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Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts awards \$125,000 to Our Bright Future

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts today announced that it has awarded more than \$1 million in grants to ten nonprofit organizations serving the region, including Southbridge-based Our Bright Future.

The Activation Fund grants support a wide range of organizations as they build capacity and strengthen their effectiveness in addressing

community-identified health issues.

The Activation Fund received a record number of applications this year, reflecting strong community demand for resources that address critical health needs. In 2026, the Activation Fund is supporting organizations working to improve behavioral health, expand food access, increase housing stability, advance youth opportunities, and

address the social factors that shape people’s

health. Thirty percent (30%) of the 2026 grant recipients are receiving grant funding from The

Turn To **GRANT**
page **A10**

Applications welcome for Southbridge Cultural Council grants

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Cultural Council announces that applications for the 2027 grant funding cycle will become available only online to www.massculturalcouncil.org.

The official submission cycle for 2027 begins on Sept. 1, and ends on Oct. 15 at 11.59 p.m. No applications are accepted after the official deadline established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Boston. Officially required is that all 2027 applicants review and understand the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Southbridge Cultural Council specific criteria online before submission of the grant application.

The Southbridge Cultural Council (SCC), a local agency, is part of the overall grant program of the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency, providing grant allocations to each of the 351 cities and towns of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in support of cultural activities in their respective areas. The Massachusetts Cultural Council is funded by the Massachusetts Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.

For questions of the 2027 grant cycle, please call Michelle LeBoeuf, SCC Chairperson at 508-764-4803 or Ted Bartlett, SCC Treasurer at 508-764-7909.



Courtesy Photo

Massachusetts-based Careforth partnered with the WooSox Hometown Heroes program on Friday, Aug. 7, to honor individuals, families, and community leaders who make a positive impact across the state. Family caregivers Michael Pratico and Karen Wasielewski, both from Southbridge, were recognized during pre-game ceremonies at Polar Park for their dedication to caring for their families. Pratico is a caregiver for his adult son, Joseph, with autism spectrum disorder, providing encouragement, companionship and care, and helping Joseph thrive and experience all that life has to offer. Michael also used to be a PE teacher and loved being able to throw out the first pitch. Wasielewski cares for her mother, Constance, who faces significant mobility challenges. Karen's daily support helps her mother continue living at home, surrounded by family, familiar routines and her community. A lifelong baseball fan, Constance especially enjoyed spending the evening at the ballpark. Pictured within the attached: Michael Pratico and his granddaughter Paris, and Karen Wasielewski and her mother Constance.

Tantasqua Class of '76 to hold 50th reunion

STURBRIDGE — Tantasqua class of 1976 is celebrating its 50th reunion this year. We want to reach out to all former students.

The big event happens on Sept. 26 at 5 p.m. at

Rapscallion Pub, 3 Arnold Rd., Sturbridge.

Fifty years have passed since we walked the halls of Tantasqua Regional HS. We hope to reunite and reconnect with as many fellow class-

mates/friends as possible.

Please help us spread the word. If you were a member of the THS Class of '76 or if you know how to reach a classmate, please get in touch.

You can visit our THS

Class of '76 Facebook page for more details and to buy tickets. If you are not a Facebook member, you can reach out to Kathy Thompson at katherinethmp@aol.com.

Hitchcock hosts series of Saturday night sound therapy sessions

BRIMFIELD — In partnership with Healing Hands for Body & Mind and Health Well Crafted, both in Palmer, Hitchcock will present a series of sound therapy sessions on Saturday evenings. The sessions will take place from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on select evenings. Each session is offered for \$20 per person.

The dates for the sessions are as follows:

Aug. 22 | Stability & Balance
Sept. 19 | Stress Management
Oct. 17 | Immune Defense
Nov. 14 | Life Challenges, Loss, & Grief

Sound therapy utilizes aspects of music, tones, and notes to improve one's physical, emotional, and mental health. Healing with sound dates back to ancient Greece when it was used to treat mental disorders. Throughout history, music has been used in many ways — to boost morale, promote productivity, and support healing. The healing powers of sound are vast and mostly untapped in today's society.

Recent research has linked sound and music



to a number of health benefits, including boosting immune function, lowering stress levels, and improving the health of premature babies.

For the Stability & Balance session on Aug. 22, specially formatted vibrational sounds will support the systems of the body and their relationships, including emotional as well as physical stability and structural issues.

This session will promote balance of the energetic circulation of the body.

The September 19th session will focus on stress management.

“All living things experience stress. The goal is not to eliminate stress but to mitigate its effects on our physical and mental wellness,” says session facilitator Alora Heffernan. “Without proper management, stress can lead to

organs, cells and proteins that defend the body while protecting the body's own cells,” say facilitators Pat & Ken Wheelock. “This system defends us from invading microbes and supports overall disease resistance from more chronic illnesses such as cancer. Stressors, such as lifestyle, medications, and environment can destabilize the system, causing imbalances and reducing its ability to protect the body.”

This specially chosen pattern of vibrations and tones supports the foundational strength of the Immune System. Restore the integrity of the vital functions of our defense system with this sound therapy.

On Nov. 14, a session focused on Life Challenges, Loss, & Grief. This therapy uses specific vibrational patterns and tones to soothe and nourish both the organs and nervous system in the processing of our emotions, thus providing support through high impact stress experiences.

Pat & Ken Wheelock are multi-trained bodywork practitioners based in Three Rivers, Massachusetts. Their practice spans acupuncture, Reiki, herbal studies, sound therapy, color therapy, and aromatherapy — a rich, holistic toolkit built through years of dedicated study and hands-on experience. Certified practitioners since 2008, the Wheelocks have spent over 15 years studying, practicing, and teaching the healing arts.

Alora Heffernan is a certified Reiki Master and Certified Meditation Teacher providing intuitive energy work. This includes non-invasive modalities such as Guided Meditation, Reiki, and Sound Therapy to promote energy alignment, relaxation, and general wellness.

Some seating will available; students are encouraged to bring a yoga mat or folding camp chair to be comfortable.

For more information, visit www.hitchcockacademy.org. Hitchcock Academy is a community center located at 2 Brookfield Rd. in Brimfield, serving the community with educational, recreational, and cultural programming.

Wales Community Pantry announces first-ever fundraising golf tournament

FISKDALE — The Wales Community Pantry today announced its first annual fundraising golf tournament, inviting the community to swing for a cause that hits close to home. The event will take place on Saturday, Oct. 3, with a 9 a.m. start at Hemlock Ridge Golf Course in Fiskdale.

This is more than a day on the course. It is a chance to stand with neighbors and families who face the stress of not knowing whether there will be enough food for dinner. Or breakfast. In just the past two years, the number of people

the pantry serves has roughly tripled. Hundreds of families across Brimfield, Holland, Wales, and more than 20 surrounding communities now rely on the pantry for nutritious food provided with dignity. The pantry also sends weekend food home with 85 elementary students through its Backpack Program and delivers to more than 40 home-bound neighbors.

In the immediate area there are no grocery stores and limited public transportation, making the pantry a critical lifeline. Rising costs of food, housing, and healthcare

continue to push more households to seek help. The tournament will feature food, prizes, and the chance to make a tangible difference.

“Golf is fun, but this day is about something bigger,” said Dave Sweeney, Executive Director of the Wales Community Pantry. “Every player, sponsor, and volunteer helps us keep food on the shelves for families who need it. We’re grateful for the community’s support and excited to grow this event into an annual tradition.”

