

SPENCER NEW LEADER

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North Brookfield launches Thanksgiving Food Drive

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

NORTH BROOKFIELD — The giving season is upon us, and a local food pantry is asking the community to help provide for those in need this Thanksgiving.

The North Brookfield Community Food Collaborative is dedicated to helping North Brookfield and surrounding communities serving hundreds through its distributions. The operation feeds an estimated 174 clients a week, including more than 35 from out of town. They also help support outside pantries when possible.

On Oct. 20, Karen Farrington, the founder and President of the North Brookfield Community Food Collaborative, appeared before the Board of Selectmen with a plea, seeking to set up collection bins at town buildings for

Turn To **FOOD DRIVE** page **A8**



Courtesy

Students at Leicester Elementary School wore orange to show their support for Unity Day and take a stand against bullying. By wearing orange, our LES community sent a powerful message about kindness, inclusion, and standing together to make sure everyone feels safe, welcomed, and accepted. Together, we stand united against bullying! Photo courtesy of the Leicester Public Schools Facebook page.

East Brookfield Library to celebrate Thanksgiving with Charlie Brown movie and feast

EAST BROOKFIELD — The East Brookfield Public Library will celebrate the Thanksgiving season with a special screening of “A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving” on Thursday, Nov. 19, at 3:30 p.m.

The holiday program will feature the classic Charlie Brown Thanksgiving movie, followed by a Charlie Brown-themed feast for attendees.

The event offers an opportunity for community members to enjoy a seasonal favorite and celebrate the upcoming holiday together at the library.

The movie and feast are scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. at the East Brookfield Public Library.

Those interested in attending can contact the library for additional information.

West Brookfield receives grant to update Hazard Mitigation Plan

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

WEST BROOKFIELD — Gov. Maura Healy’s office has announced the recipients of state grants to help Massachusetts communities invest in local infrastructure, including West Brookfield.

The awards were made through the Municipal Tribal Technical Assistance (MTTA) program, which is administered by the Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office. In a release announcing the funds, Healey called the funding a key resource for communities to invest in projects that will, in turn, allow these entities to compete for federal funding.

“These awards will not only help cities, towns and tribes deliver key projects and plan for future needs; they will also allow more communities to compete for federal dollars,” said Healey in a statement. “Our administration has made it a priority to pursue every federal dollar available, and these grants will enable more communities to do so.”

The grants help towns, communities, and tribes invest in transportation initiatives, clean energy, and resilience projects. Eighteen awards were announced in the Governor’s press release, the lone local grantee being the town of West Brookfield.

The town will receive \$30,000 to invest in its Hazard Mitigation Plan, or HMP. The grant notice did not specify exactly what work will be prioritized to update the plan, but it’s likely the grant will help West Brookfield modernize and update its current HMP.

Hazard Mitigation Plans serve as the framework for identifying and responding to vulnerabilities to major weather events. For many towns, it is the first line of defense when planning a response to a natural disaster, serving as a proactive strategy for how the town will respond before and after the event hits. These plans are updated regularly to coincide with changing weather patterns and help prioritize infrastructure and response vulnerabilities.

By prioritizing its HMP, West Brookfield would remain qualified for federal post-disaster mitigation

Turn To **GRANT** page **A8**

Leicester High School Health Assisting students support elementary school screenings



LEICESTER — Leicester Elementary School welcomed students from Leicester High School’s Health Assisting CTE program, run by Melissa Ledbetter, MSN, RN, as they helped conduct routine vision, hearing, height, and weight screenings for elementary students. The screenings provided an opportunity for tenth-grade

students in Health Assisting II to apply their learning in a real-world setting while supporting the health and well-being of younger students in their district.

As part of their coursework in human growth and development, these students receive training to meet all Massachusetts Department of Public Health requirements for conducting screenings. The

experience is one example of how Leicester High School’s four-year Health Assisting pathway prepares students for future careers in healthcare. Beginning in ninth grade, students progress through increasingly advanced coursework and certifications, including Alzheimer’s and Dementia care in tenth grade, BLS (Basic Life Support) and CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) certifications in eleventh grade, and hands-on cooperative work experience during their senior year.

Leicester Elementary School Principal Tracy Steiger expressed her appreciation for the partnership, stating, “We are fortunate to have such a strong Career and Technical Education program in our district. Opportunities like this allow high school students to build valuable skills while making a meaningful contribution to our elementary school community. We are grateful for their time and support!”



Courtesy

The Brookfields Lions Club recently made donations of \$250 each to the West Brookfield Police Department for their Halloween & Christmas events. The Club also donates to departments in North Brookfield, East Brookfield, Brookfield & New Braintree. Pictured, left to right: Sgt. Kendall Perrault, Brookfields Lions Club member Bill Cass, and Chief Nathan Hagglund.

Spencer Exchange Club to present 18 Under 18 Youth Leadership awards

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

The Exchange Club has acknowledged and awarded nearly 100 young adults with the 18 Under 18 award over the past five years who were nominated by their teachers, employers, school counselors or others who felt they made a difference in their communities. Award recipients were recognized with citations and presented with monetary awards. This year's award ceremony will be held during a Worcester Railers game at the DCU Center in Worcester on Sunday, Nov. 22.

The Exchange Club membership is purposefully invested in the present and future of the Spencer and East Brookfield communities. They wish to highlight the innate talents that our youth exhibit unselfishly every day in what sometimes seems like the simplest of actions of caring and the ability to relate to others. They believe that curiosity, analytical thinking, dependability and a strong work ethic make the greatest difference where we all live, work and play. The club's vision of the future is that these young men and women will carry on the Exchange's mission of "Unity for Service."

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

Bay Path named 2026 School of Recognition by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

CHARLTON — Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School is the only regional vocational technical school in Massachusetts named a 2026 School of Recognition by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The annual honor goes to a small group of schools for progress toward state accountability targets, especially improved achievement in English language arts and math. This year, 56 public schools statewide made the list.

Bay Path met 60 percent of its state accountability targets this year, up from 49% in 2025. That moved the school into DESE's "substantial progress" category and placed it in the 76th percentile of Massachusetts high schools. The gains came while Bay Path's roughly 1,200 students also trained across 23 vocational programs. The students come from Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, North Brookfield, Oxford, Paxton, Rutland, Southbridge, Spencer and Webster. Bay Path is the only school from those ten towns on this year's list.

"As a school community we are very proud of this accomplishment," said Kyle Brenner, Superintendent/Director. "Over the past several years, we have been intentional about building strong systems of learning. We've raised academic rigor, strengthened curriculum and instruction, and brought our academic and vocational programs into closer alignment. This recognition reflects the work of our entire school community."

