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Thursday-Friday, January 8-9, 2026

Southbridge Rotary bids farewell after nearly a century of service

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Rotary Club of Southbridge held its final meeting on December 18, 2025, at the Wellsworth Hotel and Conference Center, marking the close of an organization that has served the Southbridge community for nearly 98 and a half years. Current and former members gathered to bid farewell and reflect on the club's long legacy of service, fellowship, and community impact.

The evening included a final tribute delivered by past president and longtime member Constantino "Dino" Tata, who spoke on behalf of the club's membership. Tata reflected on the club's founding nearly a century ago, its commitment to Rotary's Four-Way Test, and the changing realities that ultimately led to the decision to dissolve the club just 17 months short of its 100th anniversary.

"At this time our club does not appear to be fulfilling the mission of Rotary, that is to provide service above self," Tata said. "With insufficient membership to carry out that



Courtesy

From left: Patrick Morrill, Betsy Peppel, Jeff Caniff, Bob Knight, Terri Colognesi, Dino Tata, Gerry Maldonado, Jim Waddick, Mary O'Cain and Ron Carlson.

mission, the directors and membership voted to end the club's existence with today's meeting."

Rather than focusing solely on the closing, Tata emphasized the decades of positive impact the Rotary Club of Southbridge made throughout the region. Since its founding, the club awarded thousands of dol-

lars in scholarships, supported leadership training programs such as RYLA, honored student scholars and athletes, sponsored Rotaract Clubs, and contributed time and resources to countless local causes. The club also organized major community events, including one of the few fireworks displays ever

held in Southbridge, and raised significant funds through its annual golf tournament benefiting both charitable efforts and the local hospital.

The Southbridge Rotary Club also played a role in expanding Rotary's presence in the region by sponsoring the formation of the Sturbridge Rotary Club

in 1972. Tata noted that Rotary International's 1987 decision to admit women strengthened the organization and contributed to the club's longevity.

"This club leaves behind a great legacy of care, involvement, and concern," Tata said. "The town and our students will be poorer for the loss of this great club,

Charlton Lions welcome visitors and questioners

CHARLTON — It's a new year with new possibilities for friendship, service, learning, giving and helping — some of the goals of The Charlton Lions Club, which invites Charlton residents to learn about Lionism at an informational meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 28. Come at 6:30 p.m. to the Great Room at The Overlook. Refreshments will be served. You will not be pressured to join. The meeting will finish by 8 p.m.

Come learn what Lions do — in the Charlton area and the world. Get acquainted with local Lions. Hear about their service projects and the fun they have raising funds to support their work.

The Charlton Lions Club, which was chartered in 1975, is part of Lions Clubs International, an association made up of 1.4 million members in 49,000 clubs who bring hands and hearts to the communities in which they serve in nearly every country on earth.

If you plan to come on January 28, please contact Membership Chair Jennie Frisella at 508-434-2527. Then come to Door 62 off the Rose Garden at The Overlook. Use the service road off Masonic Home Road, stay to the right, park on the left across from the car sheds.

If you can't attend this meeting, come any second or fourth Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. to the same location. Regular meetings are held on those dates each month, September through June.

Sturbridge trekkers enjoy First Day Hike

STURBRIDGE — The annual Friends of Sturbridge Trails (FrOST) First Day Hike was held on Jan. 1 and enjoyed by 21 participants who braved the chilly winds and freshly fallen snow, traveling the easier trails on the Leadmine Mt. Conservation Lands.

The hike was led by Dave Peterkin, an avid hiker and member of the Trails Committee, and assisted by Trail Committee members Dave Vadnais and Jen Scherer.

This Friends of Sturbridge Trails event is the first of several that will be held throughout 2026. Upcoming events include our annual meeting on Tuesday Jan. 20, 7 p.m. at the Public House and our always fun ice sculpture contest in



mid-February.

To learn more about join-

ing FrOST, our upcoming events and the Sturbridge

Trail system, visit: www.trekssturbridge.org.

Houle named MSAA Middle School Principal of the Year

SOUTHBRIDGE — Sarah Houle, Principal of Southbridge Middle School, has been named the 2026 MSAA Middle School Principal of the Year. She has served at Southbridge Middle School for the past seven years. Sarah earned her Bachelor's degree from Boston University and holds Master's degrees from UMass Boston and Endicott College. She is currently pursuing her Ed.D. at Clark University in Transformative Education.

Prior to her work in Southbridge, Houle was a high school social studies teacher with a passion for developing critical thinkers and active citizens who can chart their own course. She started her career at Cathedral High School in Boston, teaching a diverse population of often first



Courtesy Photo

Sarah Houle and students by example. Ms. Houle is warm, fair, and consistent in her approach

to all people within our school. She has a clear understanding of the developmental needs of the students and is committed to providing a balance of rigorous learning opportunities that are complemented by structured time daily to foster community building for students. Likewise, Ms. Houle understands how to manage and relate to staff members in effective and supportive ways. Her skill set, combined with her warmth and ability to lead by example have resulted in a positive school culture, one in which all people in the building feel both emotionally and physically safe at all times.

