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## Woodstock Academy graduate Rania Almashharawi featured by ABC News



WOODSTOCK — Rania Almashharawi, a recent graduate of The Woodstock Academy's Class of 2026, has been featured by ABC News for her remarkable journey from war-torn Gaza to Woodstock. Her story highlights the impact of The Woodstock Academy's Fund for Displaced Students, which provides educational opportunities to students whose schooling has been interrupted by conflict, war, or natural disasters.

Almashharawi arrived at The Woodstock Academy in 2024 after an introduction between Director of Enrollment Management Chris Downs and Carol Barash, a New Jersey educator searching for a boarding school that could provide a safe and sup-

portive environment for a promising student from Palestine. That student was Rania.

Once the connection was made, Woodstock Academy staff worked quickly to make her enrollment possible. The admissions team coordinated the process of bringing her to campus, while members of the Advancement Office secured support through the Fund for Displaced Students. The funding covered the costs associated with attending school far from home and ensured financial barriers would not prevent her from continuing her education.

Established in 2022, the Fund for Displaced Students was created to help young people whose lives have been disrupted by conflict or natural disasters. Supported by generous donors, the fund reflects The Woodstock Academy's commitment to developing lifelong learners and engaged global citizens. Since its creation, the program has assisted stu-

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## Putnam Science Academy closes amid financial troubles

BY JASON BLEAU  
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

PUTNAM — The Putnam Science Academy is closing its doors following a tumultuous year that revealed financial troubles for the school.

Over the years, the private school has bolstered one of the most successful prep school basketball programs in the country, but in 2025 it was revealed that the owners of the Academy, Dr. Tieqiang Ding and Julia Fang, had been accused of embezzlement and financial mismanagement.

The controversy led to layoffs and the school losing its accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges last fall. All this culminated in an announcement by Ding through a letter to staff in June that the school was closing.

"It is with great sadness that I write to inform you that as of this letter, Putnam Science Academy will no longer be operating as a school. We will be shuttering our day and boarding school programs. As a result, we will not be able to retain any of our employees," Ding wrote in his letter.

Ding and Fang bought the school in 2015 and sought investor money to support the purchase. In September, the Connecticut Banking Department set a 60-day deadline to return \$5 million to investors that accused them of fraud. The school eventually lost its accreditation in November, with the state informing the Academy that the over 90 diplomas issued this past May would not be recognized by the state.

The school properties have also been targeted for foreclosure, and teachers have alleged they went unpaid before leaving the school. Those accusations are currently under investigation.

The Academy has long received criticism from local and state officials with Putnam's Mayor Barney Seney quot-

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## Northeast Early Childhood Council celebrates graduates of 2026 UConn People Empowering People (PEP) Parent Leadership Program

PUTNAM — The Northeast Early Childhood Council (NECC), in partnership with Putnam Public Schools, proudly celebrated the graduation of seven local parents from the 2026 UConn People Empowering People (PEP) Parent Leadership Training Program during a graduation ceremony held on May 20 at Putnam Elementary School.

The graduates represented communities from across the NECC's seven-town region and included Tiffanie Allain, Renee LeFleche, Gina Somers, Josh Somers, Morgan Stanhope, Shannon Stuba, and Samantha Withers.

People Empowering People (PEP) is a nationally recognized parent leadership program offered through UConn Extension. The program helps parents build leadership, communication, problem-solving, advocacy, and community engagement skills while gaining confidence as leaders in their families, schools, and communities. During the 14-week program, participants strengthened their parenting skills, learned more about their children's unique strengths and needs,



Courtesy

Pictured left to right: Tiffanie, Josh, Gina, Christine (Facilitator), Morgan, Renee, Shannon, Kristine (Facilitator) and Sam.

built supportive relationships with other parents, and discovered how they can make a positive impact in their communities.

The 2026 PEP class was funded through a Connecticut Parent Trust Fund grant, which supports programs that strengthen parent leadership throughout Connecticut. Through this grant, the Northeast Early Childhood Council was able to offer the training at no cost to families across Northeastern Connecticut.

As part of the PEP curriculum, participants com-

plete a community leadership project that addresses a need identified within their community. The 2026 class selected neurodiversity awareness and inclusion as their focus and created "Kindness Korner in the Quiet Corner," an interactive outreach initiative designed to increase understanding and support for neurodivergent children and their families.

Together, the class designed and built two large sensory boards, gathered educational resources, and staffed a community booth

at the Putnam Fairy & Magic Festival. The booth featured sensory activities, face painting, fidgets, and information connecting families to local supports and services. Following the completion of the project, the graduates donated the sensory boards to TEEG (Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group), extending the project's impact by making them available to local children and families.

Family members, community partners, and local

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## Local teen arrested in connection to Swatting incidents

BY JASON BLEAU  
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

KILLINGLY — A local teen has been arrested in connection with a string of Swatting incidents that have plagued Killingly schools over the past year.

The minor, whose identity has not been revealed due to their age, was arrested on June 16 after a joint investigation by the Connecticut State Police, Killingly Police, and the Killingly Public School Resource Officer. Police report details implied that the 14-year-old female was involved with several swatting incidents in March.

Swatting is the act of placing hoax 911 calls or reporting fake emergencies. These calls are often intended to negatively impact a business or individual, and in the case of schools are often used to disrupt the day. However, the teenager's motives are unclear, and it has not been confirmed if the girl was a student of Killingly Schools.

The arrest is just the latest chapter in an ongoing saga in the region involving swatting of local schools. Killingly has not been the only victim but has been the most prominent experiencing as many as five in just this school year. Outgoing Superintendent Susan Nash has repeatedly noted how these incidents are taken seriously as the district makes it a practice to consider any potential threat as legitimate for the safety of the students, so these swatting incidents do create significant impact to the school day as well as the peace of mind of students and staff.

In March, in addition to Killingly, Putnam, and Woodstock were also among the school districts who were victims of swatting incidents. It's unknown if the teenager was connected to multiple incidents or just Killingly High School.

According to investigators, a search warrant was executed following examination of electronic devices and interviews with witnesses that led to the teen as a suspect. The teen was charged with Breach of Peace in the 2nd Degree, Threat Causing and Evacuation, and Falsely Reporting a Large Scale Emergency. She was scheduled to appear in juvenile court.

# Centreville Bank Charitable Foundation surpasses \$67,000 in scholarships awarded to local students in 2026

REGION — The Centreville Bank Charitable Foundation is investing in the next generation of leaders through its 2026 scholarship program, awarding a record \$67,500 to 18 students throughout Rhode Island and Connecticut, marking the Foundation's largest annual scholarship investment to date.

The annual scholarship program recognizes students who have distinguished themselves through academic achievement, leadership, community involvement, and personal perseverance.

As they prepare to begin the next chapter of their educational journeys, these scholarships provide meaningful financial support while celebrating their accomplishments.

Centreville Bank's scholarship program includes four key categories, each designed to highlight a different form of excellence:

**Emerging Community Leader Scholarship** – For students who have made a meaningful impact through volunteerism and civic engagement.



Courtesy

The recipients of the Centreville Bank Charitable Foundation's college scholarship program were recognized at a celebratory luncheon at Centreville Bank Stadium alongside family members.

**Future Business Leader Scholarship** – Supporting students pursuing careers in business, finance, or entrepreneurship.

**Robert O. Pare Scholarship** – Honoring the legacy of former Centreville Bank President Robert O. Pare by rewarding leadership and academic excellence.

**Children of Bank Employees Scholarship** – Providing support to students whose parents or guardians are part of the Centreville Bank family.

"Education has the power to open doors, create opportunities, and strengthen communities," said Paola Fernandez, Senior Vice President, Community Development Officer at Centreville Bank. "This year's scholarship recipients have demonstrated exceptional determination, leadership, and a commitment to making a positive impact. We are proud to invest in their futures and look forward to seeing the contributions they will make in their colleges, careers, and communities."

## 2026 Centreville Bank Scholarship Recipients

**Emerging Community Leader – \$5,000 Each**

- Jaylene Le – Tufts University, Toll Gate High School (RI)
- Katherine Guiot – Albertus Magnus College, Coventry High School (RI)
- Danica Xavier – University of New Haven, William E. Tolman High School (RI)

**Future Business Leader – \$5,000 Each**

- Kai Gordon – University of Florida, Robert E. Fitch High

- School (CT)
- Ariana Gutierrez Duran – University of Connecticut, Ledyard High School (CT)
- Kinnick Campbell – University of Connecticut, Norwich Free Academy (CT)

**Robert O. Pare – \$5,000 Each**

- Roukia Abdel – Community College of Rhode Island, Charles E Shea High School (RI)
- Addison Jane Richter – George Washington University, Wheeler High School (CT)
- Miranda Musumeci – Community College Rhode Island, Coventry High School (RI)

**Children of Bank Employees – \$2,500 Each**

- Sabrina Buddock – University of Rhode Island, Coventry High School (RI)
- Kaitlyn Foley – Salve Regina University, The Prout School (RI)
- Lia Fernandez – Rhode Island College, Cranston High School East (RI)

**Noelia Reed – CT State Community College, Tourtellotte Memorial High School (CT)**

- Anjani Deonarine – Johnson & Wales University, East Greenwich High School (RI)
- Walter John Okoney IV – Wentworth Institute of Technology, Killingly High School (CT)

**Avery Gallagher – University of Connecticut, Woodstock Academy (CT)**

- Jasmine Loiselle – Quinebaug Valley Community College, Plainfield High School (CT)
- Connor Helm – University of Tampa, Barrington High School (RI)

investment reflects the Centreville Bank Charitable Foundation's ongoing commitment to helping students pursue higher education and build brighter futures across the region.

About The Centreville Bank Charitable Foundation

The Centreville Bank Charitable Foundation was established as a nonprofit charitable organization in 2008 by the Board of Trustees to further the philanthropic mission of Centreville Bank. The Foundation strives to support local community-based organizations tackling the most significant challenges and helping to meet the needs of underserved populations throughout Connecticut and Rhode Island. Grants are considered on a quarterly basis focusing on the following priority areas: education success, economic security, and capacity building. For more information, please visit [www.centrevillebank.com/Community](http://www.centrevillebank.com/Community).

About Centreville Bank

Founded in 1828 and headquartered in West Warwick, Rhode Island, Centreville Bank is a full-service mutual bank with over \$3 billion in assets and 25 locations throughout Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut. Centreville understands the unique financial needs of individuals, families and businesses and offers a wide range of personal banking and commercial banking products and services including checking accounts, savings accounts, CDs, money market accounts, mortgages, business loans and more. Centreville is committed to its employees and the communities it serves, always striving to help people make progress and achieve their financial goals. That is progress on purpose. Visit [centrevillebank.com](http://centrevillebank.com), follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, or come into a branch or office to learn more.

## Area residents named to Clark University's Spring Dean's List

WORCESTER, Mass. — Clark University announces students named to the Spring 2026 Dean's List.

Ryan R. Wallace, of Pomfret Center was named to second honors

Collin D. Hamilton, of Pomfret Center was named to second honors

Sarah T. Lucas, of Woodstock was named to first honors

Autumn R. Allard of Putnam was named to first honors

Students must have a GPA of 3.8 or above for first honors or a GPA between 3.50 and 3.79 for second honors.

Founded in 1887, Clark University is a liberal arts-based research university that prepares its students to meet tomorrow's most daunting challenges and embrace its greatest opportunities. Through 44 undergraduate majors, more than 30 advanced degree programs, and nationally recognized community partnerships, Clark fuses rigorous scholarship with authentic world and workplace experiences that empower our students to pursue lives and careers of meaning and consequence.

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- ### CLUES ACROSS
- Mended
  - Hymns
  - Commercial transport of goods
  - Poked holes in the ground
  - They precede C
  - Branch of knowledge concerned with wealth
  - Larry and Curly's pal
  - Injured
  - Popular type of dance
  - Moon crater
  - American state
  - Places to lock valuables
  - Stalk that supports the capsule
  - Keyboard key
  - death do us part
  - A type of cage
  - A place to sleep
  - Annual music awards show
  - Made over
  - Hard, stony substance
  - Incantations
  - Long-legged, wading bird
  - Breathe noisily
  - Congressman
  - Rip off
  - Golf score
  - Popular pickup truck
  - Where infants sleep
  - Music term
  - Small opening in a surface
  - Musical term meaning "very"
  - Soviet Socialist Republic
  - Treats with powder
  - Email subject line feature
  - A British lawyer
  - Expression of laughter
  - Farmer's calendar
  - Seeds used as food
  - Eurasian shrubs
  - Periods of inactivity

- ### CLUES DOWN
- Hard things to kick
  - Collective of countries
  - Letter of Hebrew alphabet
  - One-time Alabama running back Eddie
  - One's sense of self-esteem
  - Of the teeth
  - Treat with care
  - Type of whale
  - Curved structure
  - Emits coherent radiation
  - One of the Gospels (abbr.)
  - Smallest interval in western music
  - Netherlands seat of government
  - Gives to charitably
  - Lout
  - Pastas
  - Release from restrictions
  - Female sibling
  - Title of respect
  - Silver coins
  - Region in India
  - Partner to cheese
  - Dark or dusky
  - Pacific Northwest tree
  - Exaggerate
  - Toddler
  - Touch lightly
  - Fundamentals
  - Jeopardies
  - Curved structures
  - Isolated, flat-topped hills
  - Forming the bottom layer
  - Reciprocal of sine
  - Genus of Old World birds
  - New York college
  - Cloak
  - Kawhi Leonard's team (abbr.)
  - Vietnamese offensive
  - "The Great Lakes State"
  - "\_, myself and I"

## PUZZLE SOLUTION

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# Winter Olympics underway at Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp



**POMFRET** — It may officially be summer, but the theme for the first week of 4-H camp in Pomfret this year was Winter Olympics.

A total of 187 campers were on board to participate despite the rain and lack of snow. They started out by decorating the lodge with tons of hand crafted paper

snowflakes and devoured Olympic Village cupcakes at snack. On Monday night, there was a Winter Olympic trivia game. Olympic medals were crafted and awarded on Tuesday night where campers demonstrated their skills in curling, figure skating, skiing and bobsledding using brooms and frisbees, field hockey sticks, and skate-

boards as they raced for the gold. For a little extra fun, only skiing was allowed during lunch one day. Parkas were optional during Friday night closing ceremonies where skits were presented by cabin, dance and drama groups.

Although not theme related, this week's special guest presentation was brought to camp by the Knights of Gore group from Dudley, Mass. This group is a favorite and they have been coming for several years at some point in the summer. The lodge rang out with cheers for Lord Jeffrey as he battled in hand to hand combat with challengers dressed in full suits of armor. Spectators got to vote for the winner of the fencing matches. At the end of the battles, campers were able to inspect some of the gear and talk to the combatants.

As long as openings are available, it is not too late to register for either day or overnight slots. You can find details and registration forms on our website, [www.4hcampct.org](http://www.4hcampct.org). Each week has a different theme and the upcoming weeks' themes are Carnival, Zoo Pirates and Vikings, International, Puddles and Bubbles, Capture the Flag and a 24-hour Family Overnight camp to end the season.