Bay Path students demonstrated measurable academic growth in the following areas:

- English Language Arts achievement increased 3.4 points.
- Mathematics achievement increased 3.8 points.
- English Language Arts growth exceeded typical growth.
- Mathematics growth exceeded typical growth.
- Four-year graduation reached 98.9 percent.
- The annual dropout rate was 0 percent.
- Chronic absenteeism decreased from 11.1 to 10.2 percent.

"These numbers represent real progress for our students," said Dean Packard, Bay Path principal. "This is what happens when educators collaborate around student needs, when students take ownership of their learning, and when adults across our building refuse to settle for what was good enough yesterday."

About Bay Path
Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School prepares students for both college and careers through a rigorous blend of academic coursework and hands-

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

NORTH BROOKFIELD — The Friends of the North Brookfield Council on Aging will present their second annual Night of Entertainment on Saturday, Nov. 7, offering an evening of comedy, magic and musical nostalgia at the North Brookfield Senior Center.

The event will run from 6 to 8:30 p.m., and feature performances by comedian and magician Phil Volonino and Elvis Presley tribute artist Robert Black.

Volonino will entertain guests with a combination of comedy and magic, while Black will bring the music and showmanship of the King of Rock 'n' Roll to the stage with his tribute to Elvis Presley.

The evening is designed to bring community members together for a night of entertainment and socializing while supporting the Friends of the North Brookfield Council on Aging.

Light refreshments will be served during the event.

Tickets are \$10 per person and may be purchased at the North Brookfield Senior Center. Space is limited, and those interested in attending are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance.

Now in its second year, the Night of Entertainment provides another opportunity for residents to gather at the Senior Center and enjoy live performances in a welcoming community setting.

The event is presented by the Friends of the North Brookfield Council on Aging, an organization dedicated to supporting the local senior community.

For tickets or additional information, residents may visit the North Brookfield Senior Center.

Music & Movement program returns to Merrick Public Library

BROOKFIELD — The Merrick Public Library is once again inviting young children and their families to enjoy music, dancing and interactive fun with the return of its popular Music & Movement with Julie program.

The program takes place Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m., and is recommended for children from birth to age five.

Led by Julie, the weekly sessions feature familiar children's songs, stretching, movement, singing and dancing. The activities are designed to provide an entertaining experience while helping young children develop important early literacy skills through music and rhythm.

Music and movement activities can help children build listening skills, recognize patterns and sounds, develop coordination and become more comfortable expressing themselves. Singing familiar songs also provides opportunities for children to develop language skills while interacting with other youngsters and their caregivers.

The program offers families an opportunity to introduce their youngest children to the library in a relaxed, welcoming setting while encouraging a lifelong interest in learning.

Music & Movement with Julie is free and open to the public, and no advance registration is required. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to bring their little ones for a morning of songs, dancing and fun.

For more information about the program and other library activities, contact the Merrick Public Library in Brookfield.



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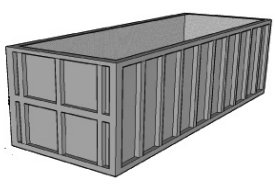


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BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

A community’s generosity can make Thanksgiving possible for all

Thanksgiving has always been a holiday that reminds us of the importance of gathering around a table, sharing a meal and appreciating the people who make our lives richer. Yet for a growing number of families, putting that meal on the table has become a challenge.

In North Brookfield, the Community Food Collaborative is working to make certain that financial hardship does not prevent local families from enjoying the holiday. Its annual Thanksgiving distribution has become an important tradition, one that deserves the support of the entire community.

The numbers tell a compelling story. The Collaborative currently serves an estimated 174 clients each week, including more than 35 from surrounding communities. Last Thanksgiving, the organization distributed 220 turkeys. This year, it anticipates providing approximately 240.

Behind those numbers are neighbors. They are families trying to stretch their grocery budgets, older residents living on fixed incomes and people who may be working hard but still struggling to keep up with the cost of everyday necessities.

Food insecurity does not always announce itself. It can exist behind the doors of familiar homes, among people encountered at the grocery store, at school events or around town. In communities where independence and self-reliance are deeply valued, asking for assistance can be particularly difficult.

That makes the work of organizations such as the North Brookfield Community Food Collaborative all the more important.

During the Oct. 20 Board of Selectmen meeting, Collaborative founder and President Karen Farrington explained the thought that goes into each Thanksgiving distribution. The organization does not simply hand out a turkey and consider its work finished. Volunteers assemble bags of non-perishable and frozen foods, carefully considering what families will need to prepare a complete meal.

It is a thoughtful approach that recognizes something fundamental about helping others. Providing assistance means understanding what people actually need, rather than offering whatever happens to be convenient.

Equally encouraging was the response from North Brookfield’s selectmen, who approved a communitywide collection effort with donation boxes at municipal offices, the library, senior center, police and fire departments. Local post offices also agreed to participate.

This is exactly the kind of cooperation that makes small towns special.

Municipal government cannot solve every problem facing its residents, nor should every community challenge require a complicated government program. Sometimes, the most effective response is to bring people together, provide a few convenient collection points and allow generosity to do the rest.

The Collaborative is seeking familiar Thanksgiving staples, including canned green beans, turkey gravy, stuffing, cranberry sauce, corn muffin mix and instant mashed potatoes. These are relatively modest contributions individually, but collectively they can help make hundreds of holiday meals possible.

The organization also needs volunteers to assemble food bags Nov. 15 and assist with distribution Nov. 19.

There is another important aspect of this effort worth recognizing. Although based in North Brookfield, the Collaborative serves residents beyond town borders and shares resources with other food pantries whenever possible.

That spirit of cooperation matters. Hunger does not recognize municipal boundaries, and neither should compassion.

At the same time, the organization’s increasing demand should give everyone reason to consider the broader challenge.

Turn To EDITORIAL page A5

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Surreal

To the Editor:

As I understand it, we are trying to convince Iran of the benefit of not pursuing nuclear weapons. I believe President Obama had already do so, several years ago, but the current narcissist in chief does not approve of agreements not bearing his name, and even some that do. He was convinced that a short war would be the right answer. Six months in we are still looking to define short. We have already defined expensive and depletion of arms.

If we believe tat our country is the correct arbiter, based upon the success we had de-nuking Ukraine, during the Bush #43 administration, when we signed an agreement to preserve their borders with Russia/Putin., and have now proven the value of such agreements, it makes it far easier to understand the resistance in North Korea and Iran, to abandon that negotiating point.

