following the program.

I thought it would be interesting to check in on what was happening in our area 100 years ago, in late February 1926. The front page of the February 25th 1926 Windham County Transcript contained the notice of the death of Killingly's oldest resident-Mrs. Caroline Oatley. "Mrs. Caroline Oatley Passes Away at East Killingly. Headed 5 generations. Descended from early R.I. Settlers. She had spent most of her quiet life in this town. Mrs. Caroline Olive Oatley, Killing's oldest resident, passed away shortly before noon Wednesday at the home of her niece, Mrs. Grace Hill, in East Killingly. She was in her 101st year. Until this winter Mrs. Oatley had enjoyed very good health, but during the cold months had gradually failed... Mrs. Oatley was born May 25, 1825 in the town of Foster, R.I., a daughter of Olney and Marcia Wade Mowry. She was the second of twelve children and outlived all her rothers and sisters. Her ancestors were among the earliest settlers of Rhode Island...She married Benedict Oatley, who died many years ago." She was the mother of H.

Herbert Oalley who survives her. (killinglypl.org/archives/WCT, p.1).

These old newspapers provide wonderful tidbits about the lives of our ancestors---items that would probably not make the news today. They add much to the personality of a loved one. I recently watched a Webinar from Chronicling America (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/titles/>) on using their newspaper collection to find more information about family members---obituaries, social tidbits, etc. Their collection covers the years from 1736 to 1963 and includes a variety of newspapers. When using their papers, or other newspaper collections, start with a broad search, keeping in mind alternate spellings of names. Start with dates, locations and facts you already know. For example, the presenter noted that the phrase "Boston Massacre" does not appear in the papers. That event needs to be searched using the date or the name of Atticus, who was killed. The Putnam Patriot is available on this site for 1872-1962; The Windham County Observer (out of Putnam) is available from 1900-1960. Have fun browsing! Chronicling America is a free site.

In addition, the new Winter edition of American Ancestors contains a feature by Senior Genealogist Rhonda R. McClure, "Mining the Treasures in Newspapers (pp.22-26)." Union lists and bibliographies of newspapers will help you determine if a newspaper exists for the place, time and location where your ancestor/s

lived. "Winifred Gregory's American Newspapers 1821-1936, A Union List of Files Available in the United States and Canada lists newspapers in geographical order by title and frequency...Available online at catalog.hatitrust.org/Record/001178201." (p.25). The magazine is available at Killingly Public Library.

Here's a local tidbit for those from the Shippee family from the same paper. "Uncle Joe' Shippee Signs Up For a Year. (Not for the military!) It has been reported from Plainfield that 'Uncle Joe' Shippee, former crossing tender who won the New England fiddling championship at Providence recently, has signed a contract for one year with a representative of Sam B. Schubert of New York. It is said that the contract calls for a salary of over \$10,000, with all expenses paid. It becomes effective on March 1" (p.1).

I had fun reading the sports write-ups of the day. Basketball scores were much lower in 1926. "Windham defeats Killingly 26 to 17. Sickness of Players Cramps K.H.S. Style in Game. Hard Fought Contest. With three players, Conklin, Spencer and Fulton, literally getting up from their sick beds to enter the fray, Killingly High gave Windham the best battle the Willimantic school has had on its home floor this season...In the preliminary game the Windham girls defeated the Putnam High lassies 42-17"...Players for Killingly were Brennan, rf; Conklin, lf; Barrett, c; Spencer, rg; Fulton, lg; Gallup, lg. (Windham County Transcript 2/25/26, p.8-at killinglypl.org)

I'm sure many of you, like me, follow the UConn basketball teams. The same page carried an

article about what was happening in the winter of 1926. "Green Mountain Five Defeated at Storrs. With Paul Bitgood holding down one of the guard positions and Pop Williams jumping center during a part of the contest, the Connecticut Aggies put down Vermont University at Storrs Friday evening in one of the fastest games ever seen on the Hawley Armory court. The final count of 47 to 41 was reached only after a five minute overtime period." Did you notice the name? Not the Huskies but the Aggies! In 1926 the university was called Connecticut Agricultural College "with the purpose of teaching the practical, real world skills of farming." The name was changed to Connecticut State College in 1933 and the University of Connecticut in 1939. (ConnecticutHistory.org)

"The Husky was officially chosen as the University of Connecticut mascot in 1934 following a student survey in the Connecticut Campus newspaper, with the first live mascot, Jonathan arriving on campus in 1935. The name honors Jonathan Trumbull, Connecticut's Revolutionary War-era governor." (AI). GO HUSKIES! GO!

Margaret M. Weaver Killingly Municipal Historian, February 2026. Windham County Transcripts are available online at killinglypl.org under archives (Killingly Public Library). For additional information email me at margaretmweaver@gmail.com or visit the Killingly Historical Center at 196 Main St., Danielson, Wednesday or Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. or call 860-779-7250. Like us at Facebook — www.facebook.com/killinglyhistoricalsociety.

Chandler Folkerts named to Dean's List at Bates College

LEWISTON, Maine — Chandler Folkerts of Woodstock was named to the Dean's List at Bates College for the Fall semester ending in December 2025. This is a distinction earned by students whose grade point average is 3.92 or higher.

Folkerts is still considering a major at Bates.

Located in Lewiston, Maine, Bates is internationally recognized as a leading liberal arts college, attracting 2,000 students from across the U.S. and around the world. Since 1855, Bates has been dedicated to educating the whole person through creative and rigorous scholarship in a collaborative residential community. Committed to opportunity and excellence, Bates has always admitted students without regard to gender, race, religion, or national origin. Cultivating intellectual discovery and informed civic action, Bates prepares leaders sustained by a love of learning and zeal for responsible stewardship of the wider world.