Our motto: a summer of fun, a lifetime of memories! We'd love to have you come and make some memories with us this summer. Our camp registrar is available by phone to answer any questions at 850-974-1122 or e-mail [registrar@4hcampct.org](mailto:registrar@4hcampct.org).

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## Pomfret solar land lease agreement petitioned to referendum

**POMFRET** — A petition submitted and sponsored by members of the Pomfret Republican Town Committee has moved the proposed solar land lease agreement between the Town of Pomfret and Greenskies Clean Energy from a Special Town Meeting vote to a town-wide referendum on July 2.

The petition was filed with the Town Clerk on Wednesday, June 24, before the scheduled Special Town Meeting on Thursday. In response, the Board of Selectmen scheduled a referendum for Thursday, July 2, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Pomfret Community School. State law requires that a referendum be held no fewer than seven and no more than fourteen days after the Special Town Meeting.

The July 2 referendum date was selected by the Board of Selectmen to allow the vote to occur before the anticipated July 5 expiration of federal clean energy tax incentives that are important to the project's financial feasibility.

"If the referendum cannot be held before the tax incentives expire, the project is no longer expected to be economically viable, and voters would lose the opportunity to decide the proposal," First Selectman Maureen Nicholson said. "The town has made every effort to provide information and answer questions regarding this proposal," Nicholson said. "The timing of this project is driven by factors outside the Town's control, including recently available capacity at the Tracy Road substation and the expiration of federal tax credits that make the project economically possible."

Nicholson said the town has provided information through public meetings, informational materials, and opportunities for residents to ask questions throughout the review process. Project information, frequently asked questions, maps, financial information, the lease document, and related documents are available on the town's Web site.

"This represents a unique opportunity for Pomfret to generate significant long-term revenue from a town-owned asset while retaining ownership of the property," Nicholson said. "The referendum will determine whether Greenskies may proceed with the next phase of environmental studies, permitting, and project evaluation. The Town has explored this proposal as one way to generate additional revenue and help reduce future pressure on local property taxes."

The proposed project would lease approximately 25 acres of the Town-owned, commercially zoned, 188-acre Murdock Property on Route 101 at the Pomfret-Killingly town line. Based on the proposed agreement, the project is expected to generate approximately \$479,000 annually in lease payments and tax revenue, totaling an estimated \$9.5 million over the initial 20-year lease term.

Under the proposal:  
The project would not include battery storage.  
The solar array would not be visible from any road.  
A decommissioning bond would ensure removal of the entire facility at the end of the lease.

Approximately 155 acres, or 82 percent, of the Murdock Property would remain unaffected.

The proposed lease authorizes Greenskies Clean Energy to continue environmental studies, engineering, permitting, and regulatory review. Construction could occur only after all required local, state, and federal approvals have been obtained.

The stated purpose of the petition was to provide all registered voters with an extended opportunity to vote on the proposed land lease. While the lease agreement was petitioned to referendum, a separate item on the Special Town Meeting agenda—a special appropriation of up to \$185,000 for the Board of Education's 2025-2026 budget—was not included in the petition. That appropriation was approved at the Special Town Meeting by a vote of 85-35 and will be funded from the Town's unassigned fund balance.

Polls for the referendum will be open on Thursday, July 2, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Pomfret Community School. Absentee ballots will be available from the Town Clerk's Office on Tuesday and Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Residents seeking additional information may contact the First Selectman's Office at (860) 974-0191 or visit [www.pomfretct.gov](http://www.pomfretct.gov).

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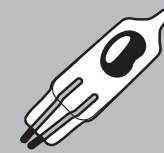
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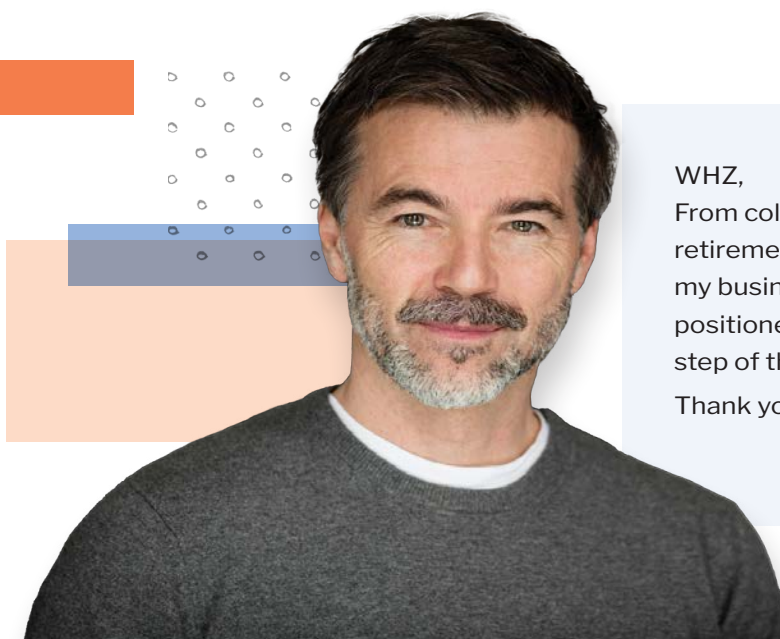
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## Opening doors, changing lives

In a world where headlines are often measured in destruction, it is refreshing to be reminded that sometimes, the most powerful stories begin with a single open door.

The recent recognition of Woodstock Academy graduate Rania Almashharawi by ABC News is certainly a proud moment for the school. But it is also something larger. It is a reminder of what education can accomplish when compassion is matched by action.

For many students, attending school is something they have always expected. They worry about homework, exams, college applications and friendships. They build routines around classrooms, sports and after-school activities. Those experiences are so familiar that it can be easy to forget millions of young people around the world have seen their education interrupted by war, political unrest or natural disasters.

For them, the chance simply to attend school can become a distant dream.

That is why programs like The Woodstock Academy's Fund for Displaced Students deserve recognition. The fund does not exist to make headlines or advance a political viewpoint. Its purpose is remarkably straightforward. It gives deserving young people an opportunity to continue learning when circumstances beyond their control have taken that opportunity away.

Education has always been one of society's great equalizers. It cannot erase hardship, but it can create possibilities that otherwise would never exist. A diploma opens doors. A college education opens even more. The confidence that comes from being encouraged, challenged and supported often changes the direction of an entire life.

Rania's story illustrates exactly that.

She arrived in Woodstock having left behind a homeland consumed by conflict. She entered a new country, a new language, a new culture and a new school community. Those challenges would have been daunting for anyone, let alone a teenager separated from her family while violence continued thousands of miles away.

What followed speaks well of the entire Woodstock Academy community.

Faculty members taught. Dorm parents cared. Fellow students welcomed someone they had never met. Donors quietly provided financial support. Together, they transformed what could have been a temporary refuge into a place where a young woman discovered not only academic success, but confidence in her own voice.

One of the most meaningful moments in her journey came not because of a grade or an award, but because she realized people genuinely wanted to hear her story. That realization, she has said, changed her.

That may be the greatest lesson of all.

Education is not simply about transferring knowledge. At its best, it teaches us to listen as much as it teaches us to speak. It introduces us to people whose lives have been shaped by experiences very different from our own. In doing so, it expands our understanding of the world without requiring us to abandon our own identities or beliefs.

Communities benefit from that exchange just as much as the students themselves.

Woodstock Academy has welcomed displaced students from Ukraine, the Caribbean and Gaza. Each arrived with unique experiences, perspectives and aspirations. Each also became classmates, teammates, neighbors and friends.

Those relationships are difficult to measure, but they matter.

It is also worth recognizing the role that private generosity plays in efforts like these. The Fund for Displaced Students exists because donors decided that investing in education was a worthwhile use of their resources. Their contributions did more than pay tuition. They invested in human potential.

Now, as Rania prepares to begin studying genetic engineering at Smith College with the goal of becoming a physician serving women and children affected by conflict, that investment continues to grow.

Her success belongs first and foremost to her own determination. But it also reflects what can happen when a community chooses to open a door instead of turning someone away.

In every generation, schools are remembered not only for the subjects they teach, but for the lives they shape. Woodstock Academy has long prided itself on preparing students to become thoughtful citizens of the world. This story demonstrates that mission in its clearest form.

There will always be conflicts that seem too large for any one community to solve. No school can end a war. No town can erase human suffering halfway around the globe.

But one school can change one life.

Sometimes, that is where hope begins.

# OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Quiet Corner

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Trump was elected to lead, not to sow discord

To the Editor:

President Trump's unneeded war came to a quasi-pause as both sides signed what is basically a letter of intent towards a final treaty. Administration officials immediately trumpeted an American victory in that the Strait of Hormuz would be immediately opened and that millions of new barrels of oil would be available for global consumption. This, despite the fact that it was the government's lack of foresight that allowed Iran to close the waterway in the first place. In addition, they claimed that Iran's military had been decimated and that its nuclear facilities were no more. Again, this despite the fact that there is no evidence that Iran's missile program has been terminated and its army of nearly one million troops remains unaffected. What's more, without inspectors, concluding that Iran's nuclear ability is gone is impossible to verify. Iran is a very large country, and presumably has underground facilities America may not even be aware of. We also know that Iran still has nuclear material left. Indeed, the one and only one thing, removing weapon's grade radioactive minerals was simply kicked down the road for a future negotiation. America, despite thousands of sorties, billions of taxpayer dollars, damage to our regional ally's infrastructure, squandering of our weapons stockpile, and heavy damage to our regional military bases has nothing to show. Not to mention the damage to our economy due to near record record inflation. All of this for what? To satisfy the male ego of a bombastic president and his equally want to be macho-man Secretary of War.

Trump in a speech at the G7 summit again complained that President Obama's original treaty with Iran was "one of the worse and dumbest." This was a 150-page document that took years to negotiate and involved many other nations including the EU, Russia, and China. He griped that America flew \$1.7 billion dollars to Iran that allowed them to fund their global terror. His current agreement is less than three pages long and in it not only does the US agree to unfreezing Iranian assets and US sanctions worth tens of billions of dollars, but it also states, "the United States of America undertakes with regional partners, to develop a definitive mutually agreed plan with at least \$300 billion, for the reconstruction and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

So, in the end, Iran gets a windfall of cash, an end to sanctions on its oil exports, and agreement

that it will help "define the future administration and maritime services in the Strait of Hormuz." In addition, it allows Iran to "maintain the current status quo of its nuclear program, and the United States of America will not impose any new sanctions and will not deploy any additional forces in the region." Iran for its part "reaffirms that it shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons."

As a result, they will have more than enough money to resume building up their military and nuclear facilities. We had a treaty already. One that other countries signed. Trump tore it up because he did not believe that the Iranians were abiding by its terms. This rather than enforce the treaty. And because Iran knows that Trump could wake up one morning and burn any treaty, they must be suspicious. Trump after all twice has reneged on our own neighbors, Mexico and Canada, by revoking economic treaties, one of which he himself negotiated.

The letter of intent goes one step further in preventing Israel from protecting its Northern border from the Iranian supported Hezbollah and makes no mention of reigning in its other regional proxies Hamas or the Houthis.

In the end, there was no regime change. The Iranian people did not over through their oppressive government. The military is nearly strong as ever. They still have their army and their missiles and their nuclear program.

The President's behavior is outrageous and not befitting of a head of state. Rather than actively taking part in negotiations or even doing something about inflation or teetering Social Security, he continues to Tweet 3 a.m. threats and whine about the White House Ballroom, an ugly arch, and a Washington cesspool — I mean, reflecting pool. All the while spending time golfing.

Americans elected someone to lead our country, not to stir discord and ruin our global reputation. Fortunately, the United States is not its government, but its people. We still care for our neighbors. There is more good stuff than bad. I experienced this firsthand in our little Quiet corner last week. There are many good Samaritans out there who are not dissuaded by a caustic political divide. I had a lost wallet found and returned (after a little trip on my car roof) and help in changing a flat truck tire. Strangers helping strangers. Reminding us that American values are still alive and well. Shout out to Mary, Tom and RJ. Thank you, thank you, and thank you.

LEE WESLER  
WOODSTOCK

### Pomfret: Here's the Murdock Property solar array truth

To the Editor:

Chris Coyle's latest letter urges voters to "demand the truth." That's excellent advice. So let's start with the truth about the Murdock Property.

For reasons known only to Chris and Melissa Coyle, the property has suddenly been rebranded as "Murdock Farm." The name appears so frequently in their letters that one might think repetition alone could rewrite history. It can't. Simply calling something a farm does not make it a farm.

The town purchased the Murdock Property in 1978 for gravel extraction—not to preserve a farm, create a nature sanctuary, or protect some hidden agricultural treasure. For nearly fifty years, town officials of both parties have searched for productive uses because the property has never generated meaningful value for taxpayers. It has been gated, locked, and used for practical municipal purposes for decades.

The latest effort to transform a former gravel pit, transfer station site, and high voltage power lines construction storage yard into a sacred agricultural preserve would be amusing if it weren't being offered as historical fact. The property is not protected open space. It never has been. It was never a farm. The actual Murdock Farm is on Peterson Road and has long been operated by the Davies family.

Curiously, there was no public outcry when former Republican First Selectman Craig Baldwin proposed selling the property or locating a data center there. No emergency petitions. No calls to "save the farm." No alarm bells when the transfer station was built. Apparently, the land only became an irreplaceable environmental treasure when a solar project was proposed by the current First Selectman. Funny how that works.

Melissa Coyle cites a 40-year-old Environmental Review Team report as proof of the property's unique qualities. Since that report was written, the property has hosted gravel operations, timber harvests, storm and construction debris storage, municipal activities, utility easements, asphalt millings stockpiling, and transfer station operations. DPW employees have referred to it for decades as "the pit." High-voltage transmission lines cross the property, and an AT&T fiber easement runs beneath it. Whatever the Murdock Property may be, Yosemite National Park it is not.

The proposed 24-acre solar project would use only a small portion of the property, leaving approximately 155 acres unaffected. Yet opponents continue speaking as though all 188 acres are about to disappear beneath a sea of solar pan-

els. Listening to some of the rhetoric, you'd think Pomfret was about to become New England's largest solar 'farm.'

We're also told voters are being "rushed." Rushed? This commercially zoned property has been studied, debated, analyzed, discussed, reviewed, and revisited for years. Public meetings have been held. Presentations have been made. Questions have been answered. At some point, «we need more information» becomes another way of saying, «I don't like the answer.»

Yes, the project faces a tight timeline. Capacity recently became available at the Tracy Road substation—a rare opportunity the Town has been waiting years to see. At the same time, federal tax incentives that make this proposal exceptionally attractive may disappear in early July. Delay is not a neutral choice. Delay has a price tag.

More truth? No batteries. Not visible from the road. A decommissioning bond requires complete removal of the array at the end of the lease. Multiple studies, permits, and approvals still lie ahead. This vote does not build a solar project tomorrow. It allows the Developer to continue investigating an opportunity that could provide substantial long-term revenue.

Critics, including Selectwoman Martha Emilio, have repeatedly argued that Pomfret needs commercial development to help ease the tax burden. Fair enough. Here it is.

So, if not here, where? On private property along Routes 44, 101, 97, or 244? On the hillside behind Centerville Bank? That's certainly an option. The landowner gets the lease payments, the Town gets the view, and taxpayers still get the tax bills.