When Russia invaded Crimea, we did not do what we promised, but did send support. Congress did continue funding, some of which Trump withheld seeking dirt on Biden, and was subsequently impeached for. The Biden admin was also

supportive. It was believed the war would end on day one of Trump administration, not realizing the plan was surrender as he had done in Afghanistan, but did not have the influence this time as no US boots were on the ground.

Instead, what we have seen is a wil- lowing of support, and now, not only abandoning our NATO allies, but cutting Starlink support and removing the sanc- tions on Russian oil that fund the war. George Bush has been dead silent in defense of his agreement. And there is no reason to ever believe us again.

Like the treaties we broke as we evicted the native Americans, Iran believes Israel did the same thing to Palestine. Hard to argue that they are wrong.

Ukraine has destroyed the Russian bot farms that have been used in every Trump election, and that he counted on in 2020 where they were just overwhelmed.

I know not what dirty tricks to expect next month, but let’s turn out in over- whelming numbers and actually make America great again.

KEN KIMBALL
BROOKFIELD

We can’t afford a governor who’ll need on the job training

To the Editor:

Mike Minogue continues to show us he is not ready to be Governor. First was his TV ad claiming Springfield was a “mill town.” I grew up in Springfield and other adjoining communities, and I can tell you Springfield was never a “mill town.”

Then another TV ad promising to end the gasoline tax as long as the war with Iran continues, which could be until January of 2029 when a new president is sworn in. Meanwhile, bridges and road repair or replacement will dramatically be reduced. As a past 15-year select- man, I can attest to the crying need for these repairs or replacements. The state’s Chapter 90 money is largely funded with gasoline taxes

that are meant to go towards bridge and road repairs and reconstruction as well as public transportation.

Lastly, there is the current debacle with Shawn Oliver, Minogue’s running mate for Lieutenant Governor. The man allegedly crashed into five other vehicles and was arrested for DUI. I say “alleged-

ly, but there is much evidence to go along with the arrest.

What these three examples show is that Minogue either didn’t do his homework or just said what he felt sounded like something voters would like to hear with- out caring about what the words meant. As for Mr. Oliver, Minogue once again did not do his homework by not vet- ting Oliver. In comparison, Maura Healy knows the difference between Springfield and a mill town and what Springfield needs. She also knows the importance of Chapter 90 to our cities and town. Her suggested gas tax reduction was for a set time period and had replacement money earmarked to replace it. Lastly, she picked a running mate with a proven track record to be her Lieutenant Governor. Minogue failed in these three instances.

If elected, what else will Minogur fail at? Massachusetts cannot afford a Governor that will need on the job train- ing!

RALPH E. HICKS
SPENCER

Let’s make every Spencer child’s Christmas a happy one

To the Editor:

We are getting ready to kick off the 2026 Christmas season, and it is our hope to help make a Spencer child’s Christmas a happy one. Last year more than 200 Spencer children received gifts for Christmas through the efforts of this generous community. We cannot do it without your help. Monetary donations, new toys and family/child sponsors who “adopt” them are what makes our world go around.

We are under the Spencer Exchange Club’s Charitable Trust Foundation. Spencer Toys for Tots is now called Spencer Toys for Kids. With this merge we are able to use their 501(c)3 status so we will not have to pay tax on the toys we purchase. This helps us a lot! I’ve been a proud member of Spencer Exchange Club for more than 30 years, and the generosity of its members is second to none!

Spencer Toys for Kids has been help- ing Spencer families for more than 60 years. We have our main distribution in the second week of December, but we will fill all needs right up to Christmas. Children 14 years old and younger receive gifts & stocking stuffers. Applications will be available starting the first week of November at Spencer Post Office & ERA Key Realty (415B) Main St. We have also downloaded them to our Facebook page. Monetary donations can be sent to: Spencer Toys for Kids, P.O. Box 186, Spencer, MA 01562. 100% of these donations go right to the kids. We have no administrative fees! New, unwrapped

toys can be dropped off at Spencer Fire Dept, Choice PT & ERA Key Realty. If you would like to “adopt” a family, let us know! We will supply you with a child/family “wish list.” This part of our program is amazing! It enables us to do a little bit better for the kids that are not sponsored. I wish you could see the won- derful gifts that come in.

My office at ERA Key Realty Services becomes Santa’s workshop in November and December where we collect, sort & distribute to the families. We are grateful to the owners for allowing us to take over the building and sometimes the staff to get this done.

We have a handful of dedicated shop- pers who run with the rest of the lists and purchase items with such great care with your monetary donations. They shop the sales, multiple stores and even venture out on Black Friday to get the most bang for your buck. They do this year after year, and we are lucky to have them.

Items like mittens, warm socks, hats, and fuzzy blankets are always great to have also! Follow and like us on Facebook Spencer Toys for Kids. We will keep you updated on our page as to what is going on during the Christmas season with our program. This program runs as well as it does because we are blessed with people who care in this community. Let’s work together to help make a Spencer child’s Christmas a happy one. Thank you!

DONNA MORIN-FLANNERY
DIRECTOR
SPENCER TOYS FOR KIDS

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.

Is FIRE right for you? What early retirement really takes



FINANCIAL
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NIELSEN

The idea has never been more appealing: quit your 9-to-5 decades ahead of schedule and spend your days on your own terms. You may have heard of the FIRE move- ment, but what is it really and does the hype live up to reality?

FIRE stands for Financial Independence, Retire Early. While some FIRE advocates focus on retiring early, others are more interested in achieving enough financial independence to gain greater flexibility over their career, lifestyle, and future.

Wherever your goal fall on that spec- trum, FIRE is typically built around three commitments: high savings, frugal living, and disciplined investing. Proponents generally save from 50-75% of their yearly income, according to CNBC Select, live more frugally, and invest those savings for growth potential over time.

Why FIRE resonates with some people

It can help you prioritize. While you may want a long and successful career, you may instead prioritize earlier retirement or a path that allows you more time with family, a more meaningful job, or a downshift from your current daily grind.

It advocates for some sound financial principles. Living within your means, saving for your goals, and investing for long- term growth potential can help build a solid financial foundation.

It helps you set a strategy for the future. Achieving your retirement goal is easier when you’ve defined what you want retirement to look like and built a strategy to help achieve it.

What to consider before pursuing FIRE

Your budget may change. Future expens- es may look different than they do today. Family obligations, emergencies, and other life changes can increase the amount you’ll need in early retirement.