UTampa student Jacqueline Dearborn of Woodstock earns Dean's List honors

TAMPA, Fla. — Jacqueline Dearborn, of Woodstock, earned dean's list honors at the University of Tampa for the Fall 2025 semester. Dearborn is a Freshman majoring in Graphic Design BFA. Students must maintain a GPA of 3.75 or higher to be eligible for the dean's list.

The University of Tampa is a private, comprehensive university located on 110 acres on the riverfront in downtown Tampa. Known for academic excellence, personal attention and real-world experience in its undergraduate and graduate programs, the University has about 200 programs of study and serves more than 11,500 students from 50 states and most of the world's countries.

Quiet Corner Al-Anon group meets Wednesdays

WOODSTOCK — An open Al-Anon meeting meets at the East Woodstock Congregational Church every Wednesday from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

The Quiet Corner Al-Anon Family Group is open to anyone affected by alcoholism, family or friend. Any enquiries can be directed to 860-634-3271.

**www.Villager
Newspapers.com**

Courtesy

Cub Scout Pack 21 of Putnam built bird houses on Wednesday, Feb. 18 with the help of local carpenter Jim Tetreault. This is just one of many fun and challenging activities Pack 21 does throughout the year. Pack 21 welcomes boys and girls ages five through ten. To join, call John Ryan, at (860) 928-5873.



ALL WE KNOW IS LOCAL ~ VillagerNewspapers.com



Ronald Baron named Thompson's Veteran of the Month

THOMPSON — Air Force Staff Sgt. Ronald W. Baron, Sr. of Elliott Avenue, North Grosvenordale, has been selected by the nominating committee to be recognized and honored as the March 2026 Veteran of the Month for the Town of Thompson.

On Jan. 13, 1965, civilian Ronald Baron reported for his basic training duty at the Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. At the conclusion of his basic training, he was transferred to the Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he underwent extensive training in his military advanced career as a transportation specialist. At the conclusion of this training, he remained at Pease AFB for another year, and very quickly became the personal driver of choice for all the Majors and Commanders on the

base. He was commonly referred to as the transportation expert among the top brass at Pease.

Airman Third Class Baron received numerous awards and citations for his professional and courteous manner in which he completed his responsibilities. Frank G. Soto, USAF transportation Superintendent wrote that Airman Baron has been selected as the Driver of the year for 1965. Soto stated that "He received this recognition for his incentive to comply with all established rules and regulations, for his safe and efficient operation, and for his courtesy to other vehicle operators."

Soto went on to write that "Airman Baron has displayed his willingness to accept and carry out all orders and instructions from his supervisors. He has compiled an outstand-

ing record of Motor Vehicle Operation and has contributed many extra hours toward the completion of his missions."

Numerous other letters of commendation and appreciation were written by Majors and Commanders. When Airman Baron was not transporting his Superiors, his duties included loading and unloading luggage and equipment on and off the B-47's and B-52's coming in and out of Pease AFB. for reassignment.

In January of 1966, Airman Baron was deployed to the Hickam Air Force Base, Pearl Harbor Hawaii. Because of his exceptional work as the transportation Airman at Pease AFB, he was immediately assigned to be the Personal Driver of the Pacific Air Force Base Commander Colonel Philip A. Sykes, and Major General Robbins, the Chief of Staff of the Pacific Air Force Command. This assignment allowed Airman Baron to personally transport many World and Military Leaders at Hicham AFB base including Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the wife of the President of China, Cardinal Francis Spellman, Governor of Hawaii John A. Burns, General Waters, the Secretary of the Army and countless more. Of particular note, Airman Baron transported the Commander of the Japanese Air Squadron that attacked Pearl Harbor on that fateful December 7th day, and the Crown Prince of Japan. Among Airman Baron's duties and responsibilities included the transportation of many important dignitaries for their opportunity to visit the USS Arizona Memorial, a most memorable visit to be cherished for a lifetime. Least we not forget a date which lives in infamy. As the Air Force Base Commander's personal driver, Airman Baron also had many opportunities to transport entertainers and dignitaries who would often stop at Hickam AFB on their way to entertain the troops in Vietnam. They would perform a show for the military personnel at Hickam before moving on to Vietnam. Among the many entertainers that Airman Baron transported around Hickam base included Dinah Shore, Julie London, Theresa Brewer, Paladin of Western Television fame, Arthur Godfrey and numerous other entertainers who were household names at that time. Airman Baron and his wife Sharon, were also personal guests of The Commander of the Pacific Base Command, Philip A. Sykes and his wife, at a reception in celebration of the nineteenth Birthday of the United States Air Force on Sept. 17, 1966 celebrated at the Officers Open Mess Hall, Hickam AFB, Hawaii. (Very impressive for a young Airman from North Grosvenordale).