If not this project, what project?

After decades of searching for a productive use for the Murdock Property, taxpayers deserve more than outrage and objections. They deserve an alternative. Show us the plan. Show us the revenue. Show us the numbers.

So far, opponents have offered plenty of criticism, plenty of warnings, and some very creative rebranding.

What they haven't offered is a better idea.

Vote it down if you want. Just don't act surprised when the tax bill arrives next year. And the year after that. And the year after that.

Opportunities don't come around every year. Tax bills do.

Sincerely,

MARLENE HEALD  
POMFRET

## Celebrating 250 years of independence

Closed: The Killingly Historical Center will be closed on Saturday, July 4. It will be open as usual on Wednesday, July 8.

Celebrate America 250 at 11 a.m. on the 4th of July at Rotary Park in Putnam. Rain or shine. Join in honoring Putnam's part in America's Semiquincentennial with the dedication of a commemorative plaque, speeches, and more. All are welcome.



KILLINGLY

AT

300

MARGARET  
WEAVER

Open: The Gertrude Chandler Warner will be OPEN as usual on July 4th weekend from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday. For additional information, please call (860) 207-6044 and leave a message.

Celebrate America 250/Putnam: CT Tunes and Tales of the Revolution, Wednesday, July 8, 6-7 p.m. with singer-songwriter Kent Besocke at Putnam Public Library. Co-sponsored by the Aspinock Historical Society.

Celebrate America 250 Killingly/Putnam: Visit the circa 1745 Cady Copp Cottage on Putnam Heights (Killingly Hill until 1855) Saturday, July 11 between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. NO PARKING ON THE SITE. For reservations for the bus leaving the Putnam Municipal Complex at regular intervals email william.walsh@putnamct.us or call the Putnam Rec Department at 860-963-6811 by Friday, July 10.

DAR Book Club (16+). Killingly Public Library. Friday, July 17, 1-2 p.m. Join DAR members for a special historical fiction book read/discussion on A Girl Called Samson by Amy Harmon. You do not have to be a member to participate. Pick up a copy of the book at the circulation desk beginning June 15. Amazon had this to say, "Deborah (Samson), impassioned by the cause, disguises herself as a soldier and enlists in the Continental army. Her impressive height and lanky build make her transformation a convincing one, and it isn't long before she finds herself confronting the horrors of war head-on."

Happy Independence Day! Celebrate the fact that 250 years ago, the colonies declared themselves a new nation, free from the Mother Country, Great Britain. "The colonists elected delegates to attend a Continental Congress that eventually became the governing body of the union during the Revolution. Its second meeting convened in Philadelphia in 1775. The delegates to Congress adopted strict rules of secrecy to protect the cause of American liberty and their own lives. In less than a year, most of the delegates abandoned hope of reconciliation with Britain. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee introduced a resolution 'that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states.' They appointed a Committee of Five to write an announcement explaining the reasons for independence. Thomas Jefferson, who chaired the committee and had established himself as a bold and talented political writer, wrote the first draft. On June 11, 1776, Jefferson holed up in his Philadelphia boarding house and began to write. He borrowed freely from existing documents like the Virginia Declaration of Rights and incorporated accepted ideals of the Enlightenment. Jefferson later explained that 'he was not striving for originality of principal or sentiment.' Instead, he expressed his words served as an 'expression of the American

Turn To KILLINGLY page A9

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Four fallacies for the price of one

To the Editor:  
It's not at all clear what prompted Edward Clement to write his letter to the Editor ("Our Educator's Paradox?") on June 19, raising the specter of socialism ascendant in the country: Not enough billionaires here? Only one trillionaire? Too many teachers lounging in luxury? Maybe the fact that the top 1 percent of households in the United States hold a tiny 30.5 percent of the country's wealth, while the bottom 50 percent hold a whopping 2.5 percent got him hearing Bolshevik hoofbeats in his sleep?  
Whatever his reason, or intent, Mr. Clement delivers a masterclass in the use of logical fallacy to argue a position — we, in effect, get four fallacies for the price of one:  
First, the Straw Man: a straw man argument misrepresents or oversimplifies an opponent's position in order to make it easier to attack. Mr. Clement does this by implying that any criticism of unregulated capitalism is akin to endorsing full socialism — replacing an actual position (that we need better regulations and worker protections) with a much more extreme and easier-to-attack caricature (they want to abolish capitalism). He is not arguing against what educators actually believe (he is not really not interested in that); he is arguing against a distorted version of it. That is the essence of the straw man argument.  
Second, the Red Herring: By focusing so heavily on the word "socialism" and its associations, Mr. Clement diverts attention away from major questions — whether corporate capitalism should have stronger oversight and whether government can be used to make life better for the vast majority of people — and tries to lead the reader into an emotional reaction to a loaded word. The "horrors" of socialism become the red herring that prevents any serious examination of his underlying argument,

which is as thin as the air at "30,000 feet."  
Thirdly, Ad Hominem By Association: Rather than engaging with any specific policy arguments that educators might make, Mr. Clement simply associates them with a politically toxic label. This is a form of ad hominem attack — targeting the person or group rather than the argument itself. By branding teachers as socialists, he attempts to render their views unworthy of serious consideration without ever having to actually address those ideas.  
Finally, False Equivalence: Mr. Clement treats "donating to Democratic causes" and "being a socialist" as equivalent, which they are obviously not.  
It would be well for Mr. Clement to go back to his history books and remind himself how the word "socialism" has been used time and again to fight against things in America that are fully accepted now and very much appreciated. In the first Red Scare of the 1910's and 1920's, the label was used to conflate labor organizers and progressive reformers with anarchists and revolutionaries. It was used against Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's, against Truman's proposed health insurance in the 1940's, and, most memorably, against Medicare itself in the 1960's, when the American Medical Association distributed tens of millions of pamphlets and recruited Ronald Reagan to warn Americans against "socialized medicine."  
Programs that we take entirely for granted — Social Security, the minimum wage, child labor laws, the Clean Air Act — each were called socialist in their time. As FDR observed, "A few timid people, who fear progress, will try to give you new and strange names for what we are doing."  
JOHN A. DAY, JR.  
WOODSTOCK VALLEY

### Lamont will be remembered as a petty fool

To the Editor:  
Gov. Lamont, I am totally disgusted with your decision not to participate in the 250th States Fair. You just couldn't leave politics out of it, could you? Everyone I know agrees, Connecticut, the "Constitution State," should be represented. Your decision only shows how small minded you are.  
You turned down private funding because it came too late — total BS; even a delayed setup would be better than nothing at all. Were Biden or Obama the President, you'd

be falling all over yourself to be the first booth set up. It's no secret you hate the current President; a bigger man would, at a minimum, respect the Office of the President and be proud to have Connecticut included in the Great American Fair.  
History will remember you as a petty fool who passed up a great moment to celebrate the 250th birthday of this great country.  
Thank you,  
RICHARD ADAMS  
KILLINGLY

### How low can we sink?

To the Editor:  
I was disgusted and outraged when I read of the Swatting call on Pete Buttigieg's family. How much lower can you go than to use four-year-olds to make a statement about your political enemies?  
Some of the people in this country keep descending to lower and lower depths. This behavior can be directly linked to the examples we see on a daily basis by our present administration. The bullying, hatred and racism emanating from the Whitehouse is sparking similar actions from like-minded people. There once was something called civilized behavior in this country but it seems that is in short supply these days. Why expect anything better? The most powerful person in the country resorts to bribery, bullying, extortion, lies and any means to satisfy his own ego. His plans to force the Justice Department, the Cabinet, the media, the Senate and the House to do his bidding are coming along very well. At some point in time, this country will be unrecognizable. It will be run by one tyrant who has his foot on the neck of every branch and who tweets his wildest thoughts

on the internet at midnight instead of having press conferences with well-thought-out plans for the future of our country.  
The recent Supreme Court decision to end temporary protective status to people from countries like Haiti is another example of low behavior and total lack of empathy. We might as well send the Statue of Liberty back to France (my husband's words). He's right, it's becoming meaningless. I guess we no longer care about the huddled masses.  
To all the people who still think Trump is doing a good job: start watching and reading the news that reports provable facts instead of pop-up blogs that flow whichever way the ratings take them. There are no versions of the truth, there are only facts. Make sure you know them. You certainly won't get them from the White House. Their reports are specious at best, and outright lies at worst.  
I agree with Robert De Niro, as I'm sure many of you do — I want my country back!  
JEAN McNALLY  
WOODSTOCK

### Additional Letters to the Editor, see Page A-8

#### Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author's name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author's name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.  
It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

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### Woodstock — Time to pay

To the Editor:  
For Woodstock taxpayers, the time to pay is near. In the last few days, you should have received your new tax bill based on the budget passed April 28 and the mil rate set by the Board of Finance on May 12.  
If you take out the tax bill you received last June and compare the two, you'll see a roughly 14 percent increase if you're an average taxpayer. If you were the recipient of a greater than 30 percent increase in your latest assessment, then you'll see more. To be fair, this includes both the impact of the latest assessment and the increase you received in your supplemental tax bill for the current, 2025- 2026, tax year and this year's increase of 7.7 percent on average.  
If this doesn't rattle your cage just a bit, think back over the last five or six years and

the increases of 5, 6, 7 percent year after year. Think about what you'll see over the next 2,3,4, 10 years. See, spending begets spending. You have to maintain and supplement what you acquired and then add more. In April, roughly 900 voted yes to the increases in this year's budget, roughly 670 voted no, and over 4,000 didn't bother.  
Since 2020, property taxes have gone up 36 percent for the average taxpayer — if your two revaluations were above average, more, in some cases a lot more. That's 20 percent faster than inflation. The next few years will be interesting indeed. Be sure to send a thank-you to the spenders — you know who they are.  
DAVE RICHARDSON  
WOODSTOCK



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Courtesy

Members of Putnam Cub Scout Pack 21 were taught how to plant sprouts during their regular pack meeting on Wednesday, June 24 at their chartered organization, the Albert J. Breault VFW Post 1523. Expert gardener Jim Tetreault of Sterling showed the Cub Scouts how to plant, water and fertilize and grow the sprouts, so they could take them home and eat them in just two weeks. This was just one of the fun and active things that Pack 21's Cub Scouts do all year long, guided by trained and experienced adults. Pack 21 welcomes boys and girls ages five through ten. To join, call John Ryan at (860) 928-5873.



# Rotary honors area's salutatorians and valedictorians



Courtesy

Putnam High, from left: PHS Lead School Counselor Erika Ponciano, Rotarian and Val Sal Committee Chair Kristen Willis, Paige Perry, Nicholas Devlin and Rotary President Kathy Kirk.



Tourtellotte, from left: Rotarian and Val Sal Committee Chair Kristen Willis, Kim Steglitz, Julie Lewis, Briana Martin and Rotary President Kathy Kirk.



Woodstock Academy, from left: Rotarian and Val Sal Committee chair Kristen Willis, Dean of Academics Dr. Michael Harten, Ivar McDonald, Isabel D'Alleva-Bochain and Rotary Club President Kathy Kirk.

PUTNAM — The Putnam Rotary Club honored its service area's salutatorians and valedictorians at a recent meeting.

Plaques were presented to: From Putnam High School: Salutatorian Paige Perry and valedictorian Nicholas Devlin.

From Tourtellotte Memorial High School: Salutatorian Julie Lewis and valedictorian Briana Martin.

And Woodstock Academy: Salutatorian Ivar McDonald and valedictorian Isabel D'Alleva-Bochain.

Each student spoke about where they were going to college and what they planned to major in.

In addition, plaques were sent to those salutatorians and valedictorians who could not be at the Rotary meeting including: Marianapolis: Salutatorian Charles O'Brien and valedictorian Philopateer Basha. Pomfret School: 2nd in class Ziheng (Henry) Chen and 1st in class Kelly Jimin Park. Putnam Science Academy: Salutatorian Cecile Lufungula and valedictorian Ethan Graham.

The club members congratulated all the students on their outstanding academic achievement and the culmination of their high school career.

## Pomfret School Spring 2026 Honors announced

POMFRET — The following local students were named to a Spring 2026 Honors list at Pomfret School:

**Head of School Scholar Honors**  
To achieve this level of distinction, students named to this list earned a grade point average of at least 4.00 and received no grade lower than an A-.

**Class of 2026**  
Gabriela Brown (Woodstock Valley)  
Mirabelle Cole (Brooklyn)  
Ian Sherman (Brooklyn)

**Class of 2027**  
James Lake (Pomfret)  
Rowan Lehmann (Putnam)  
Ella Sousa (North Grosvenordale)

**Class of 2028**  
Roan Donovan (Woodstock)  
Amber Sherman (Brooklyn)

**Class of 2029**  
Erin Park (Pomfret Center)

**High Honors**  
To achieve this level of distinction, students named to this list earned a grade point average of at least 3.67 and received no grade lower than a B+.

**Class of 2026**  
Anson D'Alleva-Bochain (Pomfret Center)  
Shelby Geragotelis (Brooklyn)  
William Leary (Pomfret)  
Max Ring (Pomfret)

**Class of 2027**  
Beatrice Foronda (Putnam)  
Landon Murdock. (Woodstock)

**Class of 2028**  
McKenna Bendall (Pomfret)  
Coco-Lyon Jacquet (Pomfret)  
Tatum Litowitz (Pomfret)  
Adelyn Snyder (Dayville)  
Camilla Stewart (Pomfret)  
Isabella Weinhardt (Dayville)

**Honors**  
To achieve this level of distinction, stu-

dents named to this list earned a grade point average of at least 3.33 and received no grade lower than a B.

**Class of 2026**  
Robert Ellsworth (Eastford)  
Remy Jacquet (Pomfret)  
Gabriella Nsubuga (Danielson)  
Delaney Williams (Brooklyn)

**Class of 2027**  
Rita Rawcliffe (Woodstock)  
**Class of 2029**  
Sydney Anderson (Woodstock)

Founded in 1894, Pomfret School is an independent coeducational college preparatory boarding and day school for 350 students in grades 9 through 12 and postgraduates. Set on a stunning 500-acre campus in Northeastern Connecticut, Pomfret empowers students to pursue lives of purpose and meaning by inspiring the next generation of change makers and problem solvers. Learn more at [www.pomfret.org](http://www.pomfret.org).

## Area residents graduate from University of Connecticut

STORRS — The University of Connecticut congratulates the following students who completed the requirements to earn degrees in May of 2026.

**UNDERGRADUATE**  
**BROOKLYN**-William Carver III, Kaitlyn Dalbec, Caroline Frost, Anthony Girard, Morgan Hardacker.  
**DANIELSON**-Emma Gilbert, Jeyla St. Laurent.  
**DAYVILLE**-Gabriel Brisson, Samantha Goulston, Connor O'Marra, Daren Paquin, Sophia Rabor.  
**MOOSUP**-Phoebe Thompson.  
**POMFRET**-Lily Brin, Maggie Jellison.  
**POMFRET CENTER**-Claire Anderson.  
**PUTNAM**-Eric Belske, Ayvriil Brytowski, Benjamin Northup.  
**THOMPSON**-River Favreau, Scout Favreau, Neil Wong.