You may need to bridge the retirement benefit gap. Medicare covers many health- care costs for retirees 65+, but if you retire early, you’ll need to find and pay for health insurance until you become eligible. You’ll also need to rely more heavily on personal savings for longer before claiming Social Security benefits. Because Social Security benefits are generally based on your highest 35 earning years, retiring early may result in a lower benefit than if you’d continued working.

Your flexibility may be limited. Market declines can be particularly challenging in retirement. One way to help weather a decline is by reducing spending, but a lean budget with more necessary expenses may leave you with fewer options to adjust your spending.

Your strategy should be personal- ized. Many FIRE proponents advocate for rules of thumb like the 4% withdrawal rate and saving 25 times your annual expens- es. However, retiring earlier than normal means your savings must support a longer retirement, and inflation has a larger impact. Therefore, your withdrawal rate may need to be lower and your planned savings higher than traditional rules of thumb, and those targets should be person- alized to you.

Start planning now

Whether your goal is early retirement or a more traditional path, a financial advisor can help you with a plan for your goals and the path ahead.

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

WEEKLY POLICE BLOTTER

Spencer

The Spencer Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Oct. 14-20.

Israel Cruz Cortes, age 54, of Holden was arrested on Oct. 15 for Operating Under the Influence (Liquor) and Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle.

Leicester

The Leicester Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Oct. 15-21.

Two individuals whose identities have been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 15 for Shoplifting By Price Tag Tampering.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 17 for operating an Unregistered Motor Vehicle, Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle, operating an Uninsured Vehicle, operating a vehicle with No Inspection Sticker, and a Number Plate Violation to conceal ID.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 17 for Larceny Under \$1,200.

Christopher Sean Martin, age 51, of Leicester was arrested on Oct. 17 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of license, Failure to Stop for Police, a Marked Lanes Violation, a Passing Violation, and Failure to Stop or Yield.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 18 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and driving at a rate of speed exceeding the posted limit.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 19 for Shoplifting By Asportation.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 20 for Shoplifting By Concealing Merchandise and Trespassing.

An individual whose identity has been withheld from publication received a summons in lieu of arrest on Oct. 20 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of registration, operating an Uninsured and Unregistered Motor Vehicle, a Motor Vehicle Lights Violation, operating a vehicle with No Inspection Sticker, and Failure to Notify RMV of a Name or Address Change.

EDITORIAL

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es facing local families. A Thanksgiving food drive is an immediate and worthwhile response, but the need for assistance does not disappear when the holiday decorations come down.

Food pantries need consistent support throughout the year, particularly when donations fluctuate and household expenses remain difficult to manage.

For now, however, North Brookfield has

an opportunity to demonstrate what community generosity looks like in practice.

A few cans of vegetables, a box of stuffing, a donation of time or an extra grocery purchase may seem like small gestures. For a family wondering how to afford Thanksgiving dinner, they can make an enormous difference.

The true measure of a community is not simply how it celebrates its blessings, but how willingly it shares them. This Thanksgiving, North Brookfield has an opportunity to make sure there is room at the table for everyone.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What does America stand for?

To the Editor:

[A] is for alliance, [relationship] agreement. [M], is for mountains. [E] is for equality [R] is for rights, [I] is for independence, [C] is for courage, [A] is allegiance.

Let me give you a word of caution, do not expect to continue to have the free-

dom, lifestyle we are presently living, if you decide to choose, elect a democrat for the president, Democrats have chosen to adopt socialism lifestyle, socialism is another name, word for communism. My suggestion is do not allow a democrat, socialist to become elected. I am suggesting that we remain a Godly country pledging allegiance to God and the flag Of these United states of America and the republic for which it stands, "one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all." The choice is ours! American freedom and or socialist bondage!

Dwell in peace!

ROLAND BLAIS
BROOKFIELD

Voting to save America

To the Editor:

Our 250-year-old democracy, the longest lasting in the world, has never been perfect. That's because "We the people" have never been or will be perfect. L Our brilliant Founding Fathers - Washington, Jefferson, Adams and the great ones like Lincoln that followed well understood this. That's why they produced a Constitution that - while built on the beliefs that we were and would be a good people - was written so that there would be a separation of powers between the Presidency, the Congress and the Courts. This way, one elected power could not "rule" over .not just the other two, but over the people of the "United States."

Even during our Civil War, this three way elected separated powers system has not only largely worked, it made our country not only the greatest on earth, but the one most of the world would willingly follow.

From the beginning, but especially over the last two years, Donald Trump and his followers have, more and more, shown us that they want to end this separation of powers. They also do not care about the most important needs and wants of we Americans and our families. Rather in his own words Trump - incompetent as he is - says he wants "rule" and steal from us, not govern, "We the people."

He also now controls the former Republican Party in such a way that they cannot disobey, but only serve him.

Democratic party elected politicians have shown themselves to not always be good, true and beautiful. Likewise, though, they seek to govern with the people, not rule them.

I hope them soon the Republican party returns. But in this time of high crisis because of Trump and his people, I believe now is the time in any just way possible to support and vote for Democrats.

Otherwise, what we have been for has been for 250 years may be no more.

KEVIN KANE
SPENCER

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The trouble with being almost ready

LANTERNS
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By CHARLES

I've come to believe that one of the great mysteries of human existence is the difference between being ready to leave the house and actually leaving it. These are two entirely separate accomplishments.

I can be showered, dressed, wearing my shoes, and standing beside the front door with my keys in hand, fully convinced that departure is imminent. Twenty minutes later, I may still be there.

I don't know exactly when leaving the house became such an elaborate production. When I was younger, I remember being able to decide to go somewhere and simply go. There was very little ceremony involved.

Nowadays, a trip to the hardware store can require the sort of preparation once reserved for an expedition across the Atlantic.

First, I need to find my glasses. This is complicated by the fact that I may already be wearing them, although that possibility rarely occurs to me until I've searched two rooms and accused an innocent family member of moving them.

Then comes the question of my wallet. I have a designated place for my wallet. I know where that place is. Unfortunately, my wallet apparently does not share my commitment to the arrangement.

The keys are another matter entirely. My wife has suggested that I put them in the same place every time I come home. This is excellent advice, and I intend to start following it one of these years.

Once everything has been located, I begin what I call the final inspection. Did I turn off the coffee maker? Is the back door locked? Did I leave a light on upstairs? Where did I put the list of things I was supposed to buy?