Event Details

- Date & Time: Saturday, Oct. 3, 9 a.m. start

- Location: Hemlock Ridge Golf Course, Fiskdale
- Includes: Golf, food, and prizes
- Registration: <https://bit.ly/WalesGolfFundraiser>
- Sponsorships: Available at multiple levels. Contact Wales Community FoodPantry @ gmail.com or visit the golf tournament registration page for more details.

Players, sponsors, and volunteers are encouraged to sign up early. Sponsorship opportunities offer visibility while directly supporting the pantry’s mission. For more

information or to discuss sponsorship, email Wales Community FoodPantry @ gmail.com or visit the golf tournament registration page for more details.

About the Wales Community Pantry

The Wales Community Pantry provides nutritious food with dignity to families, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, working households, and children in Brimfield, Holland, Wales, and surrounding communities in western Massachusetts. Through open pantry hours, home delivery,

and a Weekend Backpack Program, the pantry serves as a vital resource in an area with limited access to grocery stores. For more information, visit the pantry’s Facebook page or email Wales Community FoodPantry @ gmail.com.

ELECTION INFO – CHARLTON

State Primary
September 1st 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM,
Heritage School, 34 Oxford Rd

Last day to Register to vote
Saturday, August 22 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Town Clerk’s Office, 37 Main St.
You can also register online or through the mail. 5 PM is the deadline.

Early Voting In person
Town Hall – Town Clerk’s Office
37 Main Street, Charlton

Sat. Aug. 22	9:00am-5:00pm
Mon. Aug. 24	8:00am-5:00pm
Tues. Aug. 25	8:00am-7:00pm
Wed. Aug. 26	8:00am-5:00pm
Thurs. Aug. 27	8:00am-5:00pm

Troop 163 hosting ice cream social & open house

STURBRIDGE — Do you like camping, hiking, swimming, biking, fishing, kayaking, white-water rafting, sailing, exploring with friends, and more? You might like being a scout! Come to an ice cream social and open house held by Troop 163, an all-girl troop of Scouting America. Learn about lasoing and how to

use a sling shot, and other activities. Families are welcome. Please stop by, have fun, and learn about scouting and our troop.

The ice cream social and open house will be held on Sunday, Aug. 30 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 345 Main St. in Sturbridge. The troop is open to girls aged 11-17,

and while based in Sturbridge, is open to residents of any town. Please email troop163sturbridge@gmail.com with any questions.

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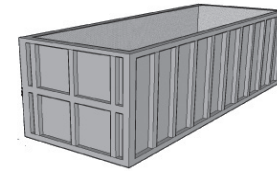


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Tantasqua Regional and Union 61 School Districts Child Find Notice

It is the responsibility of the Tantasqua Regional and Union 61 School Districts to identify any child ages 3 through 21 who may have a disability who is either a resident of Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, Sturbridge, or Wales or who attends a private school within the geographic boundaries of Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, Sturbridge, or Wales. This also includes children who reside in Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, Sturbridge, or Wales who are homeschooled, as well as children ages 3 through 21 who are not yet enrolled in school.

Tantasqua Regional and Union 61 School Districts are responsible for evaluating those students to determine whether they are eligible for special education or related services under federal and state law.

Tantasqua Regional and Union 61 School Districts are committed to identifying children before their third birthday to provide early intervention services for three- and four-year-olds with disabilities. If you have questions or concerns about a child’s development and would like the child screened, please contact the Office of Special Education.

If you suspect that the child may need an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services, a parent, any person in a caregiving position, or any person in a professional position who is working with that child may request an evaluation, at no cost, through the Office of Special Education.

Contact information is provided below:

Office of Special Education
Tantasqua Regional and Union 61 School Districts
774-241-0827

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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER
BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

Investing in Southbridge's young people pays dividends

A fire sprinkler system is not the sort of project that usually captures much public attention.

There is nothing particularly glamorous about pipes, valves and sprinkler heads. Yet in the case of Our Bright Future's planned Southbridge Innovation Hub, that infrastructure represents something considerably larger: the difference between owning a building and being able to fill it with young people, educational opportunities and possibilities for the future.

That is why the \$125,000 Activation Fund grant awarded to Our Bright Future by the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts is particularly encouraging news for Southbridge.

The money will help install the required sprinkler system in the organization's newly purchased Innovation Hub, clearing the way for a centralized youth development and educational center expected to serve as many as 1,000 students annually.

Those students will have access to STEM education, workforce development, social-emotional learning and other community programming.

There is an important lesson here about what constitutes an investment in public health.

Health is often discussed primarily in terms of hospitals, doctors, medications and access to medical care. Those things are obviously essential. But the circumstances surrounding people long before they enter a doctor's office matter enormously as well.

Does a child have a safe place to go after school? Does a teenager have an opportunity to develop useful skills? Can a young person meet adults who can introduce them to career possibilities they might never otherwise encounter? Are students given opportunities to build confidence, relationships and a sense that they have a future worth working toward?

Those questions belong in conversations about community health, too.

The Health Foundation's latest round of grants recognizes that broader reality. More than \$1 million is being distributed among 10 nonprofit organizations addressing behavioral health, food access, housing stability, youth opportunities and other factors affecting people's well-being. Our Bright Future's project brings that philosophy directly to Southbridge.

The Innovation Hub also represents the kind of community development that can have effects well beyond the walls of one building. Programs introducing students to science, technology and workforce skills can help create connections between education and employment. Young people who discover an interest or aptitude today may become tomorrow's technicians, entrepreneurs, health care workers, tradespeople or business owners.

For a community such as Southbridge, creating those pathways matters. It is particularly valuable when opportunities are available close to home. Not every family can regularly transport children to programs in Worcester or elsewhere. A strong local institution makes participation more practical while giving young people another place within their own community where they can learn, belong and succeed.

There is also something worth recognizing about the nature of this particular grant. Sometimes an organization has the vision, the building and the programming, but a decidedly unexciting piece of infrastructure stands between an idea and its implementation. Helping nonprofits overcome those practical barriers can be every bit as valuable as financing the programs themselves.

Installing sprinklers may not make for a dramatic ribbon-cutting photograph. Filling the building afterward with students building robots, developing job skills, learning alongside one another and discovering what they are capable of certainly will.

Communities frequently talk about the importance of investing in young people. This is what such an investment can look like in practice.

Southbridge's future will ultimately be shaped by the children growing up here now. Giving them more places to learn, develop skills, form relationships and imagine what comes next is not merely a service to those students. It is an investment in the community they will inherit.

Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author's name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author's name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.

It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

OPINION

Simple budgeting tips that fit real life

If you've just started managing your own finances, recommitted to doing it well or noticed your spending isn't making you as happy as you'd hoped, a budget might be exactly what you need. When you know where your money is going, you're likely to feel more in control and more confident your finances reflect what matters to you.



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Some budgeting apps do the routine work for you, syncing with your accounts and tracking spending automatically. Others are more hands-on, encouraging you to map out your spending plan in advance. There's likely one out there for every style of budgeting. The goal is to find a system you'll use and

stick with.

A simple budgeting framework to start: The 50/30/20 rule

One of the easiest ways to structure a budget is the 50/30/20 rule. The concept is refreshingly straightforward: Put 50 percent of your after-tax income toward necessities (housing, groceries, utilities, transportation), 30 percent toward wants (dining out, entertainment, streaming subscriptions) and 20 percent toward savings or paying down debt.