**TOLLAND**-Savanah Battles, Rachel Bendkowski, Jacob Bidorini, Remi Boivin, Samantha Caffrey, Sara Clokey, Laurny Gaylord, Michael Germano, Isabelle Gilley, Cameron Graham, Danielle Hemingway, Lindsey Jones, Aidan Kohl, Abhay Kohli, Elizabeth Ly, Alyssa Marsella, Calista Mrozinski, Natalie Parsons, Anna Pasterick, Sophia Rotondaro, Adam Schadt, Junaid Shah, Rehan Shah, Temoor Shah, Arbi Shehu, Alexa Sisk, Hunter Tortorella, Joaquin Uribe, Kaitlyn Wood, Xiaoyu Simba Zhang.

**WOODSTOCK**-Morgan Bentley, Sydney Cournoyer, Ava Coutu, Anya Farutin, Rayen Nielsen, Hans Rhynhart, Alyssa Sharrow, Daniel Torres.

**WOODSTOCK VALLEY**-Olivia Grant, Gianna Nichols, Ainslie Tschamler.

**GRADUATE**  
**BROOKLYN**-Elizabeth Costa, Cole Lavigne, Sophia Provencher, William Snyder.  
**DANIELSON**-Essence St. Clair.  
**KILLINGLY**-Laney Dunn.  
**MOOSUP**-Kristan Manning.  
**POMFRET**-Katherine Holzer.  
**POMFRET CENTER**-Mark Semco.  
**PUTNAM**-Alexa Steinbrick.

**TOLLAND**-Jennifer Artiaco, Lauren Bassett, Fiona Crowley, Nathan Freedman, Menaka Kannan, Madison Malcore, Melissa Niver, Caleb Raccagni, Ryaan Shaikh, Anushkagayathrie Silvaasurumunige, Nicholas Sturgis, Madison Sztaba, Eva Wiggins, Savannah Zell.

**WOODSTOCK**-Heidi Bradway, Alana Frenkel, David Ramos.

## Woodstock's Katie Fortin graduates from Suffolk University

BOSTON, Mass. — Katie Fortin of Woodstock graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations from Suffolk University in Boston. Commencement ceremonies were held on May 17.

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# Marianapolis recognizes student and faculty excellence on Prizes and Awards Day



David DiCicco, Head of School (left), with William Benedict, recipient of the Trinity Foundation Faculty Award (right).

**THOMPSON** — On Friday, May 29, Marianapolis celebrated the achievements of its freshman, sophomore, and junior students during the annual Prizes & Awards Day ceremony. The event honored excellence in academics, leadership, service, athletics, and the arts, while also recognizing a distinguished faculty member for exceptional teaching and dedication to the school community. The recipients are listed below.

**Class of 2029 Awards**

Father Mark Garrow, MIC Award: Sophia MacKenzie, Woodstock

Father Stanley Saplis,

MIC Award: Lucas DeGennaro, Mansfield Center

Father Timothy Roth, MIC Award: Lecheng Xu, Hangzhou, China

The Leonard George Budelis '38 Award: Sofia Heno, Southbridge, Mass.

**Class of 2028 Awards**

Father Albin A. Sheputa, MIC Award: Eleanor Smith, Grafton, Mass.

Friends of Marianapolis Award: Kyrach Gingo, Webster, Mass.

**Class of 2027 Awards**

Brandeis University Book Award: Samuel

Hachigian, Thompson Rensselaer Medal: Zhangjila Yang, Kunming, China

Harvard Prize Book: Ryan Shaughnessy, Putnam

Saint Anselm College Book Award: Anh Tu Dinh, Hanoi, Vietnam

The Grace Rett Philippians 4:13 Award: Emma Martineau, Putnam

University of Rochester Bausch & Lomb Honorary Science Award: Samuel Hachigian, Thompson

University of Rochester Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony Award: Maeve Early, North Brookfield, Mass.

University of Rochester George Eastman Young Leaders Award: Mary Kate

Barnwell, Danielson University of Rochester Xerox Award for Innovation & Information Technology: Violet Vinton, Webster, Mass.

The Furmanski Scholarship: Xirui Wang, Chengdu, China

Ron & Donna Coderre Scholarship: Ryan Shaughnessy, Putnam

Stetson University John B. Stetson Scholarship: Nazar Babak, Danielson, and Samuel Guay, Webster, Mass.

Faculty Trinity Foundation Faculty Award: William Benedict

# Marianapolis Preparatory School graduates 57



**THOMPSON** — On Sunday, May 31, 57 students (54 seniors and three postgraduates) graduated from Marianapolis Preparatory School.

On Saturday, May 30, during Baccalaureate Mass, members of the Marianapolis Class of 2026 received

medals honoring their academic achievements. On Sunday, May 31, during Commencement, members of the class received Silver Bowl award honors, which celebrate several areas ranging from athletics to community service to character.

Marianapolis Class of

## Tourtellotte Memorial High School announces honor roll

**NORTHGROSVENORDALE** — Tourtellotte Memorial High School has released its honor roll for the fourth quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

**9th Grade**

High Honors: Nana Baffour-Gyimah, Shyla Beckett, Payton Bolte, Ari-Lynne Brunelle, Deegan Bryniarski, Hazel Clavette, Logan Delicata, Jeylia Denham, Emma Fournier, Sophia Kus, John Lowe, Andrew Marquette, Danika Minarik, Shawn Sinni, Cameron Snow, Levi Tucker

Honors: Seth Breault, Christopher Herlihy, Alexis Light, Paris Lowe, Gia Reynolds-Rankin, Parker Smith, Adylin Stewart, Jayden Watkins, Mason Wolf

**10th Grade**

High Honors: Jeremi Helwig, Gabriella Santos  
Honors: Payton Butler, Theresa Coomey, Travis Coomey, Brookelynn Pearson, Ayden Perry, Madison Perry, Naisha Ruiz Aquino, Brody Vincent  
Recognition: Bryant Fleming

**11th Grade**

High Honors: Amelia Brousseau, Maddison Carlson, Nicko Casto, Estela Freitas, Thomas Kenadek, Calleigh Levesque, Billie Lewis, Mabel Perreault, Haley Russell, Zoe Zdanis

Honors: Gabriel Bourget, Tanisha Patel, Samantha Podgorni, Jordyn Poplawski, Kaydyn Racca, Matthew Rybacki

Recognition: Alexis Andrews, Dylan Axtell, Leah Belair, Jordan Burns-Studley, Ozzy Collette, Kaleb Laporte, Nicholas Lavallee, Ella Martin, Keyone Masterson

**12th Grade**

High Honors: Bailey Benton, Deanna Burrell, Julia Lewis, Ember Merrill, Gaige Smith

Honors: Isabella Barrows, Logan Boss, Dylan Bryniarski, Quintin Cabral, Alex Davis, Cole Hopkins, Colby Lewis, Caitlyn L'Heureux, Victoria Patterson, Tyler Shead, Laci Sinni, Joshua Tackson, Fabiola Torres, Kevin Vesceera

Recognition: Kayd Akana, Isabella Bonin, Gia DiPasquale, Jordan Fitton, Sahara Moore, Alexis Phav, Nathan Plaza, Ava Tucker

**2026 in Alphabetical Order**

Ricardo Aguayo, Chihuahua, Mexico; Kaan Akkol, Gelrode, Belgium; Anthony Alexander, Castries, Saint Lucia; Philopateer Basha, Dudley, MA; Andrew Bergeron, Webster, MA; Avery Bertrand, Pascoag, RI; Dario Bonaccini Olivieri, Verona, Italy; Addison Boria, Charlton City, MA; Emily Brodeur, Charlton, MA; Laura Čapková, Olomouc, Czech Republic; Zahara Chadd, Springfield, MA; Tiana Chahine, North Oxford, MA; Emma Clifford, Holden, MA; Murphy Coddling, Brooklyn, CT; Rylee Conlon, North Oxford, MA; Patrick Connolly, Oxford, MA; Blain DeGennaro, Mansfield Center, CT; Vincent Dellasanta, Lunenburg, MA; Francisco Diaz, Shrewsbury, MA; Hoang Anh Do, Bien Hoa, Vietnam; Felicity Durando, Dudley, MA; Ruy Elias Vazquez, Chihuahua, Mexico; Ashley Fahey, Dayville, CT; Rafaela Galvão Santiago, Sao Paulo, Brazil; Joel Gandhi, Ahmedabad, India; Rose Givner, Oxford, MA; Dillon Guilbault, Pomfret Center, CT; Angeli Herasme Rosario, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Gabriel Huss, Auburn, MA;

Kody Jamieson, Sterling, CT; Luke Landis, Brooklyn, CT; Zhiqing Li, Shanghai, China; Xiankai Liu, Beijing, China; Jesunifemi Perfect Maku, London, United Kingdom; Samantha Maurice, Pascoag, RI; Brayden McNair, Webster, MA; Isabella Miele, Marlborough, MA; Quang Nguyen, Bien Hoa, Vietnam; Van Phi Nguyen, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam; Charles O'Brien, Dayville, CT; Makenna O'Connor, Dudley, MA; Vanda Ospalá, Brno, Czech Republic; Alexandra Parafinowicz, Oxford, MA; Trung Hieu Pham, Hanoi, Vietnam; Adam Podgorny, Oxford, MA; Rocco Rudnicki, Webster, MA; Tristan Semo, Dudley, MA; Yuhui Shen, Shaoxing, China; Sofia Soloperto, Charlton, MA; Sienna Stawiecki, Dudley, MA; Maeve Sullivan, Douglas, MA; Anastasiia Timofeeva, Ufa, Russia; Minh Nguyet Tran, Bien Hoa, Vietnam; Nicholas Vanfleet, North Grafton, MA; Arianna Watson, Webster, MA; Hannah Watson, Webster, MA; Yeonsoo Yang, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Academic Awards and Silver Bowl Honors  
Dance Medal: Addison

Boria, Charlton City, Mass.

Distinguished Leadership Award: Yeonsoo Yang, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Engineering Medal: Andrew Bergeron, Webster, Mass.

English Medal: Felicity Durando, Dudley, Mass.

Eric Gustavson History Medal: Philopateer Basha, Dudley, Mass.

Fr. Gurklis, MIC Mathematics Medal: Yeonsoo Yang, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Gertrude Salvias English Language Medal: Laura Čapková, Olomouc, Czech Republic

Marilyn S. Ebbitt Medal: Patrick Connolly, Oxford, Mass.

Modern Languages Medal: Luke Landis, Brooklyn

Music Medal: Luke Landis, Brooklyn

Religious Studies Medal: Patrick Connolly, Oxford, Mass.

Salutatorian Bowl: Charles O'Brien, Dayville

Social Sciences Medal: Ashley Fahey, Dayville

The Congregation of the Marian Fathers Centennial Awards: Patrick Connolly, Oxford, MA and Rocco Rudnicki, Webster, Mass.

The Dr. Louis Loffredo Memorial Award: Hannah Watson, Webster, Mass.

The Father Casimir Kuckell, MIC Memorial Awards: Charles O'Brien, Dayville, and Sienna Stawiecki, Dudley, Mass.

The Father John Petrauskas, MIC Memorial Award: Sienna Stawiecki, Dudley, Mass.

The John Kendrtarvich Memorial Award: Emma Clifford, Holden, Mass.

The Marianapolis Alumni Merit Award: Charles O'Brien, Dayville

The Marianapolis Service Award: Maeve Sullivan, Douglas, Mass.

The Mothers of Marianapolis Award: Yeonsoo Yang, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Valedictorian Bowl: Philopateer Basha, Dudley, Mass.

## Ryen Shea of Putnam graduates from University of Hartford

**WEST HARTFORD** — The University of Hartford is pleased to announce that Ryen Shea of Putnam has been awarded the degree of Master of Education in Special Education from the College of Education, Nursing, and Health Professions. 1,093 UHart students were awarded graduate and undergraduate degrees this spring as part of the Class of 2026.

Please join us in congratulating all our students on their hard work and academic success!

The University of Hartford blends raw passion with emerging talent, offering intentional preparation across six career-focused schools and colleges so every student can thrive. Located on a 350-acre campus neighboring Connecticut's capital city-and-positioned midway between New York City and Boston-the University is home to approximately 4,300 undergraduate and 1,700 graduate students from 42 states and 53 countries. Here, students are guided to discover their place, their people, and their purpose.

## Local student earns degree from Emmanuel College

**BOSTON, Mass.** — Emmanuel College awarded a Bachelor of Science Nursing to Elizabeth Walker of Thompson at the College's 104th Commencement on May 9.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Mail-in ballots and the right to vote are under attack!

To the Editor:

The United States first implemented voting by mail during the Civil War, so that soldiers on the battlefields could cast their ballots in their home states. For more than 160 years, this tradition has grown and strengthened American democracy. During the 2024 general election alone, the Postal Service successfully delivered over 99 million ballots, and over 97% were delivered in fewer than three days. (EBSCO & Senator Sheldon Whitehouse)

Mail-in ballots are now under assault. On March 31, Trump signed an executive order giving the U.S. Postal Service unprecedented oversight over who is voting by mail, directing USPS to deliver ballots only from people on an approved list that states would be required to provide to the federal government. The order also threatens criminal penalties for election officials, mail carriers, and others who send ballots to or deliver ballots from individuals the administration deems ineligible. (Votebeat & Brennan Center for Justice)

This order is a challenge to the Constitution itself. The Constitution makes clear that only the states and Congress can set the rules for elections. The executive order attempts to override states' mail-in voting laws by transforming the USPS from a neutral mail carrier into an arbiter of who may cast a ballot by mail. (American Civil Liberties Union)

At a recent Senate hearing last week, Senator Gary Peters asked Trump appointed Postmaster General David Steiner directly: "If a state refuses to turn their absentee voter list over to the federal government, will the Postal Service still mail their ballots under this proposed rule?" Steiner replied: "Under our proposed regulation, no. We would tell the state that we need the manifest." (UPI) That means that if states refuse to hand over their voter data to the Trump administration, their citizens will lose the right to vote by mail in that state. (It's hard to envision the USPS adding this oversight and additional duties while it is financially struggling and has opted to pause payments to worker retirement funds to fund its current operations to stay afloat.)

## Pomfret Republican Committee should adopt 'Hypocrisy' as its tagline

To the Editor:

'Hypocrisy' should be the tagline of the Pomfret Republican Town Committee, and it was clearly on display at the Town Meeting held June 25. On the call were the approval of the lease with Greenskies Clean Energy to construct a solar array on town-owned property, and the approval of a special appropriation for the board of education to cover its budget shortfall due to the unanticipated increase in special education costs.

However, the PRTC decided they did not want a vote on the solar project at the Town Meeting, so they collected enough signatures to force a referendum. But their real goal was to delay the referendum until after the deadline for federal and state tax incentives had passed. After receiving the petition, the board of selectmen had a special meeting before the Town Meeting and set the referendum date for July 2.

Near the end of the Town Meeting, after the presentations and questions from the audience, the Republican selectman stood up and proudly stated that the decision on a referendum date must be voted on at the Town Meeting and not by the board of selectmen. (The selectmen have always scheduled town meetings and referendums.) Did she really think the audience would choose to delay the referendum so the vote would be too late for the project to move forward?