That last question is particularly troublesome

because I generally remember making the list. I can picture myself writing it. I can even recall being rather pleased with my organizational skills. What I cannot remember is where I put the blasted thing.

My wife, meanwhile, has developed a remarkable ability to recognize the warning signs of a delayed departure.

"Are you actually leaving?" she'll ask.

"Absolutely."

"Because you've been saying that for 15 minutes."

"I'm just checking something."

She doesn't ask what I'm checking anymore. I think she's decided it's better not to know.

And then, of course, comes the weather. Here in New England, the temperature outside can bear little resemblance to what the thermometer suggested when I first looked at it. A pleasant October morning can become a chilly afternoon before a fellow has finished his errands. So I go back for a jacket. Then I decide the jacket is too heavy. Then I wonder whether I ought to bring it anyway. At some point, I find myself standing in the kitchen holding two coats, trying to make a decision that should not require the wisdom of Solomon.

What bothers me most is that none of this seems particularly unreasonable while it's happening. Every individual step makes sense. Naturally, I should have my wallet. Obviously, I need my keys. There's nothing foolish about checking that the doors are locked. It's only when you add everything together that the absurdity becomes apparent. I suspect this is true of a great many things in life.

We complicate perfectly ordinary tasks by adding one more precaution, one more consideration, one more little detail that abso-

lutely must be addressed before we can proceed. We do it with errands, home projects, vacations, and sometimes even conversations.

There's always one more thing to think about. I've noticed that some people seem entirely immune to this condition. They announce they're leaving, pick up their belongings, and walk out the door.

I regard these individuals with a mixture of admiration and suspicion. Surely, they've forgotten something. Yet somehow, they manage to survive. Perhaps there's a lesson there about accepting that not every detail needs to be settled before we get moving.

Life doesn't always require perfect preparation. Sometimes you simply have to put on your shoes, grab your keys, and trust that the rest will work itself out. I've been trying to adopt that philosophy lately.

The other day, I had a few errands to run. I gathered my things, checked the weather, and headed for the door.

My wife looked up from what she was doing.

"Going somewhere?"

"Yep. I'll be back in a little while."

And with that, I walked outside, climbed into the car, and started the engine. It was a beautiful moment of personal triumph. I had finally mastered the art of leaving the house without making a production of it. Then I realized I had forgotten where I was going.

I sat there for a minute, considering my options. Eventually, I went back inside.

My wife didn't even look surprised.

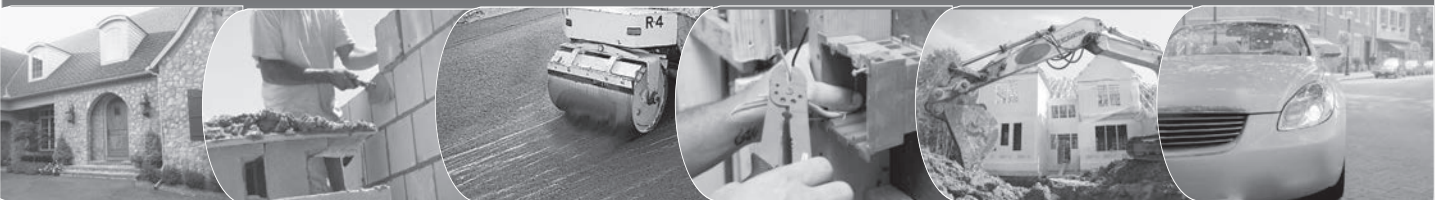
"Forget something?"

"Not exactly," I said. "I'm just making sure I leave for the right reason."

She shook her head and went back to what she was doing.

I suppose there's still room for improvement. But at least I remembered my keys.

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EcoTarium to the International Space Station — Over!



WORCESTER — “I’ve got you loud and clear up here from the space station, over,” said NASA Astronaut Major Luke Delaney using a HAM radio signal as he addressed local students, ranging from first graders to high school freshmen, at the EcoTarium Museum of Science and Nature on Oct. 15.

Ten students were selected to ask questions during the radio call to an astronaut aboard the International Space Station (ISS) as it traveled across the horizon overhead. The Museum was buzzing with excitement with hundreds of visitors in attendance to witness the earth-to-space contact at the EcoTarium. The live radio contact was coordinated through Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) in collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Amateur Radio Association (CMARA), schools across the region, and the EcoTarium.

“What a thrill to watch the students ask their questions to Astronaut Delaney on the International Space Station using radio technology,” said Noreen Smith, President and CEO of the EcoTarium. “This represents the best of what science museums can offer. We are inspiring

future engineers, astronauts and scientists here at the EcoTarium through exhibits and

experiences like this contact with outer space.”

The broadcast lasted 10 minutes as the ISS flew over southern New Hampshire, in orbit 260 miles above Earth. Students asked 20 questions to Major Delaney, including:

“How do you make grilled cheeses up there?”

“How does it feel to always be floating and not on a planet?”

“What do you do when you miss home?”

“What is the most surprising thing you have seen from space?”

“What do you hope the ISS will achieve next?”

HISTORIC FIRST-EVER CONTACT BETWEEN WORCESTER AND THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION MADE AT THE EcoTarium

During the brief program preceding the contact, Brendan Cole, Senior Manager of Education at the EcoTarium, taught the audience about radio waves. Cole shared that radio waves are part of the electromagnetic spectrum and are a form of invisible light. The waves travel through space at the speed of light, carrying information that a receiving antenna picks up and converts into signals that can be interpreted as sound or data. As the clock approached the last 10 seconds before the ISS came into range for the radio contact, children began to excitedly count down, “10...9...8...” The rest of the audience joined in unison before erupting into cheers for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to connect with an astronaut live on the ISS.

There have been 10 ARISS radio contacts from Massachusetts since the space station went into orbit in 1998. This was the first contact made with the ISS from Worcester, Massachusetts.

This initiative advances the EcoTarium’s mission of igniting curiosity and inspiring a passion for science, technology, engineering, and math. The Museum offers year-round astronomy programming for visitors of all ages, including the new NASA-funded permanent exhibit “Lift Off! Space Explorers,” full-dome shows in the Alden Planetarium, the newly renovated observatory, and a monthly Astrophysics Speaker Series. The EcoTarium will open its newest major traveling exhibition, Journey to Space, in the Stoddard Exhibition Hall on Nov. 14.

On Saturday, Oct. 17, the EcoTarium hosted a public celebration, Communicating

Across the Cosmos, that featured special programs about HAM radio and how we use different waves across the electromagnetic spectrum. The EcoTarium showed a full replay of the cosmic conversation with Major Luke Delaney aboard the ISS in the planetarium.