On Oct. 14, 1966,

Airman Baron and 21 other young Airman received "Temporary Duty Orders" to report to the Mother Ship USS Granville Hall, at Pearl Harbor Naval Base for a 30-day secret mission to participate in Project SHAD. (Shipboard Hazard and Defense). Veterans Exposure to Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents. The airmen were transported hundreds of miles from Pearl Harbor, to the middle of the Pacific of unknown location between Guam, and other very remote islands. Many of the substances used in the testing were stimulants and tracers presumed to be innocuous such as Bacillus globigii and sodium fluorescein, but some tests involved active agents such as infectious bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*, which causes Q fever and the nerve agent sarin and VX. This was a top-secret mission, that was never to be spoken about. It was redacted and these airmen could never inquire about, or get any information regarding what was administered to them, until Project Shad was first disclosed publicly in 2000, and subsequently became fully de-classified after the 50-year classification period ended in 2016. This has prompted those Veterans and many others to inquire about what impact their involvement in the testing may have had on their health, and what testing agents had been administered to them. SHAD Veterans have expressed frustration regarding the requirement to document their participation in Project SHAD when seeking disability benefits from the Veterans Administration, even though they were never allowed to keep records or documentation due to the classified nature of this testing mission. Air Force Veteran Ron Baron is among those who participated in this secret testing and is frustrated and angry in the Government cover-up. You may research much more regarding Project SHAD online if so inclined. This research will certainly give you much empathy and a better understanding for what these Veterans have lived with, and make you very skeptical about how our Government handled this top-secret mission over 50 years ago and what impact this testing had over a lifetime on these Veterans and their spouses and children health and well-being.

After this secret mission, Airman Baron returned to Hicham AFB and continued his duties there as previously assigned until his tour of duty was completed in 1969. Airman Baron was honorably released from active duty and then transferred to the Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts and served as a reservist for an additional two years ending his Military career on Jan. 12, 1971. For his exceptional

meritorious service, Airman Baron was awarded the Air Force National Defense Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Americanism Medal, and numerous citations and commendations from General John Ryan, Commander-in-Chief, of the Pacific Air Force, and Harold Brown, The Secretary of the Air Force for his Service at Hicham AFB in Hawaii.

Ron was born to parents Edward Baron and Bernice Bruneau Baron on May 3, 1944 in Webster, Mass. He had two brothers, Edward and Theodore (deceased), and a sister, Darlene. Ron was educated at St. Louis Grammar School, and is a graduate of the St. Louis High School in Webster class of 1962. After graduating from High School, Ron worked in the sheet metal industry, learning on the job, working first for Frank's Sheet Metal in Natick, Ma. for many years before venturing into his own sheet metal business Baron Air Systems, that he built into a very productive and lucrative business until his retirement.

From 1971 to 1987, Ron was "Mr. Little League" in Thompson. He became Vice President, and then President for all 16 years, and was also very involved in the District 11 Zone administration. He dedicated his Little League years to improving everything from Membership, to the improvement of the Little League Complex. Under his leadership, the Thompson Little League had over 200 boys and girls playing Little League consisting of the T-Ball Program (two teams), Minor League (6 Teams), Little League (6 Teams) and Senior League (four teams). The Thompson Little League peaked in participation and popularity under his Leadership. The program flourished with multiple games on every week night from April to August each season. In 1984, the Superintendent of Schools Donald C. Hardy wrote "please add my letter of acknowledgement and praise to the correspondence in recognition of the Championships accomplished by both the Thompson Senior League and Little League of District 11." He went on to write "the success in baseball we experience under school coaches is certainly attributed significantly to the fine development experience our students have in the Thompson Little Leagues. You have a right to be proud of the organization you head, the facilities that have been developed and the success that will undoubtedly continue." Under his leadership and influence, Ron managed to secure the 1981 State of Connecticut Little League State Championship Game featuring New London and Stamford. It was played in Thompson on the newly

completed Little League Complex. At that time, it was one of the newest and best complexes in the entire State. This was a great honor for the entire Community of Thompson to be very proud of. Under Ron's leadership the expansion and renovation of the Little League Complex on Red Bridge Road was undertaken. With a state and federal grant in excess of \$100,000. secured by the Little League directors, and under Ron's planning and organization, the complex that you see today was made into a reality with a lot of assistance from moms and dads. For his tireless work, Ron was nominated to be a Lifetime Member of the Thompson Little League.

As if his time in the Little League was not enough, Ron ventured into the local WPTP (Woodstock, Putnam, Thompson and Pomfret) Micro Football League, when he was chosen as the first Coach in this newly formed football league. As he had accomplished in the Little League, Ron put 100 percent of his effort into this new venture. He became the Coach of the very successful Thompson Colts micro team for eight years, from 1978 to 1985. During that span his teams won 4 consecutive Super Bowls in 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1981. and again in 1985. Ron is arguably the individual who has accomplished more for young children in Thompson sports (outside of school) than any other individual. He has dedicated his adult life to the children of Thompson. An unsung hero by all standards.

Ron married Sharon (Fitzgibbons) Baron in 1965 at St. Louis Church. Sharon has been a dedicated inspiration and partner to Ron in all his accomplishments during his military years, his sheet metal business, and in his time with the young children of Thompson. Many might refer to her as Saint Sharon. Together, Ron and Sharon have two adult children Ron, Jr. and Donna, and seven grandchildren.

Ron was a long-time member and officer of the Valley Springs Sportsman Club, is a life-long member and officer of both the VFW Post 10088 in Quinebaug and the America Legion Post 67 in Grosvenordale, is also a long-time member of the Knights of Columbus, was named as a lifetime member of the Thompson Little League, and served the Town of Thompson as a Member of the Thompson Recreation Commission.

Ron will be (was) presented with a plaque of appreciation from the Board of Selectmen and the Veterans Officer at the Board of Selectman meeting on March 3 for his military service.