Here's the hypocrisy: the Republican naysayers did not want the solar project to be voted on at a Town Meeting, but they did want a vote on setting the date of the referendum. They were also okay voting on the board of education special appropriation at the Town Meeting. It's clear they make up the rules as they go in order to benefit whatever cause they are promoting. They speak of the importance of letting all residents have a chance to vote at a referendum, but they want to delay the referendum until after the deadline, at which point the results would be meaningless.

This small group of citizens has spent the past year doing everything in their power to derail projects proposed by the board of selectmen. They have forced the town to

One day after Steiner's testimony, U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani ruled that the federal government cannot use the postal system to regulate who gets ballots, writing: "No law enacted by Congress delegates authority to control mail-in voting to USPS." She issued an injunction blocking key pillars of Trump's efforts to overhaul the 2026 elections. (Votebeat)

As for the claim that mail voting is riddled with fraud: the data say otherwise. Research by the Brookings Institution found an average mail voting fraud rate of only 0.000043% across the 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 general elections, roughly four cases of fraud out of every 10 million mail votes cast. Meanwhile, Trump himself voted by mail multiple times, even as he publicly called the practice corrupt. (Brookings, NPR)

Even within the Republican party, the contradiction isn't lost on everyone. Representative Thomas Massie said: "I think it's ironic that we control the House, the Senate, the Supreme Court, and the White House, and we're yelling election fraud? I mean, we won all the damn elections and we're in charge. And what are we doing with it? We're bankrupting the country, we're starting new wars, we're violating the Constitution." (Newsweek)

States, not Trump, control how Americans vote. Policies that make voting more difficult deserve close public scrutiny. Call your representatives and tell them to protect mail voting. If you're reading this letter online, public comments regarding the USPS proposal are being accepted on or before Thursday, July 2, in the Federal Register at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/postal-service>.

Tens of millions of Americans, military members, veterans, seniors, rural residents, overseas citizens, and people with disabilities, depend on mail voting to participate in our democracy. This is not a partisan issue. It is an American one. We need to speak up while we still can. Our right to vote depends on it.

LISA ARENDS  
BROOKLYN

hold two referendums (at an approximate cost of \$6,000), threatened to file a lawsuit against the first selectman, and have filed numerous Freedom of Information requests for hundreds of pages of documentation. These FOI requests also cost money, as they are evaluated by the Town Attorney. Furthermore, the small cadre of Town Hall employees is spending countless hours providing the requested information, leaving them with less time to take care of their normal business.

If you go on Facebook, you will see hundreds of their posts with misinformation, criticism of elected officials, and accusations of backroom deals and inappropriate actions by town officials. Flooding social media like this is hurting the Town of Pomfret, and very few of us comment on their posts because we don't wish to get into arguments and stir the pot even more. But I can tell you, the majority of Pomfret residents are sick of all the negativity and criticism, and we do make our voices heard at Town Meeting and referendum votes, as well as opinion letters in various papers.

This group is doing absolutely nothing to improve the quality of life in Pomfret. Instead, they are forcing the Town to spend unbudgeted money, overtaxing the work of Town Hall employees, and belittling elected officials and questioning their integrity. They spread misinformation and accuse Town government of being corrupt. Many of the Facebook posters have never served on a Town board or commission and instead spend their time bashing the rest of us on social media.

Pomfret is a wonderful town to live in, and we want to keep it that way. In my 48 years here, I have never seen this type of ugly behavior by a group of residents who are trying to find the worst in all of us. They do not represent what Pomfret is all about, and they will not change the strong fabric of this community, no matter how hard they try. It's time for them to look inward and ask themselves why, if everything is wrong with Pomfret, they are still living here.

MARGIE HUOPPI  
POMFRET

New tax rules,  
new opportunities

THE OBBBA MOVES EVERY HIGH EARNER

UNDER 55 SHOULD MAKE



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High earners in their 30s, 40s, and early 50s are often in one of the most demanding financial stretches of life. Income may be rising. Compensation may include bonuses, equity, or business income. Children may still be young, education costs may be coming into focus, and retirement planning is close enough that today's decisions can have a meaningful impact later.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, often referred to as OBBBA, adds another layer to that picture. Some provisions create immediate tax planning opportunities. Others, especially newly established Trump Accounts for children, require continued monitoring as guidance develops.

Because this article is being published just before Independence Day, it is also a good moment to think about what financial freedom really means. It is not just about minimizing taxes in one year. It is about creating the flexibility to make confident decisions for your family, your future, and the life you want to build.

Here's what high earners under 55 should be reviewing now.

Use the higher SALT Cap strategically

For taxpayers who itemize deductions, the state and local tax deduction, or SALT deduction, has become more valuable. For 2025, the SALT deduction cap increased to \$40,000, or \$20,000 for married taxpayers filing separately. For 2026, the cap is indexed upward to \$40,400. That matters in higher-tax states like Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey, where property taxes and state income taxes can quickly exceed the prior \$10,000 cap.

The benefit is not unlimited. The cap begins to phase down when modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$500,000, or \$250,000 for married taxpayers filing separately, and it cannot be reduced below \$10,000, or \$5,000 for married filing separately. For high earners near that threshold, income timing may matter more than it used to.

If your income fluctuates because of bonuses, equity vesting, business income, Roth conversions, or deferred compensation, it may be worth reviewing whether income can be spread across years. The goal is not simply to maximize one deduction. It is to understand how the SALT cap interacts with your marginal bracket, charitable giving, alternative minimum tax exposure, and overall cash flow.

Rethink charitable giving before the new floor changes the math

OBBBA also changes the charitable deduction landscape. Beginning in 2026, itemizers generally must clear a new charitable contribution floor equal to half a percent of adjusted gross income before charitable gifts become deductible. For a household with \$400,000 of AGI, that means the first \$2,000 of charitable giving would not produce an itemized charitable deduction.

That does not make charitable giving less meaningful. It does mean high earners should be more intentional about timing and structure. Bunching multiple years of gifts into one tax year, using donor-advised funds, donating appreciated securities, or coordinating giving with a high-income year may help align philanthropic intent with tax efficiency.

For families that already give consistently, this is a

good time to move from reactive giving to a formal charitable strategy. Giving is often one of the clearest expressions of a family's values. A strong plan helps you give with purpose while still protecting your own long-term security.

Monitor Trump accounts, but do not rush

Trump Accounts are one of the most frequent questions families are asking right now. Can I open a Roth IRA for a newborn? Is this a Trump IRA? Should grandparents fund one right away?

The short answer is that Trump Accounts are not Roth IRAs. The IRS describes them as a new type of individual retirement account for eligible children. A parent, guardian, or other authorized person may establish an account for a child who has not turned 18 before the end of the calendar year in which the election is made and who has a valid Social Security number. Eligible U.S. citizen children born between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2028, may qualify for a one-time \$1,000 government contribution.

As of June 2026, the IRS has made Form 4547 available for Trump Account elections, and taxpayers can now view and submit certain elections through their IRS Individual Account. That is an important development, but WHZ is still monitoring the rollout. Families should continue watching for custodial availability, investment options, account administration details, and tax coordination guidance before treating the account as a core planning vehicle.

Trump Accounts may become useful supplemental accounts for children, but they should not replace established tools such as 529 plans, custodial accounts, taxable investment accounts, or Roth IRAs when a child has earned income.

Use expanded 529 rules thoughtfully

The 529 plan also gained flexibility under OBBBA. Effective Jan. 1, 2026, the annual K-12 withdrawal cap increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The law also broadened certain qualified education expenses, including curriculum materials, standardized testing fees, instructional resources, online programs, tutoring, and certain credentialing costs.

For high-earning parents and grandparents, this may change how education savings are allocated. A 529 plan can now play a larger role before college, especially for families paying private school tuition or supplementing a child's education with specialized programs.

Still, using 529 assets earlier may reduce what is available for college later. The right approach depends on the child's age, expected education path, state tax treatment, family cash flow, and whether grandparents or other relatives are contributing. Families should also confirm whether their state tax rules conform to the expanded federal treatment before making withdrawals for new categories of expenses.

Make multi-year planning the priority

One of the most important changes under OBBBA is that lower individual tax brackets are no longer viewed as a temporary window that would automatically sunset after 2025. That stability gives high earners more room to plan over several years.

For professionals with volatile income, that can be

significant. A high-income household may want to evaluate whether to accelerate or defer income, exercise stock options in phases, manage RSU concentration, spread Roth conversions over multiple years, harvest capital losses, or coordinate charitable giving with income spikes.

This is not about predicting future tax law. It is about building flexibility into your plan. When tax brackets are more predictable, you can make better decisions about when to recognize income, when to deduct expenses, when to give, and when to shift assets for long-term family goals.

Put the pieces together  
For high earners under 55, the best OBBBA move is not a single move. It is a coordinated review.

The SALT deduction may improve cash flow, but the phase-out can complicate planning. The charitable floor may change how and when you give. Trump Accounts may become useful for children, but they are still new. Expanded 529 rules create more education planning flexibility. Permanent lower brackets provide a stronger foundation for multi-year strategy.

That is what financial freedom is really about. Not one deduction. Not one account. Not one market year. It is the ability to make decisions from a place of confidence because the major parts of your financial life are working together.

At WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors, our Plan Well. Invest Well. Live Well. process is built to help clients evaluate opportunities like these in context. The goal is not just to lower taxes in one year. It is to create a coordinated, tax-aware strategy for building wealth, supporting your family, and making confident decisions over time.

Schedule a complimentary discovery session at [whzwealth.com](http://whzwealth.com) or call us at (860) 928-2341 to start building a plan that supports your future. Together, we can help you move forward with Absolute Confidence. Unwavering Partnership. For Life.

Authored by Leisl L. Langevin, CFP® CDFA®. AI may have been used in the research and initial drafting of this piece. The fees, expenses, and features of 529 plans can vary from state to state. 529 plans involve investment risk, including the possible loss of funds. There is no guarantee that an education-funding goal will be met. In order to be federally tax free, earnings must be used to pay for qualified education expenses. The earnings portion of a nonqualified withdrawal will be subject to ordinary income tax at the recipient's marginal rate and subject to a 10 percent penalty. By investing in a plan outside your state of residence, you may lose any state tax benefits. 529 plans are subject to enrollment, maintenance, and administration/management fees and expenses. WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors does not provide legal or tax advice. You should consult a legal or tax professional regarding your individual situation. Investments are subject to risk, including the loss of principal. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. 697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret Center, CT 06259 and 392-A Merrow Road, Tolland, CT 06084, 860.928.2341. <http://www.whzwealth.com>.

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## GRADUATE

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dents affected by the war in Ukraine, hurricanes in the Caribbean, and the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

When Almashharawi arrived in Woodstock, she entered an unfamiliar world. Faculty members, dorm parents, counselors, and fellow students helped ease that transition, welcoming her into the boarding community and supporting her academic and personal growth.

Looking back on her first days in the United States, Rania remembers feeling both excited and overwhelmed.

"I was shocked," she

recalls. "Everything was new."

One of the most meaningful moments of her Woodstock Academy experience came during her first semester when she spoke at a meeting of the school's Amnesty International Club. As she shared her story, she realized that her classmates were eager to learn about her experiences and culture.

"In that moment, I understood that my voice mattered," she said.

That realization became a turning point. Over time, she grew more confident sharing her perspective in the classroom, in residence halls, and through student activities. Her conversations with classmates helped fos-

ter a deeper understanding of Palestinian culture and the realities faced by families living through conflict. She even had the opportunity to share her personal journey with the community when she won the Kathryn Robertson Essay Contest and seized the chance to speak at Commencement. Her moving speech about the cultural importance of storytelling was met with a standing ovation.

Over her two years at WA, Almashharawi's growth extended well beyond cultural exchange. Living independently on campus challenged her to adapt to a new country while pursuing rigorous Advanced Placement coursework and participating in activi-

ties such as Model United Nations, all while communicating in her second language. Although being separated from her family was often difficult, particularly as violence continued in Gaza, she found encouragement and stability within the Residential Life community.

A birthday celebration organized by classmates during her first year stands out among her memories. The surprise gathering reminded her that she was surrounded by people who cared deeply about her well-being and success.

For The Woodstock Academy, Almashharawi's story reflects the purpose of the Fund for Displaced Students and the opportuni-

ties that can emerge when a community comes together to support a young person's future.

"Every donor who contributed to the fund, every faculty member who offered guidance, every dorm parent who provided support, and every student who extended friendship helped make Rania's and others' successes possible," said Jon Sturdevant. "Her journey is a powerful reminder that education can transform lives and that a caring community can open doors that once seemed impossible to reach."

Almashharawi joins a growing group of students whose educational journeys have been made possible through the fund. Among

them are Sasha Stasovskiy '23, who went on to attend Harvard University, and Yehor Bezshchasnyi '23, who continued his studies at Columbia University.

This fall, she will begin studying genetic engineering at Smith College. She plans to pursue medical school and hopes to one day work with organizations such as United Nations, helping women and children affected by conflict gain access to healthcare and support.

As she prepares for the next chapter of her journey, Almashharawi leaves behind a legacy of resilience and hope that will continue to inspire the Woodstock Academy community for years to come.

## ACADEMY

continued from page A1

ed by several news outlets calling the schools a "Ponzi scheme." In the wake of the closure, Sen. Jeff Gordon called for the state to step in to support the students whose education has now been left in limbo.

"I am calling for a forensic audit of the school's finances and for the state to provide assistance to affected students and teachers," Gordon wrote on social media. "There is a responsibility from the Department of Education to further step in. Students should not be

penalized if they completed their work. If the education was good and the students did what they were supposed to do and followed the rules, why hold them at fault? Grant the diplomas as legitimate and let them move on."

The announcement is a tragic end for a school that built itself up as a major player in high school sports. While the Academy has had a controversial history under Ding's ownership, he also helped turn the Mustangs basketball program into a powerhouse that saw five national titles, most recently in 2025.

## PEP

continued from page A1

leaders gathered to celebrate the graduates' accomplishments. The Northeast Early Childhood Council extends its sincere appreciation to State Senator Mae Flexer for joining the celebration, presenting Connecticut General Assembly citations, and assisting in recognizing each graduate. The Council also thanks Faye Griffiths-Smith, Associate Extension Educator with UConn Extension, for her ongoing support of the PEP program and for celebrating this important milestone with the graduating class.

The Northeast Early Childhood Council also extends its sincere appreciation to Putnam Public Schools for hosting this year's program and graduation ceremony, and to the Connecticut Parent Trust Fund, UConn Extension, Sherwin-Williams, Lowe's, EASTCONN, TEEG,

Killingly Public Schools, private donors, and the many community partners whose generous contributions of funding, materials, supplies, and resources made this year's training and community project possible.

"What began as a group of individuals coming together to learn turned into a team committed to making a difference in the lives of children and families," said Kristine Cicchetti, NECC Regional Director and UConn PEP Facilitator. "Over 14 weeks, we saw participants build confidence, grow their leadership skills, and see the impact they can have in their families, schools, and communities. Their Kindness Korner project is a great example of parents creating positive change together."