Watch the program and astronaut contact here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nQA-8pl1bls&t=1628s>

Learn more about the ARISS contact here:

<https://ecotarium.org/iss/>

About The EcoTarium The EcoTarium is New England’s leading museum of science and nature, an indoor-outdoor experience dedicated to inspiring a passion for science and nature in visitors of all ages.

Founded in 1825 as one of the oldest natural history museums in the country, the EcoTarium has been a leader in informal science and nature education for 201 years. Highlights of the 55-acre Worcester campus include the science center with three floors of interactive exhibits; the Stoddard Exhibition Hall; Alden Planetarium; Science Discovery programs; extensive outdoor nature trails, a native New England wildlife zoo and habitats; a seasonal railroad featuring the Worcester Railers Explorer Express Train; and an extensive outdoor playground and exhibit, Nature Explore®. The EcoTarium is located at 222 Harrington Way, Worcester. Parking is free, and Museum admission tickets may be purchased online. The EcoTarium is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit ecotarium.org.

Friday’s Child



Malayaja
Age 15
Registration # 8111

Malayaja, who goes by Trinity, is a sweet and funny child with a big personality. She loves to entertain others and make them laugh with her expressive facial expressions. Trinity enjoys singing and dancing, especially to K-pop, Hip Hop, and R&B. She also likes creating her own TikTok videos and learning new dance routines.

Recently, Trinity performed in a chorus concert, where she did very well and loved the experience. She also enjoys traveling and recently took her first flight

to California.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21183436551>

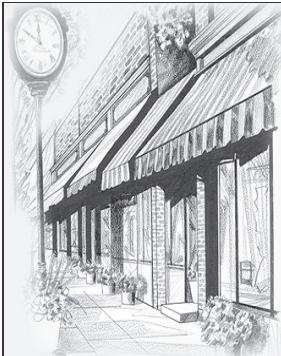
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The process to adopt a child from foster care includes training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you. These steps will help match you with a child or sibling group that your family will fit well with. To learn more 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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Workshop13 to host Halloween Dance Party



WARE — Workshop13’s house band The Project is hitting the stage for a special Halloween Dance Party, bringing a highenergy performance, great songs, and goodtime vibe that fans love. Known for their lively shows and crowdpleasing playlists, The Project delivers a night full of rock music that keeps everyone moving. The Project features Rich Eichacker on lead guitar, Tom Trudeau on bass, Cindy Colon on lead vocals, Roc Goudreau on keyboard, and Brad Willard on drums.

The dance party will be taking place at Workshop13’s Urban Hall, located at 13 Church St. Ware, MA. This beautiful second floor space is now accessible via vertical chair lift. The date is Halloween night: Saturday, Oct. 31, from 7-10 p.m. Doors open at 6:30pm. Tickets are available on a sliding scale from \$15-\$25 at workshop13.org. Workshop13 participates in CardToCulture for EBT card holders; email remington@workshop13.org to request a coupon code. Costumes are encouraged but not required.

About Workshop13

Workshop13 is a dynamic center where arts, culture, and community converge—expanding access to the arts and nurturing creativity and self-expression in our rural region. For more information visit workshop13.org, or call 413-277-6072.

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During this week’s Mass celebrating the Feast Day of St. John Paul II, we also gathered to say farewell to Father Peter Bui, who has been a beautiful light in our school and parish community over the past three years. His deep faith, kindness, and incredible smile have touched so many hearts, and he will be greatly missed. As a special expression of our love and gratitude, students presented Father Peter with a picture featuring his favorite quote, “God is Good, All the Time,” surrounded by the thumbprints of each student and faculty member, a lasting reminder of the many lives he has touched. We are so grateful for the blessing of having shared these years with him!

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OBITUARY

Earl J. Bernier Jr., 79



Earl J. Bernier Jr., 79, of Leicester, Massachusetts, cast his final line on October 18, 2026, passing away peacefully on Block Island, Rhode Island, a fitting place for a man whose love of the water ran deep.

An avid fisherman and boater, Earl was happiest on the water, often tinkering with the latest gadgets and technology aboard his boat. Known for his quick wit, he once convinced his daughters they couldn't talk while fishing because the fish could hear them. Whether this was fishing wisdom or simply a clever way to enjoy some peace and quiet remains a family mystery.

Earl also loved cars, owning everything from a candy apple green Jaguar to his prized antique Oldsmobile. A collector of all things unique, he delighted in discovering one-of-a-kind treasures. His sharp wit, playful jabs, and perfectly timed quips brought laughter to nearly every conversation, leaving behind countless stories and cherished memories.

Above all, Earl was a devoted husband and father. His family was his greatest pride, and he never missed an opportunity to support his daughters, whether cheer-

ing at sporting events, attending theater performances, or enjoying band concerts. His unwavering presence, encouragement, and good-natured teasing were constant reminders of his love.

Earl enjoyed a diverse career as an environmental engineer, working for the Worcester Department of Public Health and Leicester Board of Health, and owning an environmental consulting firm. He served his community through the Leicester Republican Committee and Cable Commission.

Earl is survived by his beloved wife, Joanne Petterson-Bernier; daughters and their partners, Abigail Bernier and Scott Mongillo, Kaleigh Bernier and Nick Graci, and Meghan Bernier and Michael Skaletsky; sister, Patricia Fleming; and nieces and their partners, Kaitlyn and Robert Franssen, and Shannon Fleming and John Schmeitzel.

Though his final voyage has ended, his humor, love, and stories will live on through those who knew him. May his waters always be calm and the fish always biting.

A celebration of life and scattering of ashes will be scheduled at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Block Island Veterinary Initiative or Block Island Rescue Squad.

FOOD DRIVE

continued from page A1

a food drive to support the Collaborative's annual Thanksgiving holiday distribution.

"We're going to do our third turkey giveaway to our families. Last year we did 220 turkeys. This year we're projected to do about 240," Farrington said. "When we give a bag of nonperishables and a bag of frozen, we put a lot of thought into it. We don't want to just give you pasta if we can't give you pasta sauce. Every year, what we've done is we've collected the fixings to give with the turkey."

The Collaborative depends heavily on rescued food and donations, and Farrington admitted they are struggling to keep up especially with food insecurity becoming a more prevalent issue. They also consider themselves "road warriors" who share their resources with other pantries and programs, but if the donations aren't there then there's less to go around.

GRANT

continued from page A1

grants and federal funding assistance to prepare for or recover from impacts from hurricanes, snow and ice storms, flooding and everything in between.