"Sarah ensured the pathway for any staff who want to be involved in making decisions and giving feedback to the administration leadership team through the Instruction Leadership Team or ILT. This team focused initial-

ly on tracking data and homework habits, to now being involved in instructional rounds that help colleagues collect data that pushes teaching and learning forward. By creating collaboration, we, as teachers, can bring these ideas to a space that allows for staff ideas to be fleshed out."

Houle grew up in Massachusetts and currently lives on a farm in Douglas with her husband and best friend, Eric, and their three children, Emalie, Trevor, and Tucker.

In her free time, she most enjoys doing anything with her family, but especially camping in their vintage Airstream (named Peggy). She also enjoys reading, watching her kids play sports, and volunteering at her church.

Community Calendar

January 9-16

Friday, Jan. 9

- Senior Center Exercise Class — 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center. Senior fitness and movement session.

- Senior Center Bingo — 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center. Open social game day.

- Mindfulness Meditation with Iris Fridays — 2–3 p.m., Mills Room, Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge. Certified instructor leads a guided mindfulness session; participants can bring yoga mats.

Saturday, Jan. 10

- Southbridge Chess Club — 10–11:30 a.m., Reading Room, Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge. Casual and inclusive chess gathering.

- Grassroots Central Mass (Library Event) — 3–4:30 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge (meeting room). Community group session.

Monday, Jan. 12

- Senior Center Exercise Class — 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

ARTHRITIS?

Is your arthritis care all that you would hope it to be? If not we may be able to help.

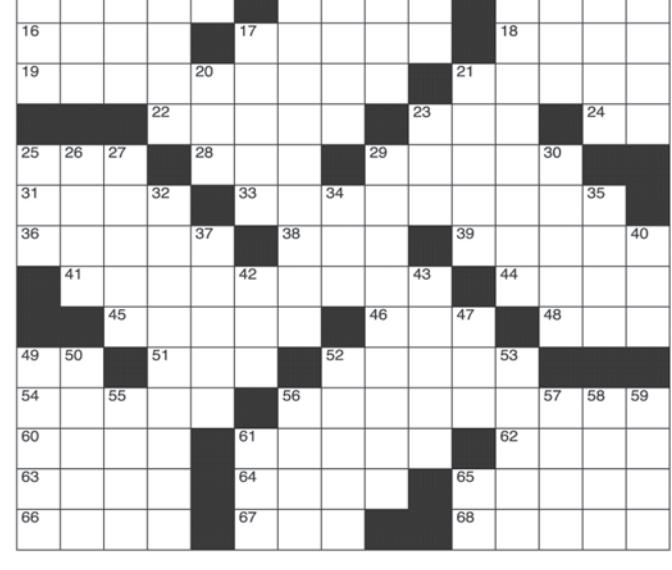
Osteoarthritis of Hands - Knees- Hips. Back and Shoulder Problems Rheumatoid Arthritis Psoriatic Arthritis - Gout

Charles A. Birbara, MD

Associate Professor of Medicine, UMass-Chan Medical School

25 Oak Ave., Worcester, MA 01605 508-799-2674

"Committed to Advancing appropriate care to people with arthritis"



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Lakes
- 6. Electromotive force
- 9. Invests in little enterprises
- 13. Longtime Utah Jazz coach
- 14. Small sailboat
- 15. Actor Idris
- 16. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
- 17. System that detects objects under water
- 18. Harsh, grating noise
- 19. Steward
- 21. A fencing sword
- 22. Infections
- 23. Actress Ryan
- 24. Sodium
- 25. Swedish castle
- 28. A lump of slime
- 29. African antelope
- 31. Insurance providers
- 33. Choosy
- 35. Ringworm
- 38. Unpolished
- 39. Drenches
- 41. Pant style
- 44. Son of Noah
- 45. Spiritual being
- 46. Upton Sinclair novel
- 48. Journalist Tarbell
- 49. Popular sports highlight show
- 51. Born of
- 52. Rich tapestry
- 54. S. China seaport
- 56. State of being unclothed
- 60. Surrounded by
- 61. Residue
- 62. Away from wind
- 63. Dried-up
- 64. Visionary
- 65. A very large body of water
- 66. Garden tools
- 67. Screen type
- 68. Ancient Scandinavian poet

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Millisecond
- 2. Spanish city
- 3. A sudden very loud sound
- 4. "The Indiana Jones of beer"
- 5. Tin
- 6. Sea eagles
- 7. Volcanic crater
- 8. Type of coat
- 9. Women's apartments in Ottoman palace
- 10. Divulge a secret
- 11. Norwegian playwright
- 12. "It's a Wonderful Life" director
- 14. Poisonous perennial plant
- 17. 18-year astronomical period
- 20. Clothes
- 21. Places to sit
- 23. Family of regulator genes
- 25. New York ballplayer
- 26. Impressive in size or scope
- 27. Jacques ___, French biologist
- 29. One from the Big Apple
- 30. Genus of woolly lemurs
- 32. Songs to one's beloved
- 34. Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand
- 35. Supplemented with difficulty
- 37. Farewell
- 40. Investment account (abbr.)
- 42. One from Utah
- 43. Begets
- 47. A male child
- 49. Break apart
- 50. Brief appearance
- 52. Partner to "oohed"
- 53. A light informal meal
- 55. Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
- 56. One billionth of a second
- 57. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
- 58. Close tightly
- 59. Mail out
- 61. Language
- 65. Computer characteristic

PUZZLE SOLUTION



- Senior Center Veteran's Social — 10:30–11:30 a.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Cornhole — 1–2 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Friends of the JHPL Board Meeting — 2–3:15 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge.