"One of the best parts was watching parents connect, laugh, and learn together. What started as individuals quickly became

a supportive community where parents encouraged one another and shared experiences, making every session something to look forward to," said Christine Rosati Randall, NECC Regional Coordinator and UConn PEP Facilitator.

Graduates shared that the program helped them build confidence, strengthen relationships, and develop new leadership skills. They described gaining a stronger sense of community, learning the value of teamwork and active listening, and feeling more confident as parents and community leaders.

Through programs like PEP, the Northeast Early Childhood Council continues to invest in family leadership by helping parents build knowledge, confidence, and connections to make a positive difference in their families and communities.

Since bringing the UConn People Empowering

People (PEP) program to Northeastern Connecticut, the Northeast Early Childhood Council has graduated multiple PEP cohorts, creating a growing network of parent leaders throughout the region. To help graduates stay connected, continue building leadership skills, and support one another, NECC is launching a PEP Alumni Group. Past PEP graduates interested in reconnecting, participating in alumni activities, or learning about future leadership opportunities are encouraged to email [ambassador@nec-council.org](mailto:ambassador@nec-council.org).

The Northeast Early Childhood Council congratulates the Class of 2026 and looks forward to seeing the positive impact these graduates will continue to make throughout Northeast Connecticut. The Council also hopes to offer another PEP class in 2027. To learn more, visit our website [atnecouncil.org](http://atnecouncil.org).

## Stop & Shop fundraiser to support Eastern students

WILLIMANTIC — Stop & Shop will support Eastern Connecticut State University students facing food insecurity throughout the month of July through the "Bloomin' 4 Good" program. During the month-long initiative, Stop & Shop will donate \$1 to Eastern's on-campus food pantry, Shawn's Cupboard, for every specially marked \$11.99 bouquet of flowers sold in its Willimantic location.

Donations will be used to keep shelves stocked with fresh produce and nonperishable food items, supporting student health and wellbeing year-round. While the pantry is quiet during the summer months, administrators note increased use and need among the student body during fall and spring semesters.

"Every dollar raised will be used to support Eastern students who are experiencing food insecurity," said Michelle Delaney, vice president for Student Affairs. "We are grateful for Stop & Shop's ongoing support and partnership in meeting the needs of our students."

Stop & Shop's Willimantic location has a history of supporting Eastern students. The grocery store donated \$10,000 to Shawn's Cupboard in spring 2025 (an increase of \$7,500 from the year before) and supported Eastern through two fundraisers in fall 2025 - the Community Bags program and "Bloomin' 4 Good." Before that, Eastern was the recipient of the "Bloomin' 4 Good" program in both spring 2025 and fall 2024.

"Without Stop & Shop and our wonderful benefactors, Shawn's Cupboard would not be able to keep the pantry as full or offer as much of a variety of food to our students," noted Nancy Brennan of Eastern's Campus Ministry, which oversees the student food pantry. "It is through their generosity that students are getting enough to eat, which makes them able to meaningfully engage in their classes and in society."

For more information, contact Stop & Shop "Bloomin' 4 Good" program manager Melissa Hansen at (603) 380-9349 or [stopandshop@bloomin4good.com](mailto:stopandshop@bloomin4good.com).

## University of Hartford congratulates the Class of 2026

WEST HARTFORD — The University of Hartford is pleased to announce that 1,093 students were awarded graduate and undergraduate degrees this spring as part of the Class of 2026.

Please join us in congratulating:

Brooke Fettig - Thompson - Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science

Gracen Van Der Swaagh - N. Grosvenordale - Master of Education in Special Education

Ella Lach - Pomfret Center - Bachelor of Science in Radiologic Technology

Congratulations to all our graduates for their hard work and academic success!

The University of Hartford blends raw passion with emerging talent, offering intentional preparation across six career-focused schools and colleges so every student can thrive. Located on a 350-acre campus neighboring Connecticut's capital city-and positioned midway between New York City and Boston-the University is home to approximately 4,300 undergraduate and 1,700 graduate students from 42 states and 53 countries. Here, students are guided to discover their place, their people, and their purpose.

## KILLINGLY

continued from page A4

mind.' Less than three weeks after he'd begun, he presented his draft to Congress. He was not pleased when Congress 'mangled' his composition by cutting and changing much of his carefully chosen wording. He was especially sorry they removed the part blaming King George III for the slave trade, although he knew the time wasn't right to deal with the issue. On July 2, 1776, Congress voted to declare independence. Two days later, it ratified the text of the Declaration. John Dunlap, official printer to Congress, worked through the night to set the Declaration in type and print approximately 200 copies. ("https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration/how-did-it-happen).

The Norwich Packet and the Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island Weekly Advertiser of July 22, 1776 reported, "On Wednesday; the Congress's declaration of independence of the United States of America, was read at the head of each brigade of the continental army posted in and near this city (New York), and every where received, with the utmost demonstrations of joy. The same evening the Equestrian Statue of George III, erected in the year 1770, was thrown from its pedestal and broken in pieces (the lead wherewith this statue is made) is to be made into bullets." (Vol. 3, Issue 147, p. 3; also The Connecticut Gazette; and The Universal Intelligencer of Friday, July 19, 1776 from New London, CT, p.1 for clarification of missing words) [genealogybank.com](http://genealogybank.com).

One of Eastern Connecticut's own, Samuel Huntington (1731-1796), was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was born in a portion of Windham that is now Scotland, CT. The homestead is still standing. "After years of studying the law books from (Reverend) Devotion's collection, Samuel passed the bar and was admitted to practice law in March of 1754. Samuel married Martha Devotion, the daughter of Ebenezer, in 1761; their union spurred his advance into the upper echelon of the Connecticut colony's legal community. By 1765, Samuel was appointed to the position of King's Attorney for the colony of Connecticut. Samuel's fervent support of the Patriot cause of independence from British rule inspired him to resign from the position. Moved to help forge a new nation, Samuel was elected and represented Connecticut as a delegate to the Continental Congress. On July 4, 1776, Samuel Huntington signed the Declaration of Independence, casting his lot with the other fifty-five signers in opposition to the King. On September 28, 1779, Samuel Huntington was elected 6th president of Congress and began serving his term. During that term, on March 1, 1781, the Articles

of Confederation became operative as the first Constitution of the United States. The first section of the Articles of Confederation contains the first reference to our nation as the 'United States'. Some historians argue that this makes Samuel Huntington the first president of the United States - this point of debate underscores his critical impact on this stage in our nation's founding. Once his service as the President of the United States Congress concluded, Samuel returned to Connecticut and served in elected positions of state leadership. Between 1784 and 1796, he served as the Lieutenant Governor, Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, and, eventually, the state's Governor. During this time, he oversaw the transition of Connecticut into statehood, the adoption of the Federal Constitution, and the beginnings of the building of a State House in the newly made capitol, Hartford. Samuel Huntington died in his 64th year and was laid to rest in Norwich, CT. Though he rose to exalted positions of leadership, his simple upbringing on a Connecticut farm stayed with him; he was known as a practical man of few words who wrote in a simple style. His quiet leadership and deep commitment to the American Revolution won him the respect of the new nation. Huntington's legacy as a Founding Father and Patriot Connecticut statesman is still felt in the Nutmeg state to this day. (<https://www.jud.ct.gov/lawlib/history/samhuntington.htm>). See also Patricia F. Staley Norwich in the American Revolution, Chapter 6-Samuel Huntington (1731-1796) 'A Sensible, Candid, and Worthy Man.'

Margaret M. Weaver Killingly Municipal Historian, June 2026. For additional information email me at [margaretm-weaver@gmail.com](mailto:margaretm-weaver@gmail.com) or visit the Killingly Historical Center at 196 Main St., Danielson, Wednesday or Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. or call 860-779-7250. Like us at Facebook [www.facebook.com/killinglyhistoricalsociety](http://www.facebook.com/killinglyhistoricalsociety). For Windham County Transcripts visit <https://killingly.historyarchives.online>.

### WOODSTOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer & Fall Exhibitions

We are now open for the season.

We have begun a monthly series of small spotlight

exhibitions of quilts by local quilters.

The second installation of

**Crazy for Quilts** and our ongoing exhibition

**Woodstock Through the Camera's Eye in**

**Post-Civil War America**

Will be on view on Sundays from 10 am. to 1 pm.

**The Center for Woodstock History**

Palmer Memorial Hall, 523 Route 169

Research appointments and scheduling visits at other times may be made at our web site

[www.centerforwoodstockhistory.com](http://www.centerforwoodstockhistory.com)

# Local residents to participate in Pan-Mass Challenge to support cancer research

NEEDHAM, Mass. — This Aug. 1 and 2, the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) will bring together more than 6,000 cyclists and 4,000 volunteers on Aug. 1 & 2 to raise money for cancer research and patient care at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Participants from local communities will be among those helping support the PMC's mission to fund lifesaving cancer research and treatment.

Local participants include:  
 Lucille Langlois of Quinebaug  
 Margaret Goulette of Quinebaug  
 Lisa Brian of Putnam  
 Mary Monaghan of Thompson  
 Christina Tomeo of Thompson  
 Jacquelyn LaVallee of N. Grosvenordale  
 Roger Durand of N. Grosvenordale  
 Pam Maynard of North Grosvenordale  
 Shirley Faucher of Woodstock  
 Sarah Rich of Woodstock Valley  
 Lynn Evans of Woodstock  
 Tracy Schroder of Woodstock  
 Craig LaFiandra of Woodstock

Jo Hannafin of Woodstock  
 Donna Mullin of Pomfret Center  
 Keith Stolerek of Pomfret Center

Kristen Brown of E. Woodstock  
 Anne Cunneen of Danielson  
 Rosalie Santerre of Killingly  
 Andrew Danna of Dayville  
 Ralph Oriola of Brooklyn  
 Steven Laplante of Brooklyn  
 The PMC, which raises more money for charity than any other single athletic fundraiser in the world, is aiming to raise more than ever this year, with a fundraising goal of \$79 million.

This year's PMC comes at an especially critical time, with federal research support shrinking, grant approval rates reaching historic lows, and cancer cases continuing to rise. For the 20th consecutive year, 100 percent of every rider-raised dollar will go directly to Dana-Farber, one of the nation's top three hospitals for cancer research and care.

"The theme for this year's PMC, which is 'now, more than ever,' underscores the paramount

importance of every single dollar raised in fueling the search for a cure," said Billy Starr, founder and chairman of the PMC. "We are endlessly grateful to every rider, volunteer, donor, and sponsor who makes the PMC possible. Because of their training miles, long hours of volunteering, generous support, and unwavering commitment, we are moving ever closer to a world without cancer."

Since its inception in 1980, the PMC has raised \$1.125 billion for Dana-Farber, making it the organization's largest single contributor and accounting for 67 percent of the annual revenue of The Jimmy Fund, Dana-Farber's community-driven fundraising arm. This unrestricted annual funding has empowered and accelerated advancements in cancer research, deeply benefitting patients across the world.

During each annual PMC weekend, thousands of cyclists and volunteers come together from across the world, hailing from 47 US states and 12 countries, with a shared purpose of raising

as much money as possible for Dana-Farber. Cyclists ride routes ranging from 25 to 177 miles. Included among these participants is the PMC Living Proof community, riders and volunteers who were previously treated or are currently undergoing cancer treatment and serve as Living Proof of the progress made through raising funds for cancer research and treatment.

There is still time to participate in this year's Pan-Mass Challenge. Folks interested in getting involved can learn more and register at PMC.org.

About the Pan-Mass Challenge  
 The Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) is a bike-a-thon that today raises more money for charity than any other single athletic fundraising event in the world. Founded in 1980 by Billy Starr - who remains the event's founder & chairman, an annual cyclist, and a fundraiser - the PMC has raised \$1.125 billion for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute through the Jimmy Fund. As Dana-Farber's single largest contributor, the organization gen-

erates 67 percent of the Jimmy Fund's annual revenue. 100 percent of every rider-raised dollar goes directly to fueling cancer research and treatment at Dana-Farber. In addition to its two-day bike-a-thon across Massachusetts, the PMC is powered by further "spokes in the wheel," with initiatives including the PMC Winter Cycle, an indoor spin event; PMC Unpaved, a gravel bike ride; and PMC Kids Rides, mini bike-a-thons for children ages 2 to 15. The PMC attracts riders and volunteers from 47 states and 12 countries and over 300,000 individual donors. Across events, the PMC has successfully melded support from committed cyclists, volunteers, corporate sponsors, and individual donors, all of whom are essential to the PMC's goal and model: to attain maximum fundraising efficiency while increasing its annual gift. The PMC's aspiration is to provide Dana-Farber's doctors and researchers with the necessary resources to discover cures for all cancers. For more information, visit [www.pmc.org](http://www.pmc.org).

## Six summer self-defense lessons for kids

Summer means freedom, fun, and all-day adventures for children — but it also comes with new risks and dangerous situations. Whether children are biking through the neighborhood, heading to camp, or spending long afternoons outside, a few simple reminders can help keep summer both safe and enjoyable.

### 1. Self-Defense Against the Sun

**Key Point:** Too much sun can ruin a fun day in a hurry. Every summer, I preach this lesson to my students: the ultimate self-defense against sunburn is sunscreen. Mostly, they listen, but one of my teen students once fell asleep at the beach and came back lobster-red! Yes, he had to do extra push-ups that night. Please remind your kids that it is not just today's sunburn that causes trouble, but years of cumulative skin damage. My cousin worked on the docks at our family boatyard and developed leather-like skin from overexposure. In her later years, she required multiple skin surgeries. Protect your kids now:  
 Apply sunscreen before

going outside and reapply frequently.

Wear hats, sunglasses, and lightweight protective clothing, such as swim shirts.

Take breaks in the shade during the hottest parts of the day.

**Takeaway Line:** A little sunscreen today prevents a painful tomorrow.

### 2. Hydration Is Not Optional

**Key Point:** Summer heat sneaks up on kids and adults fast. Adults can generally spot dehydration when children slow down their play and get a washed-out look.

Encourage water breaks before kids feel thirsty.

Limit sugary drinks in hot weather.

Teach kids to recognize signs of overheating, such as dizziness, headaches, or fatigue.

**Takeaway Line:** Water is summer fuel.

### 3. Bike, Skateboard & Outdoor Play Safety

**Key Point:** Fun should never come without pro-



TIPS FOR

SUCCESS

MIKE BOGDANSKI

tection. I like to remind our grandkids that our primary job is to keep them safe by explaining exactly what happens during a fall: bumps, bruises, concussions, and broken bones.

**Wear helmets:** They are a must for protecting against head injuries—every ride, every time, without question.

**Review street safety:** Teach solid crossing rules. When we cross the street to get the mail, we hold hands and say, "Look left, look right, look left, look right." Always check twice. My sister once went to get the mail, looked both ways, but then answered a question my mother yelled out. Distracted by her own answer, she stepped into the street without re-checking and was hit by a car.

**Set boundaries:** Establish clear rules for where kids can safely play or ride.

**Takeaway Line:** A helmet may not look "cool," but injuries definitely aren't.

### 4. Water Self-Defense Saves Lives

**Key Point:** Pools, lakes, and beaches require constant attention. Tragedy strikes in an instant. I once lost a five-year-old student who was playing on a covered, above-ground pool; he fell through an opening in the cover and drowned. It was one of the saddest funerals I have ever attended.