The 50/30/20 rule is a great foundation, but you may need to adjust it a little. If you live in a high-cost city, housing alone might require more than half your paycheck. Or you may have high income and can save more than 20 percent. Think of the 50/30/20 rule as a starting point you can adjust as your life evolves.

Not sure where your money goes?

That's completely normal. If you honestly don't know what you spend each month, try a low-pressure approach first. Spend a few months simply observing. Check your accounts without judgment, noting money coming in and going out. Think of it as a financial check-in rather than a report card. You can't change the past, but you can absolutely adjust for the future.

From there, small steps go a long way. Even spending 15 minutes a week on your budget can make the whole process feel far less daunting.

Make technology your easy button

When the numbers feel discouraging

Sometimes looking at spending brings up more stress than relief. If that happens, start by shifting your perspective. Focus on the expenses that brought you real value — a modest gift that meant the world to a friend or how your rent provides a comfortable, stable life. Then look for changes that align your spending with your values. Substituting expenses, reducing expenses, or creating more income could all be used to help you keep your spending below your income.

Build a buffer

If you can, consider building a small buffer into your budget for unexpected expenses such as birthdays, minor repairs or spontaneous plans. Adding perhaps 3 percent of your income or a set dollar amount, like \$200, helps keep those costs from throwing your whole plan off course.

The bottom line

With a few simple steps, budgeting becomes easier to stick with and more meaningful over time. At its core, it's a way to align your money with what matters while enjoying today and planning for tomorrow.

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

The great household thermostat negotiations

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET

By CHARLES

There are few subjects capable of revealing the fundamental differences between two people quite as efficiently as the thermostat.

My wife and I have been married for roughly three decades. We have successfully navigated mortgages, children, home repairs, family holidays and countless decisions involving considerably more money and consequence than the temperature inside our house. Yet we remain unable to agree on what number should appear on that little box on the wall.

This becomes particularly complicated in August.

New England summers have a way of producing days when the house feels perfectly comfortable at breakfast, slightly tropical by lunch and suitable for growing orchids by late afternoon.

This is when the negotiations begin.

I tend to believe that air conditioning should be used with restraint. I am not against modern technology. I simply have an ingrained suspicion that every degree I lower the thermostat causes the electric meter outside to spin fast enough to affect the Earth's rotation.

My wife takes a different approach. If we own an air conditioner, she reasons, perhaps we should occasionally experience the benefits of air conditioning. It's difficult to argue with that.

I will walk past the thermostat and notice that it has been lowered. I raise it two degrees. An hour later, I walk past again. It has been lowered. Nobody says anything.

This is important. We are not arguing. We are participating in a silent competition involving climate control. Eventually, one of us breaks the silence.

"Did you change the thermostat?"

"No."

This answer is technically incorrect but strategically useful. Then comes the inevitable question.

"Why is it 74?"

I explain that 74 is a perfectly reasonable indoor temperature.

Apparently, it is not.

The funny thing is that nobody ever agrees on what "comfortable" actually means. One person says the house is warm. Another says it feels fine. Someone opens a window. Someone else points out, correctly, that opening a window while the air conditioner is running makes absolutely no sense. The window gets closed. Ten minutes later, somebody turns

on a fan.

This raises another question: If the air conditioner is running and the ceiling fan is running and a portable fan is running, at what point are we simply attempting to manufacture weather?

I remember growing up without any of this. On hot nights, we opened windows. We had box fans that sounded like small aircraft engines. If it was still hot, we complained about it. That was our cooling system.

Nobody checked an app to see what the "feels like" temperature was because we already knew what it felt like. It felt hot. Of course, nostalgia becomes much easier when you're sitting in an air-conditioned room.

I have no intention of returning to the days of lying awake on an August night hoping a breeze might wander through the bedroom window sometime before sunrise. I've become soft. I accept this.

Still, there is something amusing about the amount of thought modern households devote to achieving the perfect indoor temperature.

We can heat our homes in January and cool them in August. We have programmable thermostats, remote controls and fans with six speeds.

And yet two adults who have shared a house for decades can stand beneath the same ceiling and experience entirely different climates.

Perhaps that's the real lesson of marriage.

Compromise is important. Communication is essential. And if you quietly change the thermostat, always remember what number it was on before.

Town of Charlton accepting applications for Opioid Settlement Funds Grant Program

CHARLTON — The Town of Charlton is accepting applications for funding through the Town's Opioid Settlement Funds Grant Program.

The purpose of this program is to support initiatives that prevent opioid misuse, expand access to treatment and recovery services, reduce the harms associated with substance use disorders, and improve the health and well-being of Charlton residents. Funding is made available through the Town's allocation of national opioid settlement funds and must be used for eligible purposes consistent with applicable settlement agreements and guidance. Funding may be requested to a maximum of \$2,500 per applicant. Final awards will be distributed based on available funding as well as demonstrated need and community impact.

Eligible applicants may include:

- o Nonprofit organizations
- o Healthcare providers
- o Community-based organizations
- o Other organizations serving Charlton residents

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- o Prevention and education programs
- o Treatment and recovery support services
- o Harm reduction initiatives
- o First responder or public safety initiatives related to opioid response
- o Behavioral health and mental health services
- o Community outreach and support programs
- o Data collection, evaluation, and other evidence-based strategies that address opioid use disorder

Applications will be evaluated based on demonstrated community need, alignment with eligible opioid settlement uses, measurable outcomes, organizational capacity, and the anticipated

impact on Charlton residents. Completed applications and all required supporting documentation for the first round of this grant program must be submitted by Aug. 31. Late or incomplete applications may not be considered.



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Local residents named to Simmons University Dean's List

BOSTON — The following local residents were named to the 2026 spring semester dean's list at Simmons University in Boston.

- * Isabel McLam, Charlton
- * Jessica Hennessey, Fiskdale
- * Isys Patterson, Wales

To qualify for dean's list status, undergraduate students must obtain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher, based on 12 or more credit hours of work in classes using the letter grade system.

About Simmons University
Located in the heart of Boston, Simmons

is a respected private university offering nearly 50 majors and programs for undergraduate women and graduate programs open to all on campus, in blended formats or entirely online, in nursing and health sciences, business, communications, social work, public health, library and information science, and more. Founded in 1899, Simmons inspires a culture of education, connection, and action through high-impact learning with engaged faculty, an immersive community that forges lifelong networks, and career-centered programs that accelerate professional success. The result is a Simmons experience that prepares graduates to thrive as they launch and advance in their careers. For more information, please visit www.simmons.edu.

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Marisa DeJesus of Charlton graduates from Boston University

BOSTON — Boston University awarded academic degrees to more than 7,000 students in May 2026. Among the graduates was Marisa DeJesus, who graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Earth & Environmental Sciences and minors in Marine Science and Biology. Her senior year included fieldwork with the BU Marine Program in New England and at Calabash Caye Field Station in Belize, along with studying abroad in Ecuador through Universidad San Francisco de Quito's Galápagos program in the Evolution, Ecology and Conservation track.

Founded in 1839, Boston University is an internationally recognized institution of higher education and research. With nearly 37,000 students, it is one of the largest private residential universities in the United States. BU consists of 17 schools and colleges, along with the Faculty of Computing & Data Sciences and a number of multi-disciplinary centers and institutes integral to the University's research and teaching mission. In 2012, BU joined the Association of American Universities (AAU), a consortium of leading research universities in the United States and Canada.