Richard Sugden Library offers support group for widows

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

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

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

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

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

Grow Happiness with Wendy O'Leary at the Richard Sugden Library, Spencer. Adult Happiness Club kicks off Sept. 17 from 1-2 p.m. Monthly schedule: Oct. 29, Nov. 19, Dec. 17, Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 18, April 15, May 13, and June 17. The in-person group will have an optional activity following the session from 2-2:30 p.m. Sign up with Wendy O'Leary at woleary25@gmail.com. Sponsor: Friends of

the Library.

Traditional Folk Music in the 21st Century will be held at the Richard Sugden Library on Thursday, Sept. 17 from 6 - 7 p.m. Music is an essential part of connection. Derek Piotr, folklorist, performer, and composer shares his Fieldwork Archive, featuring more than 2,000 recordings of "non-singers" poems, hymns & songs. Sponsor: Friends of the Library.

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

How to Submit an Obituary

Guidance in Your Time of Need.

Posting an obituary is a meaningful way to honor the life of someone who has passed, share the loss with the community, and support the grieving process. It celebrates their life, family, memories, and accomplishments while bringing people together in remembrance. An obituary also helps loved ones find comfort and closure during a difficult time preserves the individual's story as an important part of the family's history and legacy.

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LEGALS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
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(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO26P3435EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Leonard Anthony Contrastano
Also known as:
Leonard A. Contrastano
Date of Death: 08/01/2026
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Doreen E. Contrastano of Brookfield MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that: .
Doreen E. Contrastano of Brookfield MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 11/17/2026**.
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed

under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.
Date: October 21, 2026
Stephanie Fattman, Register of Probate
October 30, 2026

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

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Division
Worcester Probate and Family Court
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Docket No. WO26P3406EA

INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
Estate Of:
Julie A. Glavin
Date of Death: August 26, 2026
To All persons interested in the above-captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Margaret M. Glavin of Worcester MA**
Margaret M. Glavin of Worcester MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve without surety on the bond.
The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
October 30, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO26P3053EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Brenda M Morin
Date of Death: 07/06/2026
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will**

with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Donald R Morin of Warren MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that: .
Donald R Morin of Warren MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 11/17/2026**.
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.
Date: October 15, 2026
Stephanie Fattman, Register of Probate
October 30, 2026

East Brookfield Library to host Thanksgiving centerpiece workshop

EAST BROOKFIELD — The East Brookfield Public Library is inviting adults to get creative this holiday season with a two-part Thanksgiving centerpiece workshop scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 5, and Thursday, Nov. 12, at 3:30 p.m.

Participants will have the opportunity to design and create their own Thanksgiving centerpiece, adding a personal touch to their holiday decorations or dinner tables.

The project will be completed over the course of two sessions, allowing participants to work on their creations in preparation for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

Because the workshop is designed as a two-week project, participants must be available to attend both sessions to complete their centerpieces.

The program is open to all adults, but advance registration is required.

Both sessions will take place at the East Brookfield Public Library, located at 122 Connie Mack Dr.

Those interested in participating are encouraged to sign up in advance at the library.

New support group offered for people with physical disabilities

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

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

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

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

EAST BROOKFIELD — The Town of East Brookfield, with assistance from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), is updating its 2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan and is seeking input from residents.

Community members are encouraged to participate in a survey to share their thoughts on open space, recreational opportunities, and priorities for the future. Public feedback will help guide the development of the updated plan, which is required to maintain the Town's eligibility for State grant funding for conservation and recreation projects.

Residents can complete the survey online at <https://tinyurl.com/yv7b23fy>. Hard copies are also available at Town Hall, the East Brookfield Public Library, and the Senior Center.

The Town encourages all residents to take part and help shape the future of East Brookfield's parks, recreation resources, and open spaces.

Rachel Myers Named to BJU Concert Choir

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Rachel Myers, a resident of East Brookfield, was named to Bob Jones University's Concert Choir. Myers is a Junior majoring in Music.

The Concert Choir is one of BJU's upper-level choirs comprised primarily of juniors and seniors. Auditions are held for new members every August and January before the start of each semester.

The choral artistry of the BJU Concert Choir is intended to nurture spiritual reflection in the hearts and minds of both the performers and the audience.

The Concert Choir will be performing October 30 at 7:00 p.m. in War Memorial Chapel on the BJU campus.

Founded in 1927, Bob Jones University is a Christian liberal arts university located in Greenville, South Carolina.

BJU offers a well-rounded education that combines strong academics with a biblical worldview, preparing students to succeed in their future careers while deepening their faith. With a student body representing 48 states, 40 countries and 5 territories, the University offers a dynamic campus environment where each student is encouraged to pursue a higher calling-anchored in truth, mentored in wisdom and strengthened in faith.

Spencer Exchange Club hosting Fall Food Fest Nov. 14

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Trunk or Treat event planned in North Brookfield

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

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

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

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

Healing Heroes Foundation launches equine-assisted recovery program

WHITINSVILLE — Responding to the growing need for mental health resources for first responders across Massachusetts, the Healing Heroes Foundation announced the launch of its Equine-Assisted Recovery Program. The skills-based program utilizes horses as a bridge to mindfulness and grounding to combat high stress and post-traumatic stress disorder that heavily impact firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement officers, military veterans, and other first responders. Healing Heroes Foundation is a Massachusetts-based nonprofit dedicated to fostering community, connection, and camaraderie across first responders, military members, veterans, and their families. “This experiential, relationship-based program provides the space, community, and support for first responders to ground themselves and engage with one of nature’s most empathetic creatures,” says Jaime Nicholas, Co-Director of Healing Heroes Foundation. “First responders across the country are facing significant mental health and wellness challenges, and we felt a responsibility to help address that need here in Massachusetts by introducing a unique program that fosters meaningful connection and mental well-being so first responders don’t have to navigate life’s challenges alone.” Hosted in Whitinsville, the eight-week Equine-Assisted Recovery Program is made possible through partnerships between the Healing Heroes Foundation, Cornerstone Community Care, and Superior Stables. At the end of the program, participants will be connected with financial health resources through a partnership between Healing Heroes Foundation and First Responders Credit Union. The program is led by Christina Cronin, LICSW, President and Clinical Director of Cornerstone Community Care. Participants will engage in structured interactions with the horses through activities such as observing, grooming, leading, and other groundwork designed to support mindfulness, self-regulation, communication, and connection. Among the horses participating in the program is one cared for by a U.S. Army veteran and current psychiatric registered nurse, further reflecting the program’s connection to the communities it serves. The Healing Heroes Foundation has filled two cohorts of participants for its Equine-Assisted Recovery Program, showing a regional demand for this innovative resource. With a focus on solidifying the curriculum and measuring outcomes with its inaugural cohort, the organization’s long-term goal is to grow the program’s impact and geographical reach so this critical resource can be available to first responders across the state. It is currently in talks with additional Massachusetts stables.