Mountain Laurel Floral Designs announces March workshops

DANIELSON — Looking for an excuse to get out of the house during the final blustery days of winter? Visit Mountain Laurel Floral Designs, a locally owned flower and gift shop in the heart of Danielson, and join a workshop. This March, Mountain Laurel is hosting a variety of creative workshops for all ages, from lucky charm bracelets and bag charms to dahlia tuber presprouting and fun Easter crafts for all ages.

"As flower farmers, Gabby and I are missing being outside in the soil, so we decided to bring some gardening and plant-related activities to the lineup for March," said co-owner Pam Blinten. "We are also trying to create more opportunities for community members to connect, so we are introducing a Stitch Club. For just \$5, attendees can bring in their crochet, knitting, sewing, or embroidery project and enjoy some light refreshments while meeting new friends. We will also

be providing materials and guidance for anyone who doesn't have experience but would like to learn."

Mountain Laurel is also opening up their space for small private workshops and events. If you have a birthday party, shower, or a small gathering and you're looking for an intimate space where you can let your creativity take over, consider Mountain Laurel! Pam and Gabby will work within your budget and theme to design a custom floral arrangement or crafting workshop based on your guests' interests. If you're interested, email mountainlaurelfloraldesign@gmail.com.

To register for upcoming workshops, visit mountainlaurelfloralct.com. Customers are also encouraged to sign up for Mountain Laurel's email list to receive special monthly workshop offers and updates.

March Workshops:

Stitch Club

March 8 | 3 – 5 p.m.

\$5 - Stitch Club is a cozy, creative hangout where you can bring any stitching project (cross stitch, crochet, knitting, etc.) and meet fellow crafters. New to stitching? We'll show you the ropes, and basic supplies will be available to purchase so you can jump right in.

Free Pi Day Celebration

March 14 | 9 – 10 a.m.

Free - Join us for a lively story hour and a Pi themed craft with local author Andrea Smith. Celebrate all things circle shaped with a sweet story and hands on fun.

Lucky Charms

March 15 | noon – 2 p.m.

\$40 - Create your own charm bracelet or bag charm with guidance from local artist Rena Masson, just in time for St. Patrick's Day. Mix, match, and sparkle your way to a lucky new accessory. Ages 10+

Dahlia Tuber Presprouting

March 21 | 11 a.m. – noon

\$15 - Learn how to presprout your dahlia tubers so that you can increase your stock ahead of planting time. Dahlia cutting or tuber included with the class!

Open Art Studio: Easter Crafts

March 28 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

\$2-\$10 - Drop by the shop anytime and get crafty with adorable bunny headbands, painted pots, or colorful paper egg wreaths. Choose your favorite project or make them all and pay per craft. It is the perfect way to add a little handmade fun to your day.

Houseplant Leaf Impressions

March 29 | 1 – 3 p.m.

\$45 - Use your own real houseplant leaves to create 3-5 detailed prints, each print is its own unique piece of botanical art. No experience is needed, just curiosity and a love of natural beauty.

Putnam holds Art Heist fundraiser



PUTNAM — The Putnam Arts Council will be holding it's annual Art Heist fundraiser on Saturday, March 7 in the Montgomery Ward Building, 112 Main St. Putnam, from

5-8 p.m.

This unique and fun event is a chance for ticket holders to "steal" a great piece of art from a local artists who have donated fantastic original pieces - in many mediums - valued from \$50 up to over \$900.

A limited number of tickets are now on sale at \$50 each. At the event the Art Heist tickets are randomly drawn from a drum. The lucky ticket holder whose number is announced will then "steal" their favorite artwork off the walls. The first ticket holder will get to pick any piece they like. The subsequent ticket holders select from the remaining artwork.

Everyone goes home with artwork equal to, or greater than, the value of their ticket. It's a game of chance, but most people will go home with one of their top favorites.

Drinks and light hors d'oeuvres will be served. Ticket holders are welcome to bring a guest. For more information or to purchase tickets visit

PutnamCtArtsCouncil.com/art-heist.

Putnam Area Foundation awards grant to Northeast Placement Services for greenhouse improvements, SEED Program



PUTNAM — The Putnam Area Foundation has awarded a \$3,500 grant to Northeast Placement Services (NEPS) to support refurbishment and expansion of its greenhouse and garden facilities, strengthening the organization's SEED program expanding opportunities for individuals of all abilities to participate in hands-on educational and vocational experiences.

The funding will allow NEPS to refurbish and re-wrap the greenhouse originally constructed in 2016, extending its life and enabling year-round programming, and assist in the purchase of a Dosatron system, a water powered, proportional fertilizer doser to improve irrigation and nutrient management. This equipment allows people of all abilities to participate in the plant cultivation process. The grant will also allow for the installation of additional fencing and trellises to support the continued growth of the organization's produce and flower gardens.

The SEED (Strength, Education, Empowerment = Dreams) program, which started in 2021 consists of raised vegetable beds, two vegetable gardens, a pump-

kin patch, a sensory garden, irrigation systems, and flower gardens. The program has had great success providing participants with practical learning opportunities in horticulture, fostering skill development, independence, teamwork, and community engagement. The improvements funded through this grant will allow NEPS to expand participation while maintaining a safe and accessible environment for all participants. Former Executive Director Timothy Kettle had big dreams for this program, and was steadfast around making this program sustainable, educational, and fruitful for all involved. Since Kettle's retirement, Executive Director Tammy Scott has not let her foot off the gas.

"From the first seed planted until now, Tom Borner and The Putnam Area Foundation have made a lasting impact on NEPS, affording us the ability to provide another quality program where everyone sees the fruits of their labor!" Scott said.