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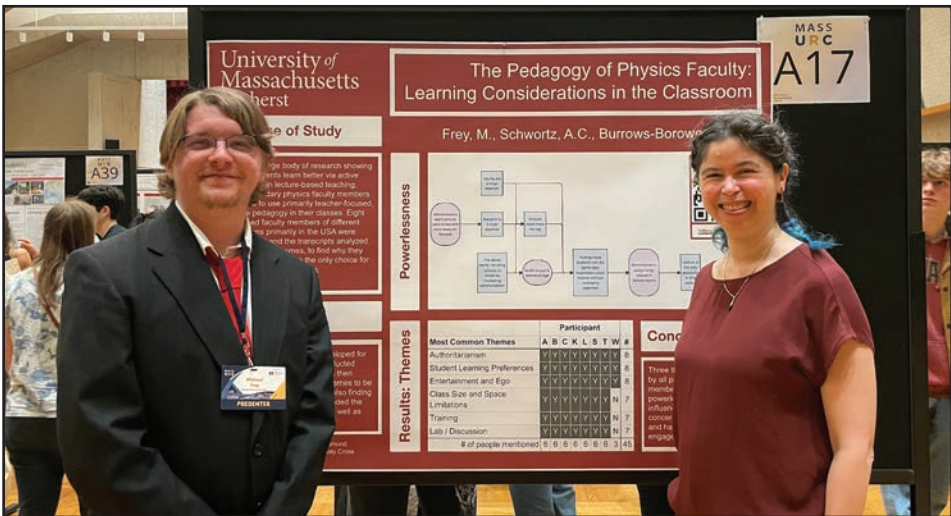
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Three generations of scholars team up to improve physics education

WORCESTER — A multigenerational team of educators and learners has come together to improve physics education, helping prepare the next generation of engineers, astrophysicists, and more.

Courtesy Photo
(Right) Michael Frey and Dr. Andria Schwartz at the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference.



Dr. Andria Borowczak

cists, and more.

The collaboration began when QCC Professor of Integrated Science & Physics Dr. Andria Schwartz noticed that many post-secondary physics teachers rely heavily on lecture-based lessons instead of active learning. Schwartz discovered little research on the topic and set out to learn more with help from Michael Frey, who was a QCC student at the time, and Dr. Andria Borowczak, Schwartz's former Ph.D. advisor.

Together, they conducted a qualitative study involving physics faculty from across the United States. Their findings were published in "Education Sciences," a peer-reviewed international open-access journal, in an article titled, "How to Engage Active Pedagogy with Physics Faculty: Watch Out for Powerlessness."

"Research has shown that active learning helps everyone more than lectures," Schwartz said. "So why do we still use lectures so much?"

Frey was invited to join the project after Schwartz witnessed his intellectual curiosity

in an astronomy course. For the study, Frey helped develop interview questions and conducted several interviews, a level of responsibility Schwartz described as significant for an undergraduate student.

"It's been surreal. I started out as a student with a love of space. Now I've published my first paper," Frey said. "Working with Andria and Dr. B has been amazing. It's like a web; we're all learning from each other."

Borowczak, director of the School of Teacher Education at the University of Central Florida, served as an external mentor, contributing to the writing, review and development of the final article. Throughout her career, she has studied partnerships and believes collaborative research creates opportunities for new perspectives and deeper understanding.

"Working with Andria and Michael showcased our trust of each other, our unique voices and added another step in our relationship," Borowczak said. "It was a pleasure working with them."

For Schwartz, the project reflects the ongoing cycle of mentorship that

drives both teaching and research.

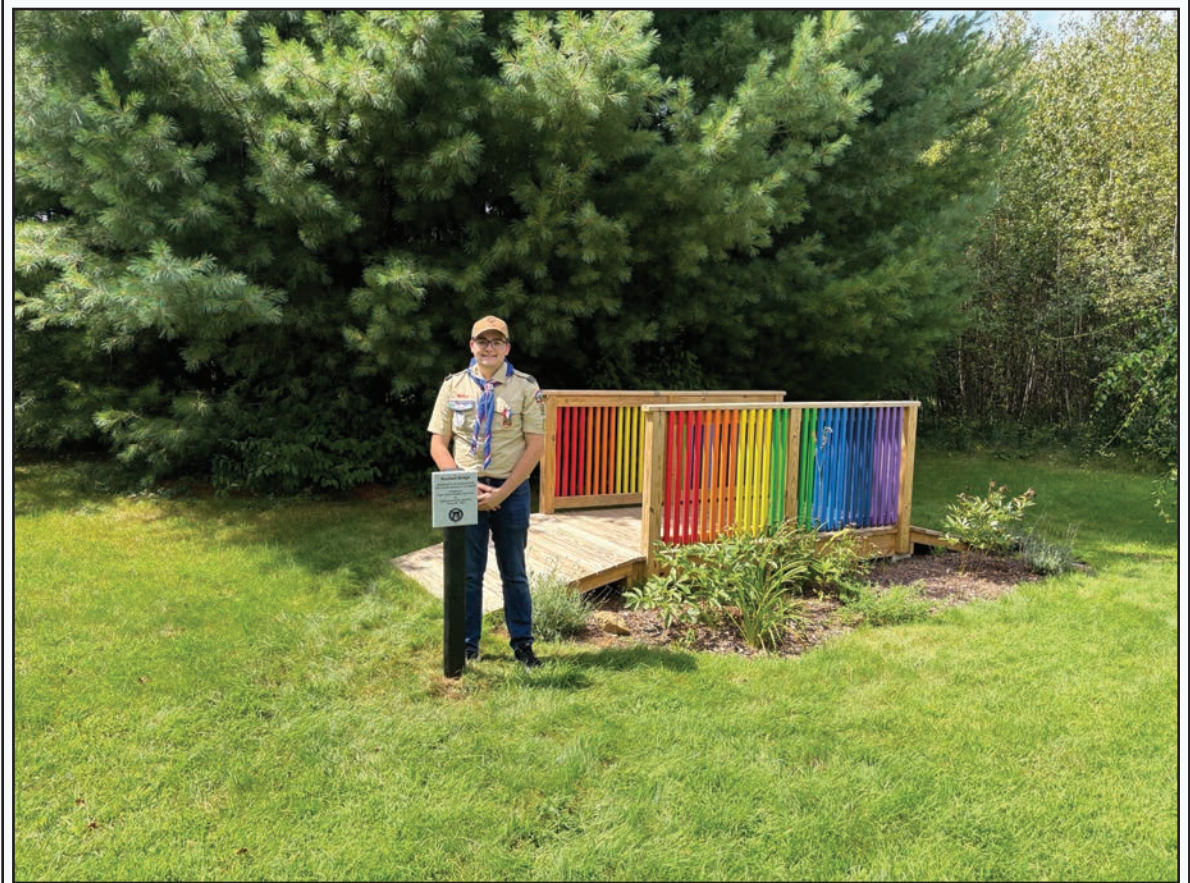
"Dr. B is an amazing resource. If I'm stuck, I get on the phone with her, and she sets me straight. Now I'm teaching Michael, and in the process, I'm learning more as well," Schwartz said.

Through their interviews, the team found that many faculty rely on lectures because they feel powerless to make change or believe they lack the time to prepare more in-depth active learning lessons. While perceptions of powerlessness may not always reflect reality, Schwartz noted that time constraints are a genuine obstacle. In addition to teaching, faculty members often balance research, student advising, and service commitments.