- Picasso Style Self Portrait (Library Arts & Crafts) — 3:30–4:30 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge (registration required).

- "In Conversation with Author Heather B. Moore: 'Julia'" (Virtual Event) — 7–8 p.m., online through Joshua Hyde Public Library.

Tuesday, Jan. 13

- Latino Group (Senior Center) — 9 a.m.–noon, Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Foot Clinic (RSVP, fee) — 9 a.m.–noon, Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Pitch — Noon to 1:30 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center COA Board Meeting — 2–3 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Winter Toddler Time (Library) — 10:45–11:30 a.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge (ages babies/toddlers).

- Wooden Spoon Carving (Library) — 6–8 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge (adults/teens).

Wednesday, Jan. 14

- Senior Center Exercise Class — 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Brain Games — 10–11 a.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Tap Dance — 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Scrabble — 1–3 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Zentangle Landscape for Adults (Library) — 6:30–7:30 p.m., Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge (arts program).

Thursday, Jan. 15

- Latino Group (Senior Center) — 9 a.m.–noon, Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Sing-a-Long with Sue Caplette — 1–2 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Emily Dickinson: The Poet and Her Gardens (Library Lecture) — 6:30–7:30 p.m., Reading Room, Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge.

Friday, Jan. 16

- Senior Center Exercise Class — 9–10 a.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Blood Pressure Screening — 9:45 a.m.–noon, Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Senior Center Bingo — 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m., Community Room, Southbridge Community Center.

- Mindfulness Meditation with Iris Fridays — 2–3 p.m., Mills Room, Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge.

REAL ESTATE

Charlton \$37,500, Old County Rd #11, Cormier & Sons Const & Hm, to Yarrows, Sean S, and Caliria, Makayla J.

\$446,900, 216 Brookfield Rd, Robert J Crear RET, and Crear, Philip D, to Reumann, Wallace, and Reumann, Megan.

\$375,000, 5 Carpenter Hill Rd, Welch Ronald R Est, and Wojciechowski, Mary L, to Gluchacki, Hannah, and Westberg, Dane.

\$60,000, Brookfield Rd #5, Jennings, Iris A, to Prop Soln Re & Contractin.

\$15,000, N Sturbridge Rd, Morse, Kenneth R, and Morse, Belinda, to Saxena, Ridhima.

Holland \$289,900, 9 Chandler Rd, Pope Ft, and Pope Jr, Alvan H, to Orszulak, David.

\$310,000, 24 Camp Rd, Allen, Lisa L, and Chase, Scott R, to Lussier, Chance E.

SOUTHBRIDGE \$336,000, 39 Belmont St, Mcfarland, Dorothy A, and Mcfarland, Craig D, to Trudeau, Sarah M, and Trudeau, Nicholas D.

\$310,230, 227 South St, Land Home Fincl Svcs Inc, to Martins, Fernando C.

STURBRIDGE \$595,000, 10 Orchard Rd, Gorman, Peter G, and Gorman, Teresa M, to Mckearney 3rd, Robert.

\$310,000, 24 Camp Rd, Allen, Lisa L, and Chase, Scott R, to Lussier, Chance E.

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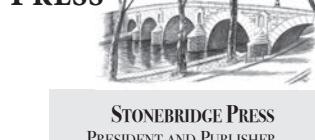
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Tuesday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Wednesday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Thursday: 9 a.m.–8 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Saturday: 9 a.m.–1 p.m. (May 25 will be our last open Saturday until Labor Day)

Sunday: Closed

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W I N T E R
TODDLER TIME
- Tuesdays at
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A play-based

A play-based story time where toddlers will work on valuable skills with their caregivers and socialize with kids their own age. January 6 through February 24. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL.

BABY TIME - phone and tablet
Wednesdays at use, accessing
10:45 Library databases-
Join Ms. es and resources,

Meredith for songs, rhymes, fingerplays and stories. For children 2 years and younger with an adult caregiver. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL. Through February 25, 2026.

and more. Need help with something else? Just ask! Please note: This is BASIC tech assistance. We cannot repair broken devices, recover lost passwords, or enter your private information (such as a bank

F R I D A Y
WINTER STORY
TIME - Fridays at
10:45
Stories, songs, M o n d a y ,
etc. T u e s d a y ,
etc. W e d n e s d a y ,
etc. T h u r s d a y ,
etc. F r i d a y ,
etc. S a t u r d a y ,
etc. S u n d a y ,
etc.

rhymes and a craft. Designed for children 3-5 years old but open to kids of all ages with an adult caregiver. Through February 20, 2026.

December 15 through January 31 - All day

W I N T E R
R E A D I N G
C H A L L E N G E
F O R K I D S

Stop by the Children's Room and pick up a

Wednesdays Winter themed
from 5:00pm to reading chal-

Southbridge police log

Starbridge Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Dec. 22-28.

mons in lieu of arrest on Dec. 22 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle, a Motor Vehicle Lights Violation, and speeding in violation of a special regulation.

Southbridge received a summons in lieu of arrest on Dec. 22 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle, Failure to Dim Headlights, and not being in possession of a driver's license.