"The Putnam Area Foundation is proud to support Northeast Placement Services and the import-

ant work they do in our community," said Thomas Borner, President of the Putnam Area Foundation. "We were an original grant sponsor in 2021 when the SEED Program started, and to see it take off and expand, reaching the number of people in our community that it has, is a testament to the service that NEPS is providing. The grant today, will ensure the continuation of a program that has become an important resource."

Ryan DeWitt, Director of Day and Vocational Services at Northeast Placement Services, emphasized the impact of this grant, noting, "NEPS has an incredible TEAM and with continued community support, there isn't anything we can't offer our participants, and there is nothing we can't do. Thank you Tom Borner and The Putnam Area Foundation, for organizations like yours that afford organizations like ours a hand up. That's community impact!"

The Putnam Area Foundation is a private foundation dedicated to supporting charitable organizations serving the greater Putnam, Connecticut area.

Courtney announces community project funding for Thompson

THOMPSON — Congressman Joe Courtney (CT-02) paid a visit on Thursday, Feb. 19 to 65 Main St. in Thompson, a town-owned property with significant local history. The purpose of the visit was to celebrate the announcement of \$732,007 in federal Community Project funding that Courtney and the Town of Thompson successfully secured in the FY26 federal budget. This latest funding award is the one of the final elements in realizing the master plan for the property, which has been in motion since 2019.

The federal funds will enable the town to complete structural renovations and develop the surrounding grounds as a series of public gardens. The 65 Main parcel abuts a 3.2-acre portion of Riverside Park, on the west bank of the French River, which is currently inaccessible for public use. The federal funding will also enable the development of that portion of the park with new walking paths and seating areas, to be planted using permaculture principles. The end use of the building will be as a municipally-support-



ed small business support center with a focus on the agricultural and food-system start-ups.

This \$732,007 community project for the Town of Thompson was passed by

Congress and signed into law last month. A contract for architectural services was recently awarded to Silver & Petrucelli, to complete the interior designs. The Town anticipates going out to bid for the renova-

tion construction in the first half of this year, with the sitework and landscaping bid requests to follow once the Federal contracts are signed.

Attending the

Congressman's visit to Thompson were: First Selectman Nick Donohue, Selectman Geoff Bolte, Director of Planning & Development Tyra Penn, project partners Jocelyn

Weir of CT RC&D, Carl Asikainen of TEEG, Zach LaBonte and Nicole Frattasio of Thompson Business Association, Brian Yacino and Brian Loffredo of Thompson EDC, Kevin Grindle of Barton & Loguidice and Robert Letskus of Refined Living LLC. These are only a portion of the people who have been working over the past few years to bring this innovative project to life.

The 65 Main St. property, which was gifted in perpetuity to the Town by Mrs. Harriet A. Tourtellotte, has served many functions over the years. Initially maintained as a residence for the superintendent of schools, as the community's needs changed it later served as the public library and the headquarters for TEEG. After TEEG relocated to their current location on Thatcher street, the building remained vacant and eventually fell into significant disrepair. The recent funding secured through Congressman Courtney's advocacy builds on prior grant awards that initiated renovations.

Woodstock's Commission on Aging to hold scam prevention workshop March 11

WOODSTOCK — Woodstock's Commission on Aging will hold a "Scam Prevention Workshop" on March 11 at 10 a.m. in the lower level of the Woodstock Town Hall, 415 Route 169. This workshop will be presented by the Better Business Bureau and is open to the public. Details are available at the Woodstockct.gov (commission on aging) website.

New Municipal Agent for the Elderly, Lorna Kay Murdock, joined the team in November of 2025. Lorna Kay is a lifelong resident of Woodstock and is a graduate of Woodstock Academy and raised her now grown family with her husband Richard in Woodstock. Murdock has

been in the healthcare field as a Registered Nurse and then Nurse Practitioner since 1990. She is available to assist in connecting residents over 60 to local resources, and can be reached by calling the Woodstock Town Hall at 860-928-6595, ext. 304.

The Woodstock Commission on Aging is a very active committee in Woodstock meeting one or two times per month focusing on improving the quality of life for seniors, offering resources and conducting assessments to understand resident needs. Members work in collaboration with the Municipal Agent for the Elderly to understand and advocate for the unique needs and

best interests of Woodstock Seniors. The commission sponsors monthly lectures (every second Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. in the lower level of town hall).

Murdock says one recent project, The "Giving Tree," was very successful and was coordinated by the Agent of the Elderly and the Commission on Aging. Bags of everyday personal items were distributed to 45-50 elderly and veteran recipients during the holiday season.

Murdock said, "We once again would like to thank the community as well as the volunteers for being so caring and generous to those in need. The Bags were very much appreci-

ated and brought joy and warmth to the recipients. If someone knows of a Woodstock resident over 60 who would benefit from receiving a 'Giving Tree' bag during the holiday season, please reach out to the Agent for the Elderly."

Murdock said residents should check the Shoppers Guide for future elderly focused programs including the "Woodstock Tax Relief programs" (apply now) and the "Farmers Market Coupon Program (apply in late Spring).

For more information on resources for the Elderly or any of the programs listed above, please call Municipal Agent for the Elderly at 860-928-6595, ext. 304.

Learning in Retirement to hold open house in Killingly

DANIELSON — Learning in Retirement (LiR -QV) is holding a free Open House on Friday, Feb. 27 at 1 p.m. at the Killingly Community Center, 185 Broad St., Danielson. Living History Interpreter Karlee Turner Etter will present "The Arrest of Suffragist Elizabeth Glendower Evans." Preview spring courses.