"It's important to get this info out there. If people know why it's a challenge, they can design things to get past the challenge," Schwartz said.

Schwartz and Frey presented their findings at the last Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference and are already planning a follow-up paper.

"How to Engage Active Pedagogy with Physics Faculty: Watch Out for Powerlessness" is available at mdpi.com/2227-7102/16/1/8.



Courtesy Photo

Local Scout Cole Hendrick successfully completed his Eagle Scout Service Project last week with a formal dedication ceremony at Here Today Adopted Tomorrow. Cole led his fellow members of Troop 161 in constructing a brand-new bridge for the local animal rescue organization. The new structure provides vital, safe infrastructure for the facility. Representatives from Here Today Adopted Tomorrow expressed immense gratitude to Cole and the entirety of Troop 161, noting that the bridge will significantly improve day-to-day operations and accessibility at the rescue. The Eagle Scout Project is the culmination of a Scout's training. It requires significant leadership, planning, and community coordination. Hendrick managed the project from initial design through fundraising, material procurement, and final construction.

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St. Anne – St. Patrick Parish introduces family-friendly schedule for 2026–2027 Faith Formation program



FISKDALE — St. Anne–St. Patrick Parish is making it easier for families to participate in both Faith Formation and Sunday Mass with a newly redesigned class schedule for the 2026–2027 program year. By intentionally centering its Faith Formation schedule around the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass, the parish hopes families can more easily worship together while also having more time back in their Sundays.

“At St. Anne – St. Patrick Parish, we want to remove obstacles that make it difficult for families to practice their faith together,” said Fr. Salvator Musande, Pastor of St. Anne – St. Patrick Parish. “Our new schedule allows children to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith while making Sunday Mass something families can attend together.

We warmly invite both returning and new families to join us.”

Registration is now open for Faith Formation for students in Kindergarten through Grade 11. Families are encouraged to register online by September 6, 2026, which will help with class planning, although registration will remain open after that date.

The new class schedule is:

- Grades K–6: Sundays, 8:45–9:45 a.m., before the 10 a.m. Mass.
- Grades 7–11: Sundays, 11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m., after the 10 a.m. Mass.

Faith Formation provides children and teens with age-appropriate instruction in the Catholic Faith, Sacred Scripture, Prayer, Christian living, and preparation for the Sacraments. Online registration is the preferred registration method and is available on the parish

website. A paper registration form is also available for families who need one.

For more information or to register, visit www.StAnneStPatrickParish.com or call 508-347-9353.

St. Anne St. Patrick Parish & Shrine is an active parish community serving the Sturbridge area and beyond, offering daily Masses, religious education, and community ministries. The shrine grounds welcome thousands of visitors each year and feature St. Anne Shrine, Stations of the Cross and Crucifix, Hall of Saints, Russian Icon Exhibit, Generations Statue, Angel of Hope Monument, Memorial for the Unborn, Votive Chapels, weekend Masses celebrated in the outdoor pavilion during the summer, and a religious gift shop open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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Explore Prince Edward Island This Summer or Fall This two-bedroom cottage near Tignish provides sweeping views of the ocean, the beach, and the North Cape lighthouse. Enjoy kayaking, bicycling, walking the beach, swimming in the warmer Gulf Stream waters, and exploring the community of Nail Pond and the many PEI attractions. Full Appliances. The cottage sleeps six comfortably. Weekly rent is only \$1,100. Contact Scott, for more information at 603-254-5032, or scottm@plymouth.edu.

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Registration #9438 9439

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<https://www.mareinc.org/recruitment-group/51030325292>

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If you're at least 18 years old, have a stable source of income, and room in your heart, you may be a perfect match to adopt a waiting child. Adoptive parents can be single, married, or partnered; experienced or not; renters or homeowners; LGBTQ+ singles and couples. As an adoptive parent, you won't have to pay any fees, adoption from foster care is completely free in Massachusetts.

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

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OBITUARIES

Carolyn J. Hafer, 84

Charlton: Carolyn J. (Abraham) Hafer, 84, passed away peacefully at home on Sunday, August 9th, with her loving family by her side, after a brief illness.

Her beloved husband of 64 years, Larry E. Hafer, passed away in 2025. She leaves her children, Diana Ijams and her husband, Andrew, Pamela Renzoni and her John, Frederick Hafer and his wife, Casey, Andrew Borer, Rita Draper and her husband Matthew; ten grandchildren Scott, Ryan, Emily, Christine, Katherine, John, Sarah, Samuel, Richard, Nicole, and eleven great grandchildren.

Carolyn was born in Natick, the daughter of Frederick H. and Irene D. (Babineau) Abraham. As a military wife, she embraced a life of service alongside her husband, supporting him through deployments, moves, long separations and the many challenges that come with military life. She worked for



many years as an Electronics teacher for HBM Electronics. Carolyn and Larry enjoyed winters in Florida as well as their various other trips traveling together throughout the years. Most of all, Carolyn "Grammy" enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren, vacationing at the "Little House" in Island Park, Rhode Island, and ensuring fun times and fond memories were had, by taking the grand-

children boating, fishing, on pony rides, boogie boarding and visiting Uncle Andy in Newport RI,

A graveside service for Carolyn will be held on Friday, October 9th, at 1:00 PM in Northside Cemetery, Charlton. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The Wounded Warriors Project at www.woundedwarriorproject.org or www.morrillfuneralhome.com

Bay Path Continuing Education's fall catalog available

CHARLTON — We are excited to announce that the Fall 2026 catalog is now available at www.baypath.net/bpce. There is something for everyone, featuring offerings in trades exam preparations, continuing education, professional development, health & wellness, art, food & entertaining, financial wellness, and much more.

Here are some of the new classes available:

- Basket Weaving

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Additionally, we have returning favorites including:

- Line Dancing
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Registration Opens on July 20 – Make sure to sign up early for the classes that catch your interest so you don't miss this opportunity! You can reach us at www.baypath.net/bpce or call 508-248-5971, ext. 1715. Bay Path has been providing engaging adult continuing education classes for the past 30 years, conveniently located at 57 Old Muggett Hill Rd., Charlton.

Shepherd Hill students hosting Tackle the Stigma 5K to promote mental health awareness

CHARLTON — The Shepherd Hill Regional High School cheerleading program, in partnership with the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District community, is inviting residents to lace up their running shoes and help break down barriers surrounding mental health during the annual Tackle the Stigma 5K and 2.5K Walk/Run on Saturday, Sept. 27.

The event will begin at 10 a.m. at the Shepherd Hill football field and is designed to raise awareness about mental health and mental wellness while encouraging open conversations throughout the local community.

Organizers hope participants of all ages will come together to demonstrate support for those facing mental health challenges and reinforce the message that no one has to struggle alone.

"This event is very important to us as we work to raise awareness about mental health and mental wellness throughout our local communi-

ty," organizers said in announcing the event.

The walk and run carries the theme, "Run toward awareness, stand up for support, and tackle the stigma one mile at a time," reflecting its focus on education, compassion and community involvement.

Mental health advocates continue to emphasize the importance of reducing the stigma surrounding anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions, which can often prevent individuals from seeking help. Community events such as Tackle the Stigma aim to create a welcoming environment where conversations about mental wellness are encouraged and support resources are highlighted.