A 33-year-old female from

mons in lieu of arrest on Dec. 23 for Unlawful Deactivation or Removal of a Theft Detection Devie and Shoplifting By Concealing Merchandise valued at more than \$250.

ed on Dec. 26 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and a Number Plate Violation.

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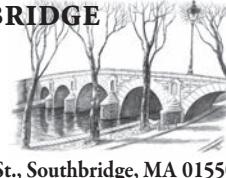
3 sizes available. Call for pricing

An advertisement for Weekend Dampeters. On the left, there is a large grey metal storage unit with multiple doors. To the right of the unit, the company name 'Weekend Dampeters' is written in a stylized, blocky font. Below the name, the tagline 'for the Homeowner' is followed by a list of services: 'Houses • Attics • Cellars' and 'Construction Sites'. A large, bold phone number '10-15-20 Yd. 508-892-4193 • Leicester, MA' is prominently displayed. Below the phone number, the words 'Fully Insured' are written in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, there are logos for MasterCard and VISA. At the bottom right, there are logos for Discover and American Express.

REMEMBER To RECYCLE

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PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER
BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

A quieter week, a steadier community

The stretch after the holidays often arrives without much fanfare. Decorations come down, routines return, and the calendar looks lighter than it did just a few weeks ago. In our communities, that quieter rhythm can feel almost unfamiliar after December's rush. But it is also a useful moment, one worth appreciating.

January is when communities reset. Not with sweeping resolutions or grand promises, but with smaller, steadier acts. Meetings resume. Programs restart. Volunteers regroup. The work of local government, schools, and civic organizations continues, often unnoticed, but essential all the same.

This is the time of year when town boards begin looking ahead to spring budgets and capital needs, even as winter still grips the region. It is when school administrators and teachers settle back into classrooms with fresh focus after the break. It is when libraries, councils on aging, and local nonprofits quietly reopen their doors and pick up where they left off.

There is something grounding about that. While the news cycle beyond our borders often feels loud and unrelenting, the work happening here is practical and personal. Roads still need plowing. Fire and police departments remain on call. Teachers keep showing up, and students keep learning. These are the things that hold a community together, regardless of the season.

January also offers a chance to reengage. After the busyness of the holidays, it can be easy to pull inward, to stay home a little more, to let the weeks pass without much connection beyond our own routines. But this is often when local participation matters most. Attendance at meetings is lighter. Volunteer rosters thin out. A familiar face in the audience or an extra set of hands can make more of a difference than people realize.

None of this requires a grand gesture. It can be as simple as attending a meeting, checking in on a neighbor, or bringing a child to a library program. It can mean taking a moment to understand how local decisions are made or how community services are funded. Small towns run on attention as much as they do on budgets.

As the calendar turns deeper into winter, there is value in embracing the steady pace that January brings. It is not a pause so much as a reset. A reminder that community life is not built only during festivals and celebrations, but during ordinary weeks like these, when people quietly do the work that keeps everything moving.

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.

OPINION

Putting your aging parents' wishes first

As your parents grow older, it may be time to talk with them about financial and aging issues, which may involve difficult conversations.

You'll want to be careful how you approach this. Mention ahead of time that you'd like to talk to them about their future plans and reassure them that you want to understand their wishes, so their affairs will be taken care of as they would like.

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

Try to address these areas:

- Health care – Seek to learn whether your parents have established appropriate health-related legal documents such as a health care power of attorney, which gives someone the authority to make decisions about their medical care if they become



FINANCIAL FOCUS

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unable, and a living will, which spells out the extraordinary medical treatments they

over "who will get what," you'll more likely have a productive conversation.

- Last wishes – You'll want to learn whether your parents have instructions in their will about their funerals and last wishes. Express that you or another close family member should know who is responsible for making sure their wishes are met in a timely fashion.

Money, independence, and aging can be sensitive topics. You don't have to go it alone, though — enlist help from another close family member. Or, if your parents work with an attorney, financial professional or other trusted advisor, consider asking if they're interested in having them participate in your talks. You might even be able to introduce your parents to one of your advisors.

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

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

Lanterns Along Main Street

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET By CHIPPIY

do real work. They tell us someone is home. They tell us the day isn't quite finished yet. They give shape to streets that would otherwise feel empty and unwelcoming.

I have walked through town many nights when the sidewalks were quiet and the stores long closed, and I have found myself slowing down without realizing it. There is something grounding about seeing the same lights you saw yesterday, and the day before that, and the year before that. The hardware store sign still glowing. The corner house still lighting the same window. The library's exterior lamps still shining over the steps, even when the doors are locked.

It is not nostalgia exactly. It is steadiness. So much of life now feels temporary. Apps update overnight. Buildings change names. Businesses come and go so fast that by the time you remember what used to be there, it has already been replaced by something else. In the middle of all that motion, there is comfort in the things that quietly stay put.

Light does that. It doesn't ask for attention. It doesn't demand praise. It simply does its job.

I think that is why I have grown more appreciative of routines as I have gotten older. Not exciting routines. Plain ones. The same walk. The same drive. The same chair by the window. These habits act like small lanterns of their own, marking time and place when everything else feels like it is rushing past.

There was a time when I thought routine meant giving up something. Youth, possibility, adventure. Now I see it differently. Routine is what gives those things a place to

land. Without it, everything floats.