Light refreshments will be served. Limited seating will be available; no reservation required. For more information, visit www.lir-qv.org.

For Advertising Information

Call 860-928-1818 Ext. 326

email: [mikaela@](mailto:mikaela@villagernewspapers.com)

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EASTCONN's Quinebaug Middle College announces honor roll

DANIELSON — EASTCONN's Quinebaug Middle College (QMC) Magnet High School has released the School Year 2025-2026: Semester 1 Honor Roll list (Fall 2025)	Windham (Windham)	Jacob Schmelzer-Willimantic (Windham)
High Honor Roll	Joshua DelGaizo-Willimantic (Windham)	Yudhvir Sidhu- Dayville (Killingly)
Tabor Ambrose- North Windham (Windham)	Ren Deojay-Danielson (Killingly)	Madison Smith- Jewett City (Griswold)
Samyah Azeez- Moosup (Plainfield)	Allen Dickison- Windham	Mikayla Snyder- Dayville (Killingly)
Alexis Barber-Moosup (Plainfield)	Zoey Dubois-Danielson (Killingly)	Royce Toledo Rivera-North Windham (Windham)
Lily Begin- Griswold	Julian Dunnack-Willimantic (Windham)	Aedyn Trigo- Hampton (Regional District 11)
Lillian Bertram- Pomfret	Jason Fletcher- Moosup (Plainfield)	Tanis Trigo- Hampton (Regional District 11)
Allysen Bonafine- North Windham (Windham)	Ella Forgues- Killingly	Abigail Trudell- Brooklyn Cheyann Turcott-Quinebaug (Thompson)
Camden Chaplin- Central Village (Plainfield)	Madyson Gallow- Brooklyn	Ariel Valdes- Canterbury
G i o v a n n i Duclos- Plainfield	Molly Garland- Danielson (Killingly)	Xophi Vanner- Dayville (Killingly)
Yvonne Fitzsimmons-Danielson (Killingly)	Noah Glynn- Dayville (Killingly)	Savannah Waite-Wauregan (Plainfield)
Kyla Grant- Plainfield	Sarah Goss- Plainfield	Blake Ward- North Grosvenordale (Thompson)
Phineas Hagan- Putnam	A v a - R y a n n Groh- Killingly	Nerissa Winters- Dayville (Killingly)
August Holdridge-Taftville (Norwich)	Ava Guillemette- Plainfield	Aurora Wood-Moosup (Plainfield)
Madison Knudson- Plainfield	Alison Gutierrez-Cordero-Willimantic (Windham)	
Darby Lalumiere- Killingly	Tobias Hall- Putnam	
Daniel Lobe- Danielson (Killingly)	Gianna Harrison-Willimantic (Windham)	
Natasha Miller- Sterling	Lawrence Haworth-Moosup (Plainfield)	
	Talisha Headley-Willimantic (Windham)	
	Michael Hoenig-Welch-Woodstock	
	Alexis Jones- Plainfield	
	Eli Kapszukiewicz- Plainfield	
	Ruby Kersting- Plainfield	
	Ammani Kuljancic-Pomfret	
	Gavin Lalumiere-Brooklyn	
	Mason LaRose-Canterbury	
	Juliana LeRouge-Wauregan (Plainfield)	
	Sebastiano Manocchio-Danielson (Killingly)	
	Hailey Marshall- Dayville (Killingly)	
	Arlo Matteau- Putnam	
	Kelton McKenna- Sterling	
	Allison Morrarty-Danielson (Killingly)	
	Rae Neal- Putnam	
	Connor Nicolas-Griswold	
	Bailey Nicolosi- North Grosvenordale (Thompson)	
	Leif Oliverson- Brooklyn	
	Kelsey Parent- Putnam	
	Sophia Phillips-Danielson (Killingly)	
	Anna Polaino- Killingly	
	Jazandrel Ramos-Willimantic (Windham)	
	Jocelyn Richards-Plainfield	
	Haley Ross- Pomfret	
	Jolene Schlegal-Griswold	

EASTCONN's Quinebaug Middle College (QMC), a regional, public magnet high school, is currently recruiting academically motivated students for the 2026-2027 school year. Students who seek a more independent learning environment tailored to their academic and career goals are encouraged to apply.

Located on the campus of CTSC-QV in Danielson, Quinebaug Middle College (QMC) is a NEASC-accredited magnet high school that enables students to earn free, transferrable college credits. The school offers a challenging and personalized learning environment to help students from different backgrounds achieve their goals and make positive contributions to their community and culture.

For more information about QMC and to enroll, students can visit www.eastconn.org/qmc for an application. To learn more, contact QMC Principal Ted Keleher at ekeleher@eastconn.org

Killingly Public Schools launches second installation of Art Around Town Artwork Trail



KILLINGLY — Killingly Public Schools (KPS) is proud to announce the launch of the second installation of the Art Around Town Artwork Trail, a creative collaboration between the school district and local businesses that celebrates student talent, creativity, and community connection.

The first Art Around Town installation was on display from May 2025 through December 2025, drawing community members into local spaces to experience student artwork and photography. Building on its success, the second installation continues this momentum, further strengthening connections between schools, families, businesses, and the broader community.

Art Around Town highlights the creativity, skill, and achievements of KPS students from Preschool-Grade 12 through artwork and photography displayed throughout the community. Serving students from 11 towns across Northeast Connecticut, Killingly Public Schools offers rich learning experiences and opportunities, and this exhibit brings student stories to life beyond the classroom.