In addition to providing an opportunity for exercise and community engagement, the event serves as a reminder that mental health is an important part of overall well-being. Organizers hope the day will inspire participants to check in with friends, family

members and neighbors while promoting a culture of understanding and acceptance.

The Shepherd Hill cheerleaders have made mental health awareness a priority, using the event to unite students, families, educators and community members around a common cause. By bringing together participants from across Dudley, Charlton and surrounding communities, they hope to build momentum for ongoing conversations that extend well beyond race day.

Whether participants choose the full 5-kilometer course or the shorter 2.5-kilometer walk/run, or-ganizers say every step represents a commitment to supporting mental wellness and reminding those who may be struggling that help is available.

Registration information and additional event details are expected to be available through Shepherd Hill Regional High School and the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District as the event approaches.

LEGALS

LEGAL NOTICE
TOWN OF STURBRIDGE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
The Sturbridge Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, August 6, 2026 at 6:10 pm** on the 2nd Floor of the Center Office Building, 301 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566 and via GoTo Meeting, to consider a **Request for Determination of Applicability** filed by Mark Farrell, Green Hill Engineering pursuant to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. c. 131, §40) and the Town of Sturbridge Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The applicant seeks approval to replace a septic system at **1 Leno Road, Sturbridge, MA.** Remote participation information and application materials will be posted at least 48 hours prior to the hearing on the Conservation Commission webpage at www.sturbridge.gov/conservation-commission.
Ed Goodwin
Conservation Commission Chairman
August 21, 2026

LEGAL NOTICE
TOWN OF STURBRIDGE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
The Sturbridge Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, August 6, 2026 at 6:00 pm** on the 2nd Floor of the Center Office Building, 301 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566 and via GoTo Meeting, to consider a **Request for Determination of Applicability** filed by Stephen Soper, Soper Construction Company, Inc. pursuant to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. c. 131, §40) and the Town of Sturbridge Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The applicant seeks approval to reconstruct an existing patio at **15 Carey Road, Sturbridge, MA.** Remote participation information and application materials will be posted at least 48 hours prior to the hearing on the Conservation Commission webpage at www.sturbridge.gov/conservation-commission.
Ed Goodwin
Conservation Commission Chairman
August 21, 2026

TOWN OF CHARLTON DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS 100 FLINT ROAD
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I. ADVERTISEMENT/PUBLIC NOTICE
TOWN OF CHARLTON –
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PAVEMENT SURFACING OF

CENTER DEPOT ROAD
Sealed bids for the Pavement Surfacing of Center Depot Road, Town of Charlton (hereinafter referred to as "The OWNER") will be received at the Town Administrator's Office, Charlton Municipal Offices, 37 Main Street, Charlton MA, 01507 until 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 2, 2026, at which time they will be publicly opened and read. No late bids accepted.
Obtaining Bid Packages: Specifications, general instructions, and Bid Forms must be obtained at the Town Administrator's Office, Charlton Municipal Offices, 37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday via pickup at the Town Administrator's Office or via email request to mary.devlin@townofcharlton.net. Bidders are required to submit on the Bid Forms provided.
Bid Deposit: All bids over \$50,000 MUST be accompanied by a bid deposit in the amount of five percent (5%) of the bid in the form of cash, a bid bond, or a certified check made payable to the Town of Charlton. The bid deposit will be forfeited if the bidder fails to execute the contract and satisfactory Bond within ten (10) days after the contract may have been awarded to them.
Conditions of Contract: All awarded contracts shall be subject to the Special Contract Conditions that accompany this bid package. Successful Bidders will be required to produce a certificate of insurance. All work being performed requires 100% Performance Bond and a 50% Payment Bond in accordance with G.L. c. 30, section 39M. The bidder shall be able to start work under this contract and after the acceptance by the Select Board.
Wage Rates: All wage rates will comply with those established by the Commonwealth Department of Labor and Workforce Development, M.G.L., Chapter 149, Section 26-27G as set forth in the contract documents.
Prequalification: Bidders for all projects that cost over \$50,000 must be prequalified by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (formerly Mass. Highway Department). All bidders shall be subject to Section 34 of Chapter 90, must be prequalified in accordance with 720 CMR 5.00 "Prequalification's of Contractors". This will apply to horizontal construction only.
MassDOT prequalification of contractors with the class of work as PAVEMENT SURFACING for the project with an estimated value of \$420,375.00 will be required.
Award/Rejection: The OWNER

reserves the right to reject any and all bids, and to waive minor informalities in the bids, or to accept the bid deemed best for the OWNER. The OWNER further reserves the right to award all portions of the contract to one bidder. In this case, the price bid by the bidder for each item as detailed on the Bid Form shall remain the same. The contract will be awarded to the lowest, responsible and eligible bidder.
August 20, 2026
August 27, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
County of Hampden
The Superior Court
CIVIL DOCKET #2679CV0512
RE: **Southbridge Credit Union v. Heirs, Devisees and Personal/Legal Representatives of Barbara B. Stepkowski f/k/a Barbara B. Harwood, et al**
ORDER OF NOTICE BY PUBLICATION
To: Heirs, Devisees and Personal/Legal Representatives of Barbara B. Stepkowski f/k/a Barbara B. Harwood, having a mailing address of 38 Forest Road, Brimfield, MA 01010; **Gregory Stepkowski**, an individual residing at 38 Forest Road, Brimfield, MA 01010; **in the County of Hampden; all in said Commonwealth; Deborah J. Harwood**, an individual residing at 14 Hughgill Road, Rindge, NH 03461
AND TO ALL PERSONS ENTITLED TO THE BENEFIT OF THE SERVICE MEMBERS' CIVIL RELIEF ACT OF 1940 AS AMENDED 2003 as amended:
Southbridge Credit Union, a duly incorporated financial institution authorized to do business in Massachusetts and having its principal place of business at 155 Main Street, Southbridge, Massachusetts 01550 claiming to be the holder of mortgage covering 38 Forest Road, Brimfield, Massachusetts given by Barbara B. Stepkowski f/k/a Barbara B. Harwood to Southbridge Credit Union dated August 28, 2017 recorded in Hampden County Registry of Deeds Book 21851, Page 498 has filed with said court a Complaint for authority to foreclose said mortgage in the manner following: by entry on and possession of the premises therein described and by exercise of the power of sale contained in said mortgage. If you are entitled to the benefits of the Service Members' Civil Relief Act of 1940 as amended, and you object to such foreclosure you or your attorney should file a written appearance and answer in said court at Springfield in said County on or before September 15, 2026 or you may be forever barred from claiming that such foreclosure is invalid under said Act.