Even the people we rely on most often show up this way. The neighbor who always waves. The clerk who remembers your name. The librarian who knows where to find what you're looking for without checking the computer. None of them make speeches. They just show up, day after day, like a porch light at dusk.

I suspect that is how communities really hold together. Not through grand gestures or big announcements, but through small, dependable acts repeated over time. Lights turned on when they are supposed to be. Doors opened when promised. People doing what they said they would do.

There is something reassuring about driving home after dark and recognizing where you are by the pattern of lights alone. The curve in the road marked by three houses close together. The long stretch of trees broken by a single lamp. The center of town announced not by noise, but by glow.

You know where you are. You know you belong there.

I don't know when I started noticing these things. Maybe it happens slowly, without permission. Or maybe it happens the first time you realize how unsettling it feels when a familiar light doesn't come on. When a house goes dark for good. When a storefront stays empty longer than expected.

That is when you understand how much those quiet, ordinary lights mattered all along.

So if tonight feels unremarkable, that might be because it is doing exactly what it should. The lights are on. The street looks the way it always has. The town is steady, at least for the moment. And sometimes, that is more than enough.

TO THE EDITOR Thanks, Dad

To the Editor:

Thanks, Dad, for keeping me safe.

— Your daughter, Leane

Leane Hammond
Sturbridge

Got Space?

we do.

Contact Mikaela Today

774-200-7308

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Cornerstone Bank, Athol Savings

Bank finalize merger

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank today announced the closing of its merger with Athol Savings Bank (ASB), effective Dec. 31, uniting the two long-standing community institutions. The completed transaction results in an expanded banking network that brings Cornerstone Bank's full suite of digital services to the North Quabbin region while preserving ASB's trusted local identity and five branch locations.

"As of today, our partnership is officially complete, and we are excited to move forward as one organization," said Todd Tallman, CEO of Cornerstone Bank. "This merger strengthens our ability to serve customers with improved technology, expanded products and deeper community investment, while staying true to the values that define both banks."

With the closing, Daniel J. Zona, former President and CEO of ASB, has begun his new role as President of Cornerstone Bank, succeeding the retiring Randal Webber. The Cornerstone Bank Board of Directors has also expanded to include four new members, including Zona, broadening leadership representation across the regions the combined bank now serves.

"This is a meaningful moment for both banks," said Zona. "Our teams share a strong commitment to customers, employees and the communities we call home. With the merger now finalized, we can begin fully delivering the enhanced services and opportunities that come with joining forces."

All ASB employees have been retained, ensuring continuity for customers. Customers can expect ongoing

communications and a smooth transition as Cornerstone and ASB align systems and expand access to digital banking tools, financial planning resources and new product offerings.

Luse Gorman, P.C. served as legal counsel for Cornerstone Bank while Piper, Sandler & Co. served as Financial Advisor. Updike, Kelly & Spellacy, P.C. served as legal counsel for Athol Savings Bank.

About Cornerstone Bank

Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank's local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstand-

ing service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBancorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank's personal and business banking offerings, please visit cornerstonebank.com or call 800-939-9103.

Family Dining & Gift Guide

Too Busy to Cook?

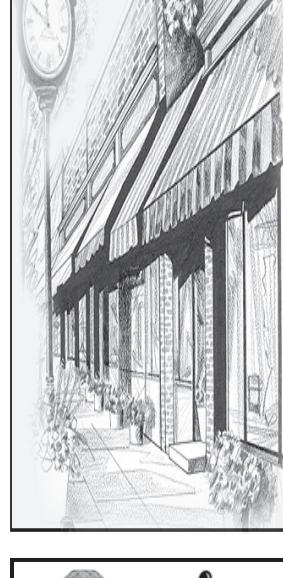
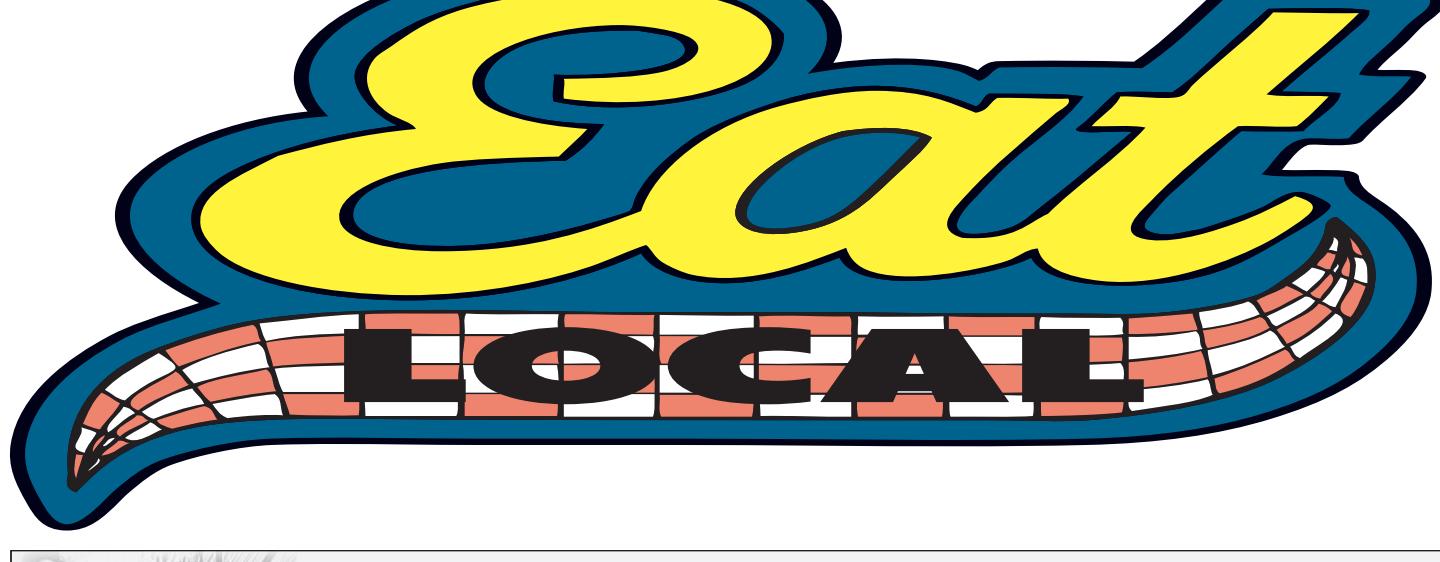
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Sturbridge police seek help in finding missing person