Never allow children to swim alone.

Ensure young swimmers always have active adult supervision.

Review simple water safety rules before every outing.

Keep all pool gates securely latched.

**Takeaway Line:** Around water, safety comes before confidence.

### 5. Build Brain Power This Summer

**Key Point:** Readers are leaders. Keeping kids engaged with books provides excellent mental self-defense.

It prevents the "summer slide," helps retain reading skills, and gives kids built-in downtime.

Reading is self-perpetuat-

ing—frequent readers naturally become better readers.

It gets kids off screens and into the real world.

It builds knowledge and expands their exposure to global topics and adventures.

**Takeaway Line:** A sharp mind is the best tool in any inventory.

### 6. Know the Summer Game Plan

**Key Point:** Kids must know exactly what to do if something goes wrong. Learning to identify a "trusted adult" takes practice, so turn it into a regular guessing game when you are out at stores or parks.

Memorize at least one parent's phone number.

Establish clear check-in times and neighborhood boundaries.

Teach the "lost" protocol: If you get lost, stay calm and take deep, slow breaths. Stay where you are if it is safe, and find a trusted adult, such as a police officer, lifeguard, teacher, or store employee. Never go into back rooms or offices with anyone.

**Takeaway Line:** Independence works best when you have a plan.

### My July 4th Bonus Tip

We all love the fireworks and excitement of Independence Day, but we must watch out for the pitfalls. A sparkler seems cute and harmless, but please note that it burns at over 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Treat them with the same respect you would show any open flame.

### Closing Thoughts

Summer memories should be filled with laughter, adventure, and joy—not preventable accidents. Everything comes down to teaching your children personal self-defense and building them up.

You want to install a positive, protective loop running in their brains whenever they second-guess themselves. When our grandchildren visit, I repeat these same three affirmations in everything they do: You are smart, you are brave, you are strong.

*Mike Bogdanski is a martial arts Grandmaster and anti-bullying activist.*

## Donald Pepek named Thompson's Veteran of the Month

THOMPSON — Army Specialist 4 Donald A. Pepek of Quinebaug Road in North Grosvenordale has been selected by the nominating committee as the Town of Thompson's July 2026 Veteran of the Month.

Pepek is being recognized as the nation celebrates America's 250th anniversary and honors veterans from all branches of the U.S. military.

Born May 18, 1947, to Beatrice and Chester Pepek Sr., Pepek has lived his entire life in North Grosvenordale. He attended Thompson Public Schools

through his sophomore year of high school and later earned his GED, an accomplishment he remains proud of.

Before entering military service, Pepek worked for Laframboise Well Drilling, Lockheed Aluminum and American Optical.

Like many young men of his generation, Pepek faced the possibility of being drafted during the Vietnam War. Under the Selective Service System, men ages 18 to 26 were required to register for the draft and were assigned lottery numbers based on their birth

dates. Those with lower draft numbers were more likely to be called into military service.

Knowing his draft number was low and that he likely would be drafted, Pepek chose instead to volunteer for military service. He enlisted alongside three lifelong friends, John Nieviedgal, Billy Hayes and David Tetreault, hoping they would remain together during their military service.

The four traveled by train from Putnam to New Haven to be sworn into the Army before continuing to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for basic training. Upon arriving at Fort Jackson, however, they were assigned to different platoons. Pepek said he did not see any of his three friends again until all had returned home following their military service two years later.

Following basic training, Pepek remained at Fort Jackson for advanced individual training as a transportation vehicle driver.

On July 12, 1967, he arrived in Vietnam to begin an 11-month combat deployment that he later described as "hell on earth."

During a stopover on Guam en route to Vietnam, Pepek experienced an unexpected reunion with his older brother, Chester,

a senior master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force who was returning to the United States after serving in Vietnam. The brothers crossed paths only briefly before continuing in opposite directions, one returning home and the other heading into a combat zone.

Pepek was first assigned to Cam Ranh Bay before being transferred to Chu Lai. He said both assignments exposed him to constant danger while transporting and distributing ammunition, explosives and other military supplies.

His platoon routinely encountered sniper fire, roadside mines and other combat hazards during supply missions. Pepek recalled that the uncertainty of every convoy created constant tension, with soldiers never knowing whether they would safely reach their destination.

He also said his unit operated in areas where Agent Orange was regularly sprayed. Pepek believes that exposure contributed to the skin cancer he has battled for many years.

After approximately six months, Pepek and his platoon were reassigned to Duc Pho in southern Vietnam, where he served as a night driver transporting supplies, equipment and personnel from landing ships.

The danger remained

constant.

Pepek recalled witnessing fellow soldiers killed by explosive devices and said artillery fire and explosions continued around the clock. He said those experiences remain vivid decades later.

Like many Vietnam veterans, Pepek continues to live with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and attributes many of his long-term health challenges to his wartime service.

Despite the hardships of combat, Pepek was among the fortunate soldiers who returned home. He received an honorable discharge Sept. 19, 1968.

Although he rarely discusses his experiences in Vietnam, Pepek has said he prefers to leave those memories in the past.

Following his military service, Pepek returned to work at American Optical, where he remained for 11 years before beginning a 32-year career in the propane gas industry. He worked for Lehigh Gas Co. and later Arrow Gas Co., building a reputation throughout the region for his knowledge of propane systems. Over the course of his career, he handled sales, marketing, deliveries, repairs and equipment service.

For his military service, Pepek received the National Defense Service Medal,

Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

In 1969, he married Cheryl Durand. The couple has been married for 56 years and has two daughters, Carrie Ann and Lisa; three grandchildren, Ryan and Tyler Hubert and Matthew McDougal; and two great-grandsons. They are also expecting another grandchild.

Pepek credits his wife with helping him cope with the lingering effects of PTSD, describing her as his steadfast source of support throughout their marriage.

The couple spends winters in Brooksville, Florida.

Pepek is a lifetime member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10888 in Quinebaug and the Disabled American Veterans Norwich Chapter.

He will receive a commemorative plaque from the Thompson first selectman and veterans officer during the July 7 meeting of the Thompson Board of Selectmen.

## Paws Cat Shelter to hold can and bottle drive

PUTNAM — Paws Cat Shelter is holding a Can and Bottle Drive on Saturday, July 11 from noon to 3 p.m. at the shelter, located at 74 School St. in Putnam. Please separate two-liter bottles. Pet food and donations are always welcome and greatly appreciated.

Paws is a non-profit, all volunteer organization caring for the cats of our communities. For more info or to make a monetary donation, contact Paws at 860-315-1228.

## Quiet Corner Al-Anon group meets Wednesdays

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

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



# OBITUARIES

## Margaret "Peggy" St. Jean, 80



North Woodstock, CT: Margaret A. "Peggy" (Mellen) St. Jean, 80, passed away on Thursday, June 25th, after several years of declining health.

Peggy was the epitome of grace and kindness. She married the love of her life, Ernest St. Jean, when she was just 20 years old. The following year, her first child, Michael, was born. Mark followed, then Karen, and then Pamela.

Peggy stayed home and raised her children and several of her grandchildren. She enjoyed teaching them and watching their eyes light up with every new thing learned. She was always happy to see her family coming, but even happier with each grandchild and great grandchild. She could whip out a meal and set a beautiful table in a moment's notice.

Peggy enjoyed being outdoors. She kept the home meticulously. She canned and froze most of the fruit and vegetables the family and friends enjoyed over the years. She made blueberry muffins, pies, cookies, jams, jelly and so much more. She was known for her strawberry pies. Ernie did not go a day without a blueberry muffin until recently.

Peggy is survived by her loving, faithful husband of 60 years, Ernie; her children, Michael St. Jean and his wife Patty, Mark St. Jean and his wife Jaime, Karen Cooper and her husband Ben, and Pamela Morse and her husband Marshall; her grandchildren, Ashley, Amanda and Andrea St. Jean, Jenna and Stephanie St. Jean, Julia and Nathaniel Cooper, and Selena, Eric, Macey and Anna Morse; her great grandchildren, Brayden St. Jean and Maevelynne Morse; her brother, Richard Mellen and his wife Pat; and her cousin and best friend since childhood, Florence Zona. Peggy was predeceased by her parents, Richard and Anna (Petersen) Mellen, and her grandchildren, Christopher St. Jean and H. Molly Morse.

A graveside service for Peggy will be held on Wednesday, July 1st, at 11:00am in the Central Cemetery, North Woodstock, CT. There are no calling hours. A memorial service in Crossroads Christian Church will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation payable to Westview Residents Recreation Activity Fund, c/o Louise Taylor, Westview Health Care Center, PO Box 428, Dayville CT 06241.

The Daniel T. Morrill Funeral Home, 130 Hamilton St., Southbridge, is directing arrangements. [www.morrillfuneralhome.com](http://www.morrillfuneralhome.com)

## Michael Lamoureux, Sr. 1952 - 2026



Putnam – Michael Lamoureux, Sr., 73, of Church St., died unexpectedly on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at home. He was the loving husband of fifty years to the late Linda (LeClair) Lamoureux who died

on April 8, 2024. Born in Putnam, he was the son of the late Roland and Jeanne (Bernier) Lamoureux.

Mr. Lamoureux was united in marriage to the former Linda LeClair on August 19, 1972, at St. John Church in Plainfield.

Michael enjoyed golfing, cooking, and playing pool. Mike and Linda followed their boys as they grew and volunteered in Boy Scouts, Little League, other sports

and in their school activities. But, above all he cherished the quality time that he spent with his family and friends.

He is survived by his two sons, Michael Lamoureux and his wife Kristi of Gray, ME and Daniel Lamoureux of Webster, MA, his sister, Connie Lafortune of Putnam, and a grandson Quinn Lamoureux of Gray, ME.

Relatives and friends are invited to attend a graveside service on Saturday, July 11, 2026, at 1:00P.M., in St. Mary Cemetery, 355 Providence St., Putnam, CT 06260. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Gilman Funeral Home, 104 School Street, Putnam CT 06260. For memorial guestbook visit [www.gilmanandvalade.com](http://www.gilmanandvalade.com)

## Susan R. LaBonte, 79



N O R T H GROSVENORDALE, CT – Susan R. (Arpin) LaBonte, 79, died Tuesday, June 23, 2026 in UMass/Memorial University Campus in the presence of family.

Susan leaves her beloved husband of 57 years, David B. LaBonte; a son, Jason P. LaBonte and his wife Christine of Thompson, CT; eight grandchildren, Brian, Mikayla, Brandon, Mikenzie, Carlos, Derick, Brendalis and Heaven; four great-grandchildren, Jaxon, Veda, Ryleigh and Bentley Brian; nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her son Brian F. LaBonte in 2022.

She was born in Worcester on March 29, 1947 and grew up in Webster, a daughter of Oliver and Irene M. (LePain) Arpin. David met her at work and they dated

for five years before marrying in 1968. They lived on Schoolhouse Pond Road in Thompson for 53 years before moving to North Grosvenordale in 2023.

Susan first worked as a shoe polisher at Sandlerette Company in Webster and then as a solderer at the American Optical Company in Southbridge. She and her husband owned and operated LaBonte's Country Store on Thompson Road in Thompson, CT for 28 years. She retired as a cashier at Rite Aid in Dudley in 2018.

Susan's main activities in life were her husband and family, especially the grandchildren.

A private graveside service will be held at the convenience of the family. There are no calling hours. Arrangements are under the direction of Scanlon Funeral Service, 38 East Main Street, Webster.

[www.websterfunerals.com](http://www.websterfunerals.com)

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

SMITH AND WALKER  
Funeral Home and Cremation Service  
148 Grove Street, Putnam, CT 860-928-2442  
[www.smithandwalkerfh.com](http://www.smithandwalkerfh.com)

GAGNON AND COSTELLO  
Funeral Home and Cremation Service  
33 Reynolds Street, Danielson, CT 06239 860-774-9403

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## LEGALS

### NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF

Deborah Smith (26-00196)

The Hon. Gabrielle Labonte, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Northeast Probate Court, by decree dated June 12, 2026, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

Elyssa A. Foley, Clerk

The fiduciary is:  
Jennifer Lamoureux,  
35 Park Terrace Road,  
Worcester, MA 01604  
July 3, 2026

### LEGAL NOTICE WITCHES WOOD TAX DISTRICT TAX COLLECTOR'S NOTICE

The first installment of Real Estate bills listed on the October 1, 2025 Grand List become due and payable to the Witches Woods Tax District on July 1, 2026.

Payments must be postmarked by August 3, 2026 to avoid interest charges. Interest will be charged on August 4, 2026 on all delinquent payments at the rate of one and a half percent per month or a minimum charge of \$2.00 per tax bill, in accordance with Section 12-146 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Failure to receive a tax bill does not invalidate the tax or the interest. (Section 12-130 C.G.S.) If you did not receive a tax bill, please contact the Tax Collector immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact the Tax Collector's Office at [taxwlake@gmail.com](mailto:taxwlake@gmail.com) or the Assessor's office at 860-928-6929 ext. 326.

Payments must be sent to:

WITCHES WOODS TAX DISTRICT  
PO Box 725, WOODSTOCK, CT 06281

Frederick Chmura  
Tax Collector  
June 26, 2026  
July 3, 2026  
July 24, 2026

### LEGAL NOTICE WOODSTOCK PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

The Woodstock PZC will hold Public Hearings on Thursday, July 16, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. at Woodstock Town Hall, 415 Route 169, Woodstock, for the following:

a. #677-06-26 (5781-52-15) – 429 RT 169-Woodstock Academy-Bentley Athletics: Replacement of Existing Tennis Courts

b. #676-04-26(5779-64-17)- 292 RT 169-Scranton Shops LLC-Josh Biando: Change of Use

The public may speak and submit written communications until the close of the public hearing. Details of the application are available from the Town Planner, [landuse@woodstockct.gov](mailto:landuse@woodstockct.gov) or available in the Land Use Office.

David Morse  
Chairman  
July 3, 2026  
July 10, 2026

### PROPERTY AUCTION

The tax collector of the Town of Thompson has levied upon the following properties in Thompson and slated them for public auction to satisfy delinquent taxes and charges under C.G.S. § 12-157. Volume and page numbers refer to the Town's land records. Unless paid, these properties will be auctioned in "as is" condition at 10:00 a.m. on September

16, 2026 at the Thompson Town Hall at 815 Riverside Drive in North Grosvenordale.

±2.25 acres on West Thompson Road (Volume 321 Page 333) owned by the Estate of Wendell A. Dobson, owing \$2,057.14. Daniel Dobson; Edward A. Dobson; William Dobson; Melissa Greenwood; the Connecticut Office of the Probate Court Administrator; the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services; the United States Internal Revenue Service; and the surviving spouse and heirs of Wendell A. Dobson may have interests which will be extinguished by the sale.

±0.51 acres on Riverside Drive (Volume 733 Page 88) owned by Dudley Sand & Gravel Corp., owing \$5,598.84. Danielle Verdini and Dennis R. Blanchette may have interests which will be extinguished by the sale.

150-152 Church Street (Volume 464 Page 165) owned by Kenneth E. Gareau, owing \$13,128.92. Henri Cloutier and Cecile E. Cloutier or her Estate may have interests which will be extinguished by the sale.