Each piece reflects students' unique perspectives, talents, and potential. The project celebrates the arts

while reinforcing KPS's role in shaping future leaders, strengthening the workforce, and nurturing engaged citizens. Students, families, staff, and community members are invited to explore the trail and experience the promise of the next generation through their creative work.

Student artwork and photography are currently featured at the following locations:

- Sugarz Bakery
- Killingly Public Library (Children's, Young Adult, and Computer Sections)
- Two Dogs Coffee Shop
- Chubby Dog Coffee Co.
- Pourings and Passages Bookstore (Young Adult and Children's Sections)
- Sweet Peas Fine Foods (Brooklyn)
- The Vanilla Bean Café (Pomfret)
- Killingly Board of Education Meeting Room

To make the experience even more engaging, students are invited to participate in a scavenger hunt as they explore the artwork around town, with opportunities to win small prizes.

Jim Weigel, Proprietor of Pourings and Passages Bookstore, stated, "The student art display was a big hit! It was so good to see such wonderful products from the young talented artists in our school district. We've seen so many more

families visit us on their scavenger hunt who never knew our store existed."

Brittany, owner of Two Dogs Coffee Shop, stated, "I love that the artwork represents different ages. We have a kids' corner here, so when families come in, and children see the artwork on the walls, we can say, 'One day, your artwork could be here too.'"

For location addresses, scavenger hunt maps, and additional information, visit www.killinglyschools.org, select Community Partnerships in the top right corner, then click on Art Around Town, or visit: www.killinglyschools.org/community-partnerships-new/artwork-around-town

While visiting participating locations, community members are encouraged to scan the red QR code displayed at each site to leave a message for the student artists or share feedback on the displays.

Killingly Public Schools extends its gratitude to the Community Engagement Committee for bringing this idea to life, the art teachers across the district for their continued support, and, most importantly, the talented students who generously share their creativity with the community.

Save the date for "Have A Heart"

WOODSTOCK — The staff and board of directors of TEEG are excited to announce preparations are underway for their 25th annual Have A Heart fundraising event. This milestone event will be held on Friday, May 1 from 6-9 p.m. at the Mansion at Bald Hill in Woodstock.

In addition to the festivities fans of this event have come to love and cherish—such as an abundance of silent auction items and eight live auction experiences—this year's event will also feature an additional tier of raffle items.

"While we want to keep the elements of success of past events, we're trying to keep things fresh,"

explained Chelsea French, TEEG's Resource Director.

Ticket prices will remain at \$35 per person and include generous appetizers, as well as lots of fun in the elegant environment of the Mansion Banquet Hall. They will be available for online purchase on the TEEG website beginning March 15.

In order to keep ticket prices affordable, the TEEG Board of Directors is soliciting sponsorship opportunities beginning at \$100; donations to the silent auction and raffles will also be gratefully accepted. Please contact Chelsea French at 860-923-3458 during business hours or via email at chelseaf@teegonline.org

donate or get more information.

TEEG is a 501(c)3 social service agency serving critical needs of low-income individuals and families in the towns of Pomfret, Woodstock, and Thompson, with food insecurity as a cornerstone of its mission. Since its founding in 1988, TEEG has developed and expanded its programming to include both emergency and ongoing food assistance—including holiday meals—benefits navigation, youth programs, and personalized case coordination. For more information about the work of the organization, please visit www.teegonline.org.

AWARD

continued from page A1

pandemic. Gosselin accepted the award in person while members of the Conservation Commission praised his contributions to providing a well-kept environment for residents to pay their respects and to visit the graves of those past, including many local historical figures.

Conservation Commission Member Jean Mountford led the presentation revealing that the individual who had previously maintained town cemeteries was paid through a trust, but during COVID, they started transitioning to utilizing town public works staff. Gosselin stepped up, taking it upon himself to maintain the cemeteries even in his own time.

"Brian Gosselin offered to take on the mowing and basic maintenance as part of his job responsibilities, but he took a personal interest in cemetery maintenance and began spending more and more time off the clock, putting extra care into these cemeteries doing things such as fixing up headstones," explained Mountford.

for the town's cemeteries, a duty he took on during the pandemic. Gosselin accepted the award in person while members of the Conservation Commission praised his contributions to providing a well-kept environment for residents to pay their respects and to visit the graves of those past, including many local historical figures.

Conservation Commission Member Jean Mountford led the presentation revealing that the individual who had previously maintained town cemeteries was paid through a trust, but during COVID, they started transitioning to utilizing town public works staff. Gosselin stepped up, taking it upon himself to maintain the cemeteries even in his own time.

"Throughout 2025, Brian put in 217 off-the-clock hours towards seven different cemeteries throughout town - cemeteries on Mashantucket Road, Chestnut Hill Road, Roth Road, Ledge Road, Franklin Street, and Old Breakneck Hill Road. Cemeteries are important green open spaces allowing opportunities for history, recreation, and community."

Gosselin did not address the Town Council after the presentation, instead humbly accepting the honor and posing for photos with the Conservation Commission while the Council thanked him for his service and time.

The Environmental Award has been a staple of Killingly's annual recognition of local volunteers for decades, with the first being awarded in 2002. According to the Conservation Commission's website, the group annually chooses an individual, organization, school or business who contribute to the awareness, care, enhancement, or protection of Killingly's open spaces and natural resources. Over the decades, more than 25 awards have been presented, sometimes to multiple honorees in the same year.