STURBRIDGE — The Sturbridge Police Department is currently asking for the public's help in locating Steven Lynch, who was reported missing on Jan. 1 at approximately 9:45 p.m., and had not been located as of our press deadline for this week's edition Monday afternoon.

Lynch was last seen on Dec. 29 at approximately 7 p.m. in the town of Sturbridge. At this time, it is believed that he may be located in the City of Worcester, or possibly the City of Springfield.

He was last seen wearing a dark colored coat, no other clothing description has been provided. Lynch is a white male, approximately five feet, four inches tall, 190 pounds, with blue eyes and light brown hair. Steven is described as having a "shamrock" tattoo on right forearm.

Anyone who believes they may have seen someone matching Lynch's description is encouraged to call 911 immediately.



Bay Path launches in-school Driver's Education program with easy enrollment

CHARLTON — Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School is

pleased to announce the launch of its In-School Driver's Education

Program, offering students a convenient and flexible opportunity to

complete driver education within the school setting. This two week class will run from Monday, Jan. 26 to Feb. 6 from 2:45 - 6 p.m.

Enrollment is quick and user-friendly, allowing families to secure a spot in just a few simple steps:

1. Visit the school's Web site
2. Enter the student's date of birth
3. Select the preferred classroom
4. Choose any optional add-ons
5. Pay in full or reserve a seat with a \$399 deposit

This limited-time offer provides families with flexible options designed to fit busy schedules while ensuring students receive high-quality driver education instruction in a familiar learning environment.

Spots are limited, and early enrollment is encouraged.

For more information, please scan the QR code or contact us at 508-835-2333.

I don't like the gym. Now what?



Exercise is an important component of overall health. Experts say that adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week, along with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week. Some believe heading to the gym is the best way to get the exercise they need, and it very well may be, unless it's not. Some people don't like going to a gym and are therefore unlikely to do so with enough consistency to benefit from a membership. However, the gym is not the only place where individuals can meet fitness requirements.

Those who are not necessarily enamored with the idea of exercising at a gym for a variety of reasons can rest assured that it's still possible to be fit and healthy. In 2023, Civic Science polled thousands of Americans on how they chose to exercise and found that exercising at home is more popular than heading to the gym. Fifty-two percent of respondents said they exercised regularly at home, while 28 percent exercised regularly at a gym. At-home exercisers also were 21 percent more likely than gym-goers to say they worked out once a week or more.

People who want to find ways to stay fit without a fitness club membership have plenty of options.

Get at-home equipment. Setting up gym equipment in a spare room, the basement or the garage can help at-home fitness fans exercise. All it takes is some compact weights, perhaps a treadmill or elliptical and a

Play a sport and/or join a club. Individuals may want to take up a physical activity, like joining a sports team or participating in a club that has physical activity, such as a hiking club. The Better Health Channel says exercising with a friend is a great way to stay motivated, as each person can spur on the other.

Turn on some tunes. Dancing around to favorite songs is a fun way to engage in physical activity. If other exercise ideas seem uninspiring, upbeat songs that get a person moving can help. Union Health says keeping one's heart rate between roughly 114 to 135 beats per minute is a good workout. Search for songs that will help achieve that rate.

If heading to the gym isn't a person's first choice for exercise, there are several other ways to exercise.


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33rd Annual Cartoon Character Breakfast returns to Southbridge

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Lions Club will host its 33rd Annual Cartoon Character Breakfast on Sunday, Feb. 8 at the Southbridge Community Center, located at 153 Chestnut St.

The family-friendly event will run from 7 a.m. to noon, when children are invited to meet their favorite cartoon characters while enjoying an all-you-can-eat breakfast featuring pancakes, French toast, and ham. Adding to the festive atmosphere, a DJ will be on hand playing great tunes throughout the morning.

Proceeds from the breakfast will benefit the Southbridge Lions Club's charity fund and will be distributed within the community to assist local families, individuals, and organizations in need.

Tickets are available in advance from any Southbridge Lions Club member or may be purchased at the door. Admission is \$10



for adults and \$5 for children under the age of 10.