1 Floral Avenue (Volume 1033 Page 67) owned by Kyle Geddes and David Audette Patterson, owing \$16,659.82. The Connecticut Water Company may have interests which will be extinguished by the sale.

±24.67 acres and ±0.93 acres on Riverside Drive (Volume 142 Page 154 excluding any portions in Putnam CT) owned by Greatrex Corporation, owing \$20,375.08.

±4.19 acres on Wakefield Pond Road (Volume 364 Page 47 excluding all portions in Burrillville, Rhode Island) owned by John B. Sharkey and Mary I. Sharkey, Trustees

of the Sharkey Family Trust dated October 8, 1993, or their Estates or Successor Trustees, owing \$3,127.85. The Connecticut Office of the Probate Court Administrator; the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services; the United States Internal Revenue Service; and the surviving spouses and heirs of John B. Sharkey and Mary I. Sharkey may have interests which will be extinguished by the sale.

±4.1 acres on Pompeo Road (Volume 70 Page 354) owned by Thomas F. Zabka or his Estate and Patricia A. Zabka or her Estate, owing \$2,817.54. Scott Thomas Zabka; Amphone Zabka; the Connecticut Office of the Probate Court Administrator; the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services; the United States Internal Revenue Service; and the surviving spouses and heirs of Thomas F. Zabka and Patricia A. Zabka may have interests which will be extinguished by the sale.

The dollar amounts listed are through the end of last month. Additional taxes, interest, fees, and other charges authorized by law accruing after the last day of the month immediately preceding this notice are owed in addition to the amount indicated as due and owing in this notice.

Bidders must present \$5,000 per property by certified check payable to "Pullman & Comley, Trustee" on the day of the sale, and the winning bidder must pay the balance of the sale price within 5 days or forfeit that deposit and the property. Unless redeemed, the purchaser will take title "free and clear" six months after the auction except for certain encumbrances. Details at [www.cttaxsales.com](http://www.cttaxsales.com).

July 3, 2026

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# Eastern releases spring 2026 Dean's List

WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University recently released its Dean's List for the spring 2026 semester, recognizing 1,216 students for maintaining high GPAs. Among the students are:

Among them is Serena Smith of North Grosvenordale, a full-time sophomore majoring in data science and criminology.

Madison Bill of Danielson, a full-time sophomore majoring in English.

Dakota Bourbeau of Danielson, a full-time sophomore majoring in biochemistry.

Payton Cathell of Danielson, a full-time senior majoring in sociology.

Austin Coporale of Danielson, a full-time sophomore majoring in communication, film, and theatre.

Quinlan Kearney of Danielson, a part-time senior majoring in history.

Gabrielle Lemery of Danielson, a full-time senior majoring in sociology and criminology.

Audrey Madden of Danielson, a full-time junior majoring in business administration.

Kaitlyn Becker of Eastford, a full-time sophomore majoring in nursing.

Meadow Bulan of Eastford, a full-time senior majoring in social work.

Yves Tercius of Eastford, a full-time senior majoring in accounting.

Serena Smith of North Grosvenordale, a full-time sophomore majoring in data science and criminology.

Nickolas Chubbuck of Pomfret Center, a full-time senior majoring in finance.

Cassidy Fortier of Pomfret Center, a full-time senior majoring in accounting.

Katherine Collin of Pomfret Center, a full-time senior majoring in social work.

Iryna Huling of Pomfret Center, a full-time senior majoring in criminology and sociology.

Julian Baracz of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in history and social science.

Ava Basak of Woodstock, a full-time junior majoring in finance.

Abigail Brown of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in communication, film, and theatre.

Ethan Campbell of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in biology.

Dylan Chamberlin of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in computer science.

Alexandra Cloutier of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in social work.

Ethan Craig of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in political science.

Cody Currie of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in computer science.

Leah Danis of Woodstock, a full-time junior majoring in English.

Hannah Dean of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in business administration.

Maxine Dietrich of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in general studies.

Benjamin Green of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in finance.

Allison Griswold of Woodstock, a full-time junior majoring in nursing.

Payton Keefe of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in psychology.

Hailey Klar of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in liberal studies.

Timothy O'Sullivan of Woodstock, a full-time junior majoring in secondary education certification and history.

Sophia Petrella of Woodstock, a full-time

junior majoring in health sciences.

Kim Putnam of Woodstock, a full-time senior majoring in general studies.

Lily Quinn of Woodstock, a full-time junior majoring in communication, film, and theatre.

Sawyer Stewart of Woodstock, a full-time junior majoring in history.

Sierra Duplisea of Woodstock Valley, a full-time senior majoring in psychology.

Grace Gronski of Woodstock Valley, a full-time senior majoring in elementary education and Spanish.

Colby Groves of Woodstock Valley, a full-time senior majoring in elementary education and communication, film, and theatre.

Grace Pokorny of Woodstock Valley, a full-time sophomore majoring in nursing.

Isabelle Shead of Woodstock Valley, a full-time senior majoring in sociology.

Lana Syriac of Woodstock Valley, a full-time sophomore majoring in social work.

Roman Azzolino of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in art.

Savannah Buisson of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in business administration.

Sierra Buisson of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in finance.

Murphy Chace of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in art.

Madison Cheverie of Brooklyn, a full-time junior majoring in early childhood education and psychology.

Molly Crabtree of Brooklyn, a full-time junior majoring in elementary education and liberal studies.

Sydney Crabtree of Brooklyn, a full-time junior majoring in elementary education and

liberal studies.

Isabelle DuBois of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in elementary education and history and social science.

Noah Greczkowski of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in secondary education certification and history.

Stephanos Menounos of Brooklyn, a full-time junior majoring in business administration.

Josephine Palmer of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in communication.

Christina Skellinger of Brooklyn, a full-time senior majoring in early childhood education and psychology.

Morgan Beaudreault of Dayville, a full-time senior majoring in liberal studies.

Marcy Ferraj of Dayville, a full-time senior majoring in computer science.

Trinity James of Dayville, a full-time junior majoring in nursing.

Brenda Joubert of Dayville, a full-time junior majoring in anthropology.

Ciara King of Dayville, a full-time junior majoring in physical education.

Dominic Poissant of Dayville, a full-time junior majoring in health sciences.

Sherrie Simoneau of Dayville, a full-time junior majoring in health sciences.

Jadyn Williams of Dayville, a full-time senior majoring in business administration.

To qualify for Dean's List, full-time students must complete a minimum of 12 credits in letter-graded courses with an average GPA of 3.5 or higher in the semester. Part-time students are eligible if they've accumulated 15 or more credits of letter-graded coursework with an average GPA of 3.5 or higher.

## THOMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL ANNOUNCES HONOR ROLL

THOMPSON — Thompson Middle School has released its honor roll for the fourth quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

Grade 5

High Honors: Margaret Axtell, Reed Hoenig, Charlotte McGlynn, Nathan Rybacki, Henry Tilton, Jude Travinski, Molley White, Clayton Yong

Honors: Sonya Apley, Ellouise Baldwin, Rose Black, Bradley Bond, Annabelle Chrzanowski, Owen DeFosse, Macie Freeman, Louise Kennedy, Aubrey Maliff, Maeve

Murzycki, Brody Nichols, Keena Parent, Jessa Perron, Brody Zabka

Recognition: Aiden Arnett, Bohdi Aubin, Shawn Botelho, Connor Clarke, David Greene, Noah Horniak, Sierra Howard, Zachery Mayer, Waylon Mead, Delaney Pacheco, Andee Pease, Harrison Poirier, Colton Ross

Grade 6

High Honors: Maica Abrajano, Kyleigh Akana, June Bardellini, Sophia Benoit, Quinn Cooney, Amelia Hendrickson,

Jeffrey Kuras, Isabella Leveille, Reis Mailloux, Emma Moriarty, Patrick Paquette, Ava Tremblay, Alanah Tsouridis, Sierra Vallee, Jessie Wuensch

Honors: Christian Burns, Avan Cady, Chloe Faucher, Brielynn Fijol, Sierra Henault, Lillian Kiley Ethan Meyers, Jacob Racine, Emmett Salvias, Ruth Saurman, Lillian Speroni

Recognition: Callan Bolte, Isaiah Blaise, Heaven Labonte, Elsay Monahan, Leonard Morency, Bryce Proulx, Henry Rivers, Julia Varney

Grade 7

High Honors: Kasandra Beckett, Cole Benoit, Joshua Boss, Emily Cabral, Hailey Caverly, Jezarya Denham, Ella DiCicco, Annabelle Estabrook, Chloe Gillon, Jasmine McCutcheon, Mitchell Murzycki, Grace Roy, Kinslie Stewart, Julianne Valby, Elizabeth Vescera, Bailey Yong

Honors: Derrick Caley, Selena Curry, Lucas Dodd, Joshua Freitas, McKenzie Hamilton, Tripp Hoenig, Jakub Krupa, Piper Kus, Eva Lafontaine, Jordan

McDonald, Bryce Rock, Jaeda Rose, Tanner Saad, Amelia Smith, Lilly Wolf

Recognition: Ashel Aubin, Parker Beck, Stephen Botelho, Ethan Cayer, John Clarke, Kileigh Comptois, Phoenix Desaulnier, Caleb Desjarlais, Ezerik Johnson, Logan McCarthy, Savanah McKiernan

Grade 8

High Honors: Kiley Audette, Brooke Caya, Matthew Chrzanowski, Madyson Grazulis, Gracie Greene, Amelia Hachigian, Maya Khaomongkhoun, Ellyana Mayo, Lucey

Miller, Allison Rivers, Amelia Senkhamtar

Honors: April Boudreau, Yvonne Clavette, Lily Kimball, Elizabeth Lemay, Laura Logsdon, Jack Lyon, Nathan Lyon, Liam Maliff, Ashley Martin, Owen McBrien, Jayden O'Connor, Colin Peckham, Summer Warburton, Logan Wedda

Recognition: Stephen Andrews, Jordyn Aponte, Jacen Beaudreault, Gage Cady, Alexis Fiske, Jack Gustafson, Landon Horniak, Chalice Seney

## Woodstock Academy announces addition of elite basketball program

WOODSTOCK — The Woodstock Academy is pleased to announce that the highly successful basketball program, led by coaches Tom Espinosa and Josh Scraba, will be relocating to The Woodstock Academy beginning in the upcoming 2026-27 academic year.

"The Woodstock Academy is very excited to add this program to our vast number of offerings for our students and communi-

ty. We look forward to this unique partnership for The Academy's future," said Dr. Lawrence Filippelli, Head of School.

The program, which has earned national recognition for developing elite student-athletes and competing at the highest levels of high school basketball, will be entering an exciting new chapter at The Woodstock Academy.

"We are extremely excited to be bringing our basketball program to The Woodstock Academy. This partnership has the potential to reach the highest level of high school basketball. I can't thank Dr. Lawrence Filippelli and Jon Sturdevant enough for believing in our vision and giving us this incredible opportunity. We are thrilled to join the WA community and look forward to bring-

ing high-level basketball, excitement, and pride to campus," said Espinosa.

This transition creates an opportunity to further enhance the student-athlete experience by combining the program's proven athletic success with The Woodstock Academy's strong academic offerings, residential life program, and campus facilities. Together, these resources will provide student-athletes with an

exceptional environment to grow academically, athletically, and personally.

"We are excited to welcome Coach Espinosa, Coach Scraba, and the basketball program to The Woodstock Academy," said Associate Head of School for External Affairs Jon Sturdevant. "This partnership represents a unique opportunity to build upon an already outstanding program while providing stu-

dent-athletes with access to a world-class educational experience and the resources they need to succeed both on and off the court."

Additional details regarding the program, student-athlete opportunities, and future plans will be announced in the coming weeks.

## Worcester Polytechnic Institute announces Spring Dean's List

WORCESTER, Mass. — Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has announced the university's Dean's List for academic

excellence for the spring 2026 semester.

The criteria for the WPI Dean's List differ from that of most other universities

as WPI does not compute a grade point average (GPA). Instead, WPI students are named to the Dean's List

based on the amount of work completed at the A level in courses and hands-on projects.

"WPI's academic programs are rigorous and require a level of independence beyond what is required in traditional courses. WPI students work on real-world, open-ended problems on campus and in communities around the globe. Far from being simple academic exercises, the projects students complete have genuine and lasting impacts in our partner communities," said Provost Andrew Sears. "Some of this nation's best and brightest students come to WPI to study engineering, science, business, and the humanities. Those named to the Dean's List have excelled in all of their work, and we are exceptionally proud of these outstanding students."

The following students were recognized:

Woodstock resident Lucas Boynton, class of 2029, majoring in Robotics Engineering  
Pomfret Center resident Vicente Bastura, class of 2027, majoring in Mechanical Engineering  
Brooklyn resident Anjolina Ortiz, class of 2027, majoring in Biochemistry

Brooklyn resident Annarose Avery, class of 2026, majoring in Management Engineering

Dayville resident Liliana WongKam, class of 2027, majoring in Architectural Engineering

About Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) is a top-tier, STEM-focused university with an R1 research classification and global leadership in project-based learning. Founded in 1865, WPI's distinctive approach integrates classroom theory with real-world practice, preparing students to tackle critical challenges through inclusive education, impactful projects, and interdisciplinary research. With more than 70 bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs across 18 academic departments and over 50 global project centers, WPI advances knowledge and innovation in fields such as life sciences, smart technologies, advanced materials and manufacturing, and global innovation. Learn more at [www.wpi.edu](http://www.wpi.edu).

### Local students earn President's List honors at Nichols College

DUDLEY, Mass. — Nichols College is proud to recognize the academic accomplishments of students on the spring 2026 President's List.

President's List recognizes those students who achieve high grades during a single semester. Students whose semester grade point average is 3.85 or higher for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and no grades below B- will receive President's List honors.

The following local students have achieved President's List honors:

Brady Devlin of Putnam  
Logan LaFrance of Putnam  
Sebastian Hanshaw of N. Grosvenordale  
Kyle Busha of N. Grosvenordale  
Taylor Annis of North Grosvenordale  
Alivia Dalpe of Thompson  
Kaitlyn Tingle of Danielson  
Jonah Libby of Pomfret  
Mateusz Chojnicki of Woodstock  
Ava Hovestadt of Woodstock

About Nichols College

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 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](http://www.nichols.edu)

### Local students earn Dean's List honors at Nichols College

DUDLEY, Mass. — Nichols College is proud to recognize the academic accomplishments of students on the spring 2026 Dean's List.

Dean's List recognizes those students who achieve high grades during a single semester. To be included on the Dean's List, a student must have a minimum grade point average of 3.5 for at least 12 undergraduate credit-hours and must have received no grades below B- during the semester.

The following local students have achieved Dean's List honors for the spring 2026 semester:

Sage Bukowski of North Grosvenordale  
Logan Rawson of Thompson  
Alekos Basley of Danielson  
Chloe Difusco of Danielson  
Lincoln Waterman of Danielson  
Lilah Dunn of Danielson  
Trent Pichie of Danielson  
Sage Bukowski of North Grosvenordale  
William Bushey of Woodstock Valley

About Nichols College

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 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](http://www.nichols.edu)