Equine-assisted approaches have proven to meaningfully complement clinical therapy, exposing participants to a more active, relationship-based setting. Interactions with horses such as approaching, handling, leading, and caring can make abstract concepts like consent, trust, self-regulation, and communication more tangible.

Nichols College launches flexible Master’s in mental health counseling to address regional shortages and fast-track careers

DUDLEY — Nichols College has expanded its graduate programs, adding a new Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling (MHC) degree. The program will prepare students for careers as licensed mental health counselors (LMHCs) in a range of settings spanning hospitals, community agencies, school-based counseling offices and private practice. The first cohort of students will begin the program this fall.

The MHC program meets educational requirements for LMHC licensure in Massachusetts. Through a practice-first, experiential learning model, students will learn to address everyday challenges, from stress and anxiety to relationship and workplace issues, while building a strong pathway toward licensure. The program was developed to align with Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards, the primary accrediting body for master’s and doctoral counseling degrees in the United States.

“The Nichols program is designed to meet the growing need for compassionate and competent licensed mental health counselors within Massachusetts, throughout

New England and beyond,” said Michelle Ledoux, Ed.D., LMHC, the inaugural director of the MHC program. “Our program stands out because we prepare students as generalist counselors-professionals equipped to work across a wide range of client needs and settings. This broad-based foundation reflects both workforce realities and client needs. It also ensures our students are positioned to pursue specialized certifications and advanced training as their careers evolve.”

The 60-credit program can be completed in three years and is delivered in a flexible, hybrid format. This structure includes synchronous online classes in both seven- and 15-week terms, as well as in-person experiential learning, internships and practicums. Courses that emphasize applied counseling skills, such as group counseling and crisis interventions, will be taught in person to support real-time interaction, skill practice and immediate feedback. Other courses, including those focused on foundational knowledge such as assessment and measurement, are well suited to an online environment.

This hybrid approach allows Nichols to maintain a high-touch, practice-orient-

ed learning experience while providing the flexibility students need to balance graduate study with professional and personal commitments.

All MHC students will also complete a required practicum and internship that fulfills Massachusetts licensure standards for clinical training. This practical, hands-on experience aligns closely with the College’s undergraduate academic priorities, as 100% of Nichols undergraduates complete an internship and a research, experiential or consulting project.

“The new MHC program reflects our institution’s enduring commitment to offering relevant, in-demand academic programs that prepare students for meaningful and successful careers,” said Interim Provost Jean Beaupre, Ed.D. “Graduates of the Nichols MHC program will be equipped to make immediate contributions in a field facing critical shortages, and where versatile, well-trained counselors are needed most.”

Nichols undergraduates enrolled in the College’s accelerated master’s program may begin work toward the MHC degree in their senior year and complete the MHC program in two and a half additional years. This accel-

erated pathway saves on tuition and enables graduates to launch their careers sooner. Nichols also currently offers accelerated master’s programs in business administration (MBA), accounting (MSA), counterterrorism (MSC) and organizational leadership (MSOL).

Applications are open for fall 2027. To learn more, visit: graduate.nichols.edu.

About Nichols

Nichols College has earned business accreditation from the prestigious Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International), the longest serving global accrediting body for business schools and the largest business education network connecting learners, educators, and businesses worldwide. Founded in 1815, Nichols College transforms today’s students into tomorrow’s leaders through a dynamic, career-focused business and professional education. Nichols offers real-world learning focused on professional depth - combined with vibrant living, competitive athletics, and an unmatched alumni advantage - equipping students to exceed their own expectations. www.nichols.edu

Worcester Chamber announces 12th Startup Worcester cohort

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

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

Since its launch, StartUp Worcester has supported entrepreneurs across a wide range of industries, from technology and professional services to food, health, transportation, and social enterprise. Alumni have gone on to secure funding, expand their operations, earn regional and national recognition, and continue

growing their businesses in Central Massachusetts.

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

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

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

Born For More: Founded by Michaelangelo Shavies, Born For More is a youth-empowerment social enterprise that pairs mentorship with a gamified mission platform, aiming to generate up to \$25,000 this year through curriculum licensing and pilot programs.

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

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

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

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

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

Vanguard Insight: Co-founded by Andrew and Jacqueline Swenson, Vanguard Insight is an early-stage, self-funded Worcester consulting firm utilizing StartUp Worcester to scale its operations and workforce development services for local businesses and nonprofits.

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

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

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

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

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FOR NADIA MILLERON.**

- 1.** Are you sick and tired of health insurance companies denying or delaying your treatments and claims ?
- 2.** As prices go higher and higher, should your household income be free of federal income taxes up to \$100,000.00 ?
- 3.** Do we need to get the millions and millions of corporate PAC money out of our political system ?
- 4.** Should we invest our tax dollars here in western Massachusetts and in solving America's problems, not in endless foreign wars ?
- 5.** Do you believe the pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness applies to all of us, not just the rich elite ?
- 6.** Should we cap runaway rent increases, and make housing more affordable by banning corporate land speculators from buying up our neighborhoods ?
- 7.** Do we need more doctors in western Massachusetts so you can get appointments and see specialists when you need them ?
- 8.** Do you support a woman's right to make her own health care decisions ?
- 9.** Should we make our medicines here in western Massachusetts so we aren't dependent on foreign drug manufacturers and supply lines, as happened during COVID shortages ?
- 10.** Do you believe there should be term limits in Congress ?
- 11.** Do we need to stop our elected officials and their families from enriching themselves at taxpayer expense while in office ?
- 12.** Has Richard Neal been in Congress too long and is he unresponsive to people in western Massachusetts ?
- 13.** Do you believe both major political parties are broken and that we should elect more Independents who aren't under their control ?

Congress needs a big shake-up. And it's not going to happen if we keep re-electing people who've been there since the 1980s. There's no mistaking where Nadia Milleron stands on the issues. And if you stand where she stands, make your voice heard on Tuesday. Get to your polling place and vote to take your government back from the career politicians who have ruined it.

NADIA MILLERON
INDEPENDENT
FOR CONGRESS

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