Credit and debit cards will be accepted at the door in

addition to cash.

The Southbridge Lions

Club looks forward to welcoming families for a morn-

ing of food, fun, music, and community support.



Congratulations to the following students who were selected as November Students of the Month at St. Joseph School — Pre-K 3-year-old: Natalia Santos; Pre-K 4-year-old: Cameron LaFlash; Kindergarten: Robert Thrun; Grade 1: Kaya Sudol; Grade 2: Rayna Parslow; Grade 3: Kamila Biela; Grade 4: Callum Bergman; Grade 5: Luke Zeglen; Grade 6: Cameron Tremblay; Grade 7: Evelyn Macko; Grade 8: Neli Kuznecki. Students are awarded Student of the Month for their outstanding exemplification of Religion, Respect, and Responsibility. Keep up the great work!

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Winter menu**

Bay Path opens application process For 2026-2027

CHARLTON — Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School is excited to announce that the application process for the 2026-2027 school year is now open!

As a school dedicated to excellence, Bay Path offers students a wide range of opportunities to explore their passions and prepare for future success. With 23 career pathways, rigorous academics, and a variety of sports, activities, and clubs, there is truly something for every student at Bay Path. With that being said, I wanted to provide as much clarity as possible around our admissions policy.

Admissions policy and lottery overview

Bay Path's Admissions Policy has been updated and approved by the School Committee to fully align with state guidelines.

To ensure equity and fairness, the admissions lottery system—conducted by a third-party organization—gives every eligible student from our ten sending districts an equal opportunity to attend Bay Path.

All applicants who complete the admissions process will be entered into the lottery. Students demonstrating strong attendance and disciplinary records may receive additional lottery entries:

- Students with fewer than 27 unexcused absences and no suspensions or expulsions under M.G.L. c.71, §§ 37H or 37H½ within the past 270

days may receive up to three lottery submissions.

- Students who fall short of these standards will receive one lottery submission.

This process recognizes the importance of commitment and responsibility while maintaining fair access for all applicants.

Waitlist information

Applicants not selected in the initial lottery will be placed on a waitlist organized by town, based on seat allocations. If openings occur, additional lotteries will be conducted using these town-specific waitlists.

All applicants will be notified of their admission status by Friday, April 10.

Admissions Timeline:

- Nov. 1 – Application opens and becomes available online.
- Jan. 16 – Deadline for students to submit all application materials.

- Monday, Feb. 2 – Bay Path requests attendance and discipline data from sending schools to determine lottery weights.

- February–March 2026 – If applications exceed available seats, a public third-party lottery will be held, announced at least one week in advance in accordance with resident student allocations.

- By Friday, April 10 – Offer letters will be sent to accepted resident students.

- April 25 – Deadline for students to accept or decline admission offers.

Bay Path remains deeply committed to providing students with exceptional opportunities

ties that prepare them for college, career, and life success and is open to all students.

For more information about the admissions process, please contact Mrs. Tracey Coleman,

Assistant Pupil Services Director, at tcoleman@baypath.net.

Historic locales across the United States

Americans will celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States in 2026. A semiquincentennial is a notable anniversary, and there's been no shortage of noteworthy events throughout United States history. The places where many of those events took place have been preserved by local and national historical societies, and visiting such sites can make for a great way to gain a greater understanding of American history. The National Trust for Historic Preservation® works to maintain and revitalize historic sites, and that boasts a number of benefits. History buffs may insist there's no experience quite like visiting a historic site and feeling an immediate connection to past eras and peoples. And such sites also provide a boost to local economies while helping to establish a shared sense of civic duty and belonging, which ultimately helps to build strong communities. With so much to gain from visiting historic locales, those celebrating 250 years

of the United States can visit any of these sites across the country to bolster those celebrations.

- Ellis Island National Monument, New York, New York: The National Trust reports Ellis Island in New York Harbor accommodated more than 12 million immigrants seeking new opportunities in the United States. Perhaps the most telling figure regarding the influence of Ellis Island concerns how many current Americans can trace their ancestry to immigrants who were processed at this globally recognized landmark. The National Trust estimates that at least 40 percent of Americans have an ancestor processed at Ellis Island.

- Historic Rural Schoolhouses of Montana, Montana: The National Trust notes that each of Montana's 56 counties still features at least one rural schoolhouse, many of which are one- or two-room buildings where generations of school-aged children were educated. A visit to one of these school-

houses provides incredible context to what life in the state of Montana was like in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

- Blandwood Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina: Designed in 1844 by New York architect Alexander Jackson Davis, Blandwood is America's oldest Italianate-style house and museum. John Motley Morehead was the twenty-ninth governor of North Carolina and owner of the house, which was where North Carolina was surrendered during the Civil War, thus ending the conflict in the state. Human rights activist Dorothea Dix was among the many who visited Blandwood over the years, and Dix convinced Governor Morehead to fund a state hospital for people with mental illness.

- Cozens Ranch Museum, Fraser, Colorado: History buffs with a passion for the era of the pioneers will want to add Cozens Ranch Museum to their travel bucket list. The Grand County Historical Association notes that former Central

City sheriff William Zane Cozens moved to the Fraser Valley with his family in 1874 and soon set to building a residence, among other structures. Countless weary travelers who made it through the Berthoud Pass in the nineteenth century visited Cozens Ranch over the years, making this a must-visit site for those looking to experience a taste of pioneering life during a much romanticized era in American history.