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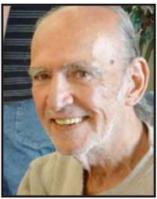


brendan@villagernewspapers.com



OBITUARIES

Donald E. Cournoyer, 83



PUTNAM – Donald E. Cournoyer, 83, died on Sunday, January 25th, 2026.

Born on September 16th, 1942, he was the eleventh of twelve children of Aime & Beatrice (Maynard) Cournoyer. He was brought up on the Cournoyer family farm on Fiske Hill in Sturbridge. He attended Notre Dame School and went on to start working at the Publick House at an early age.

Donald was an excellent cook and baker, always enjoying preparing food for the family and the large functions (especially during the holidays). He also had a green thumb for plants and flowers. Donald had a unique love for ducks, shown in his huge collection of duck memorabilia, which including some live ones that lived in the backyard of some of his houses.

He leaves his four children; Jean Janezyk

and her husband Mark of Putnam, CT; Andrea McBride and her husband Jason of Tory, Missouri; Melissa Goyette of Southbridge, MA; and Roger Cournoyer of Putnam, CT. His legacy remains in his seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Donald is also survived by his two brothers, George Cournoyer of Florida, Aime Cournoyer of West Brookfield, MA, and his sister, Margaret Biron of Florida. He also leaves many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Donald was predeceased by his brothers, Roger, Robert, David, Raymond, Michael, Richard, Albert, and Ronald.

The funeral services for Donald will be private and are entrusted to the Belanger Bullard Funeral Home, at 51 Marcy Street in Southbridge.

Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

For an online guestbook and tribute video, please visit www.BelangerFuneralHome.com

Paula Maureen Magao, 74



Paula Maureen Magao, 74, of Killingly, passed away peacefully on February 13, 2026, after a courageous battle with multiple sclerosis. Born on Christmas Day in 1951, Paula brought warmth and joy to all who knew her throughout her remarkable life.

Paula attended St. James School and Killingly High School, where destiny intervened during her freshman year homeroom class. It was there she met Wayne "The Barber" Magao, the love of her life and soul mate. Their beautiful journey together spanned 55 years of marriage, a milestone they celebrated just a week before her passing.

After dedicating herself to raising her children, Paula returned to education and attended Quinebaug Valley Community College, where she excelled with a perfect 4.0 GPA and was honored in Who's Who Among Students in American Junior Colleges. A driven and intelligent woman, Paula's determination and academic

achievements were a testament to her character and spirit.

She was predeceased by her parents, John and Rachel Loiselle, and her sister, Joan Harris. Paula leaves behind her devoted husband, Wayne Magao; her son Jason Magao, his wife Jill, and their daughters Julia and Chloe; her daughter Renee Bell and her husband Jim; her sister Carol Loiselle; and many beloved family members and friends who will cherish her memory.

Paula's greatest treasures were her granddaughters, Chloe and Julia, whom she loved with her whole heart. She found peace and happiness at the ocean, where the rhythm of the waves and the warmth of the sand brought her endless comfort. Her spirit will forever be felt in the sea breeze and the laughter of those she loved.

Paula's grace, strength, and unwavering love will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her. Calling hours were held in Tillinghast Funeral Home 433 Main St Danielson, CT on Thursday February 26, 2026 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. tillinghastfh.com

Send all obituary notices to Villager Newspapers, PO Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550, or by e-mail to obits@stonebridgepress.news

BOOK

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are written by Michael Rocchetti and are published by American Legion Post #13 in Putnam. They can be

purchased on-line at <https://hometown-heroes-of-the-quiet-corner.myshopify.com/>

All proceeds from the book sales will help fund American Legion scholarships, youth pro-

grams, Boy's State, Girl's State, American Legion Baseball, Veterans-in-need, Americanism initiatives, and other programs which directly benefit the local community.

ARRESTS

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incident. Chenevert implicated Lawson and the female individual as having set the fire as revenge.

However, a second interview with the

female revealed that while she was present for the fire, Lawson has set the blaze and Chenevert was not only present, but he also drove them to the gas station to retrieve the ignition source. The female alleged she initially lied about starting the fire in fear of retaliation from Lawson. Chenevert was subsequently arrested on Feb. 16 in Bristol for conspiracy to attempt arson and attempted murder charges and held on a \$500,000 bond. He was arraigned in Danielson Superior Court on Feb. 17.

As of this writing the female remains unidentified and there have been no other recorded arrests. However, police have indicated that more arrests are anticipated.

LEGALS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF

Patrick M.O. Murphy (26-00007)
The Hon. Gabrielle Labonte, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Northeast Probate Court, by decree dated February 10, 2026, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

Elyssa A. Foley, Clerk

The fiduciary is:
Amanda Murphy
c/o RICHARD JOSEPH DI MARCO,
COHEN & WOLF PC, 320 POST
ROAD WEST, WESTPORT, CT 06880
February 27, 2026

NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF

Susan M Shead (26-00048)
The Hon. Gabrielle Labonte, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Northeast Probate Court, by decree dated February 11, 2026, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

Elyssa A. Foley, Clerk

The fiduciary is:
Heather E Minka & Jason A Shead
c/o EDWIN C HIGGINS, BACHAND,
LONGO & HIGGINS,
168 MAIN STREET, P.O. BOX 528,
PUTNAM, CT 06260
February 27, 2026

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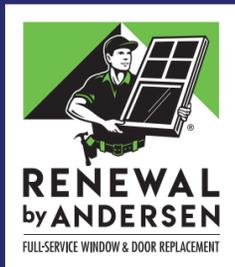
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