Witness, Michael D. Ricciuti, Esquire, Chief Justice of the Superior Court, at Springfield, Massachusetts, this 4th day of August, 2026.
Laura S. Gentile, Clerk of the Courts
By Stephanie Roscoe
Assistant Clerk
August 20, 2026

CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
In accordance with the Town of Charlton Stormwater Management Rules & Regulations, the Charlton Conservation Commission will be accepting comments on the following application:
The applicant, Blue Sky Towers IV, LLC, has submitted a Land Disturbance/Stormwater Management Application on July 27, 2026, for land disturbance associated with the construction of a telecommunications facility.
The project site is located at 103 Bond Road, Charlton, MA 01507, and is also known as: Parcel ID: 58-B-1.
Copies of the Land Disturbance Application are available at the Charlton Conservation Commission office during business hours.
Thomas O'Malley
Chair, Charlton Conservation Commission
August 20, 2026

TOWN OF STURBRIDGE
SELECT BOARD / LOCAL
LICENSING AUTHORITY
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the Sturbridge Select Board, acting as the Local Licensing Authority, will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, September 8, 2026, at 6:35 p.m. at the Sturbridge Town Hall, 308 Main Street, Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Application for Transfer of a Common Victualler All Alcoholic Beverages License from: Village Pizza Sebastian Kaly & Jose, Inc. to: Jarmakani Enterprises LLC d/b/a Village Pizza at 487 Main Street, Sturbridge MA. The applicant seeks approval of the transfer of the existing Common Victualler All Alcoholic Beverages License issued for the above-referenced premises. Any person wishing to be heard on this matter will be afforded an opportunity to do so at the public hearing by Order of the Sturbridge Select Board
TOWN OF STURBRIDGE
Frances Wychorski
Town Administrator and Select Board Administrative Coordinator & Constituent Liaison
Town of Sturbridge - 308 Main Street
Sturbridge MA 01566
508-347-2500 ext 1428
bosadmin@sturbridge.gov
August 20, 2026

Webster Five continues to build Commercial Banking team

AUBURN — Webster Five is proud to announce that Will Karrissey has joined the Bank as VP, Commercial Banking Officer.

Karrissey brings more than 20 years of banking experience spanning both retail and commercial banking, along with deep roots in the local business community and a proven track record of helping businesses achieve their growth objectives.

“I am excited to join Webster Five and be part of a team that is strongly committed to building lasting relationships with local businesses and the communities they serve,”

said Karrissey. “I look forward to working closely with clients to understand their goals, provide strategic financial guidance and help them achieve long-term success.”

Karrissey most recently served as Vice President, Commercial Banking Officer at UniBank for Savings, where he managed a portfolio of business relationships and worked closely with local organizations to support their growth and long-term success. Throughout his career, he has also held commercial banking positions at North Brookfield Savings Bank, bankHometown, and Millbury Savings



Courtesy Photo

(Right) Will Karrissey

Bank, gaining extensive experience serving businesses across Central Massachusetts.

“Will’s extensive commercial banking experience, strong relationship-building skills and deep commitment to the Central Massachusetts community make him an outstanding addition to our team,” said Christopher Watson, Chief Commercial Banking Officer at Webster Five. “His knowledge of the local market and dedication to helping businesses succeed align with our relationship-focused approach to commercial banking.”

Karrissey’s commitment to the community is reflected in his long-

standing record of volunteer leadership and civic engagement. He currently serves as a Corporator for Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Treasurer for the Creative Hub Worcester, Corporator for Whitin Community Center and Vice President of Millbury Dollars for Scholars. He previously served as Chairman of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce.

In recognition of Karrissey’s professional and community contributions, he was named Volunteer of the Year by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and was honored as a Worcester Business Journal 40 Under Forty recipient.

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Family Literacy Festival returns to Worcester with expanded programming and Children’s Business Expo

WORCESTER — The highly anticipated Family Literacy Festival 2026 is set to return bigger and better than ever on Saturday, Aug. 22 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Worcester Common Oval. This free, family-friendly event is expected to draw thousands of attendees, bringing together literacy, culture, community, and fun in one dynamic outdoor experience.

Hosted by SCENSOB Foundation, the Family Literacy Festival is designed to promote the importance of literacy

while creating equitable access to educational resources for families across the region. With a mission rooted in community empowerment, FLF continues to serve as a cornerstone event for Worcester and surrounding areas.

This year’s festival will feature:

- More than 10 vendors and community organizations, authors, and food trucks
- Children’s Business Expo, showcasing young entrepreneurs
- Live entertainment, including DJs, cultural

dance performances, and a vibrant fashion show

- Interactive literacy and sensory activities for children of all ages
- Back-to-school giveaways, including more than 20,000 school supplies distributed to families in need

“Last year’s turnout was incredible, and this year we’ve expanded every aspect of the festival to meet the growing demand,” said event organizers. “Our goal is not just to celebrate literacy, but to make sure every child and family leaves with the tools they

need to succeed.”

In addition to its educational focus, the festival serves as a powerful platform for small businesses, local authors, and community organizations to connect directly with thousands of attendees. Vendor and sponsorship opportunities are still available, though space is limited.

The event is made possible through the support of community partners, sponsors, and dedicated volunteers who share a commitment to education, access, and community growth.

For more information, vendor registration, or sponsorship inquiries, please visit www.scensobfoundation.org.

About SCENSOB Foundation:

SCENSOB Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing education, equity, and community development through impactful programming and events. Through initiatives like the Family Literacy Festival, the foundation continues to empower families and create pathways for success.



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41st Valley Friendship Tour

raises nearly \$110,000 for

Open Sky Community Services



Worcester-based nonprofit Open Sky Community Services brought together over 250 participants for its 41st annual Valley Friendship Tour fundraiser. The community event, for all ages and abilities, was held on June 6 in Whitinsville to support Open Sky’s programs throughout Central Massachusetts.

WORCESTER — The 41st annual Valley Friendship Tour drew more than 250 participants who walked, ran, and rolled through the Blackstone Valley on June 6 and raised nearly \$110,000 to benefit Open Sky Community Services, a nonprofit behavioral health and human services organization.

The Valley Friendship Tour, which starts and ends at Alternatives’ Whitin Mill, is Open Sky’s signature fundraising event for the agency’s nearly 150 programs serving children, adults, and families with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness and other complex challenges. Since it began just over four decades ago, the tour has raised millions in support of individuals and families in Central Massachusetts.

“The Valley Friendship Tour is a visual representation of Open Sky’s mission – individuals of all abilities coming together in the community with purpose,” said Ken Bates, President & CEO of Open Sky Community Services. “We are grateful to this community that has been created over the past four decades and for its unwav-

ering support of our neighbors throughout Central Massachusetts facing complex challenges. Thank you to our participants, attendees, sponsors, and staff for making this year’s Tour another one to remember.”

Teresa Pitaro, a resident of Norwood who has a family member served by Open Sky, was the top fundraiser for the fifth year in a row. She raised nearly \$7,000 for the 2026 Valley Friendship Tour.

The individual and team participants of all ages and abilities had the option of a 1-mile walk, 5K run or walk, or a 30-mile bike ride through the Blackstone Valley. The all-day event featured lunch, live music, raffles, and entertainment on the Dennis H. Rice Community Plaza at Alternatives’ Whitin Mill.

About Open Sky Community Services

Open Sky Community Services is a 501(c)3 nonprofit agency based in Worcester that has been helping individuals in our community achieve more than they imagined possible for over 50 years. The agency provides a wide range of services throughout Central Massachusetts for children, adults and families with mental health

challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness, and other complex

challenges. Open Sky Community Services has over 1,300 dedicated employees and nearly 150 programs throughout

United Way of South Central Massachusetts needs your help to meet fundraising goal

REGION — With just one month remaining in its annual fundraising campaign, the United Way of South Central MA (UWSCM) has reached 80 percent of its fundraising goal and is asking supporters to help close the remaining gap.

The organization has raised \$460,000 of its \$575,000 target, providing critical support for the twenty-two agencies that receive funding through UWSCM. While reaching 80 percent marks an

important milestone, UWSCM still needs to raise the final 20 percent before the campaign ends on Sept. 30.