- Ford Piquette Avenue Plant, Detroit, Michigan: America has long had a love affair with automobiles, so any tour of historical sites in the United States should include a trip to the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant. The birthplace of the Model T, the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant is among the most significant automotive heritage sites across the globe. The museum features more than 65 rare vehicles and enough original automotive artifacts to impress anyone interested in an industry that helped to reinvent the United States and even the world.

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People FACT:

This term for restaurant workers typically refers to those who wait on tables.

ANSWER: Servers

Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20. The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right. The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

		11	34
2		15	27
	5		20

29

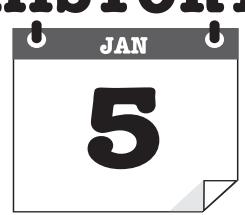
18

34

8	5	7
15	10	2
2	3	11
20		

Solution

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



1781: Richmond, Virginia, is burned by British naval forces during the American Revolutionary War.

1875: The opera house the Palais Garnier opens in Paris.

1911: Kappa Alpha, the oldest Black fraternity, is founded.

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

KMEA A SERVRENOTAI

ANSWER: Make a reservation

NEW WORD

GRATUITY

a tip given for service

“How they say that in...”

English: Food

Spanish: Comida

Italian: Cibo

French: Nourriture

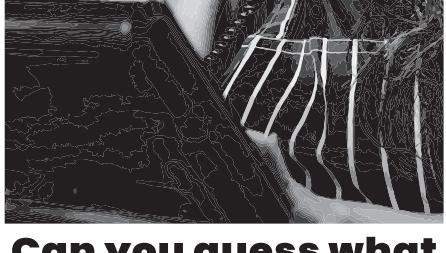
German: Essen

Did You KNOW?

When it comes to the busiest day of the year for the restaurant industry, Mother's Day tops the list for bookings and footfall.



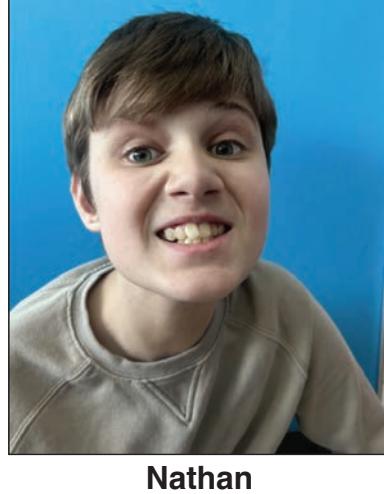
Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

ANSWER: Restaurant host

Friday's Child



Nathan
Age 15
Registration #6472

Nathan is a happy boy who loves to smile and give high fives! He enjoys Dora the Explorer, Mickey Mouse, and Jake and the Neverland Pirates. Nathan likes watching these shows, looking at books featuring his favorite characters, and having those books read to him. He is a talented young artist who loves to draw and color—especially when an adult joins in and draws with him. Nathan also enjoys sensory play with Play-Doh or putty, and he gets especially excited when adults engage with him

during these activities. He has a great time building with blocks and Magnaformers, using his creativity to make all kinds of fun structures.

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



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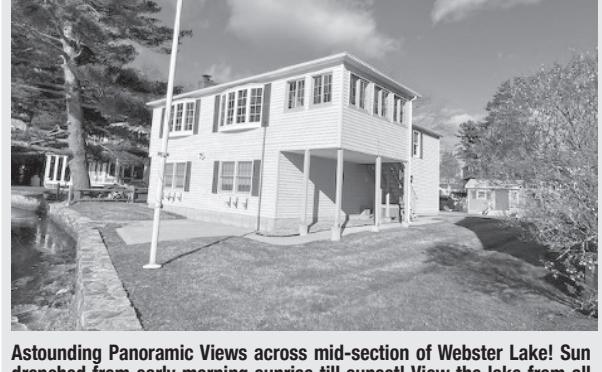
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Amropali Karmakar makes Academic Achievement List at Georgia Southwestern State University

AMERICUS, Ga. — Amropali Karmakar, a resident of Auburn, made the Fall 2025 Academic Achievement List at Georgia Southwestern State University and was

among 942 students recognized for scholastic achievement.

To be eligible for the Academic Achievement List, a student must previously earn at least 12

credit hours at GSW, be enrolled in 3 to 11 hours of courses, and earn a 3.5 or higher GPA.

Georgia Southwestern State University, located in Americus, Ga., is

a public, four-year unit of the University System of Georgia with approximately 4,000 students. Georgia Southwestern offers outstanding professional programs of

study as well as degrees in the arts, humanities, sciences and graduate programs in business, computer science, education, and nursing. Founded in 1906,

Georgia Southwestern is recognized as one of the best value colleges in the nation. Visit www.gsw.edu for more information.



Courtesy

The Southbridge High School boys' basketball team took home the trophy at last week's Winter Classic at West Boylston High School! The boys defeated West Boylston 67–52 to bring their record to 3-0 on the season. Justyn Ramos led the way with 24 points, including six 3-pointers, and Diego Martinez followed with 20 points of his own. Both players were named to the All-Tournament Team.



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