“This campaign allows us to continue working to improve the lives of children, families, and individuals of all ages through our four impact areas: healthy community, financial security, youth opportunity, and community resiliency” said Kristin McCarthy, Executive Director. “We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has con-

tributed so far. With one month left, every donation can help us reach the finish line.”

Supporters can make a difference by donating today. Contributions of any amount will help provide meals, support families, fund educational programs, and provide other services for residents of Charlton, Dudley, Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Webster and ensure the organization can continue serving the community in the coming year.

The campaign’s final month represents a crucial opportunity for new and returning donors to get involved. Whether it is a first-time gift or an additional contribution, every donation brings UWSCM closer to its goal.

United Way of South Central Massachusetts is encouraging community members to help reach 100 percent before the campaign ends. To donate, visit www.uwscm.org or contact director@uwscm.org.

August 2026 Interpretive Programs at Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center at Worcester

WORCESTER — All programs are free and open to the public. Registration is not required. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Dress for the weather and wear appropriate footwear. Meet at the Visitor Center unless otherwise stated. Programming is subject to change or cancellation. For the most up to date programming information, call (508) 373-7056

Reasonable accommodations available upon advance notice. To make a request, please contact Moneesha Dasgupta at (617) 645-0358 or moneesha.dasgupta2@mass.gov.

The Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center at Worcester is located at 3 Paul Clancy Way, Worcester.

Mill to Meadow
Saturday, Aug. 22, 2 – 3

p.m. The land on which the Visitor Center stands was once the largest factory complex in Worcester — and now not a single building remains! In this short walk, find out about “brownfield” reclamation on site and how it fits into the Blackstone Valley’s environmental renaissance. Appropriate for ages 12 and up. About ¼ mile over paved surfaces.

Visitor Center Exhibit Tour

Saturdays, 11 – 11:30 a.m.

Join us on a tour of the Heritage Center’s exhibit hall! Learn how the Blackstone Canal helped transform Worcester from a sleepy county seat to a thriving industrial city and hub for immigration and innovation. Appropriate for ages 6 and up.

GRANT

continued from page A1

Health Foundation for the first time.

“We are proud to support these ten organizations during this crucial moment,” said Dr. Amie Shei, president and CEO of The Health Foundation. “The Activation Fund grant is designed to help community organizations advance their work in bold and sustainable ways. This year’s recipients have earned the trust of the communities they serve and are providing vital services across Central Massachusetts.”

The grant awards, totaling \$1,018,398, are as follows:

Ascentria Care Alliance - \$85,036 to create a regional Memory Care Center of Excellence by training staff and up to three partnering community organizations as certified dementia care trainers and integrating evidence-based practices into its ongoing workforce development model.

Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance - \$118,411 to furnish and equip its new Resource Center in Worcester, providing people experiencing homelessness with access to showers,

laundry, rest space, and supportive services.

Community Harvest Project - \$101,980 to build a second protected growing tunnel and upgrade irrigation at its North Grafton farm, enabling the organization to grow more fresh produce year-round for hunger relief partners across Central Massachusetts.

Community Health Connections - \$124,875 to renovate counseling and group spaces adjacent to its Children’s Behavioral Health Clinic in downtown Fitchburg for an intensive youth behavioral health day treatment program serving ages 12-21 that aims to reduce strain on local hospital emergency departments.

Growing Places - \$113,096 to add a loading dock and ramp and convert unfinished classrooms into office space at its Gardner Regional Food Center, improving local food aggregation, production, distribution, and coordination.

Our Bright Future - \$125,000 to install a fire sprinkler system in its newly purchased Southbridge Innovation Hub, allowing the organization to open a centralized youth development and educational center serving up to

1,000 students each year through STEM education, workforce development, social-emotional learning, and community programming.

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts - \$114,000 to renovate the space and improve security at its Worcester health center, creating additional patient consultation rooms and expanding access to reproductive health services in a safe, secure environment. Project Just Because - \$40,000 to upgrade loading docks and purchase new warehouse equipment. These improvements will reduce the physical workload on staff and volunteers while increasing safety, efficiency, and the organization’s ability to distribute food and essential items to families in need.

South Middlesex Opportunity Council - \$75,000 to renovate its Chandler Street Women’s Services Center in Worcester, expanding capacity for the women’s emergency shelter by about 40 percent in response to rising community needs.

Wayside Youth & Family Support Network - \$121,000 to purchase furnishings and essential equipment for a new, expanded Charlton

Community Services site that triples the organization’s footprint in the community and supports the full implementation of its MassHealth Community Service Agency contract serving 27 South County communities.

About The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts

The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts is dedicated to improving the health of those who live or work in Central Massachusetts, with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations and unmet needs. Through its unique and impactful approach to grantmaking, The Health Foundation supports community-identified health issues, with health defined broadly to include social determinants of health and with a focus on promoting health equity. As a health conversion foundation launched in 1999 following the sale of the not-for-profit HMO Central Massachusetts Health Care Inc., The Health Foundation’s grants have totaled over \$62 million to 250 unique organizations over its history. For more information, visit www.thfcm.org.



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Webster - 24 Cooper Rd
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Ruth Wells Center spotlights life and work of Michel Merle

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Ruth Wells Center for the Arts, 111 Main St. in Southbridge, is excited to present a retrospective of the life and works of Michel Merle. The galleries will be open throughout the month Saturday and Sunday noon to 4 p.m. Please join us to celebrate his works, meet the artist and share refreshments in this historic setting. All are welcome.

The artwork of Michel Duncan Merle

serves as a vibrant and provocative crossroads where legendary artistic heritage meets decades of technical mastery.

A native Parisian born in 1937, Merle spent more than three decades as a Professor of Art at Worcester State University in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he taught generations of students to view creation through an alternative or philosophical lens. Artistic practice and innovation run deep-



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ly in his veins: Merle is the son of artist and gallery owner, Ligoa Duncan, the grandson of artist and philosopher Raymond Duncan, and the great-nephew of modern dance pioneer and virtuoso Isadora Duncan. Merle's extensive studies, from the Akademia Raymond Duncan in Paris to the Instituto Allende in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where he earned an MFA in Sculpture and Painting, reflects a global, lifelong commitment to the avant-garde.

Merle has participated in a myriad of artistic organizations and collaborations over the years, including: Grove Street Gallery (co-founder/co-curator); Noh Place Artists Cooperative (board of directors/performer); Forbidden Poets (piano/spoken word); WCUW 91.3 FM (radio show featuring The Stranger and Think Tank Tango); Worcester County Poetry Association (for-

mer president); and a variety of performances and contributions as a member of Worcester Artist Group, Invented Thing Quartet, Theater Now, and Kasner Gooch Multimedia.

Merle is also the author of a volume of cut-up poems, "Glass Bedding" (North American Editions) and continues to produce poems/art in this fashion. More recently, he produced collages in response to a series of René Magritte-inspired poems by Stephen Campiglio, as part of a multimedia manuscript, including the work of two other artists, Andres Juarez and Jennifer Forest, entitled "Other Turns."

The Ruth Wells Art Center exhibition invites viewers to experience a brilliant collection that honors Michel's family's historic legacy, while celebrating his own distinct, thought-provoking aesthetic.

Free concert at Jacob Edwards Library

SOUTHBRIDGE — The StarCats jazz trio will perform a free concert called Day Dream at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday Aug. 20 at the Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge.

A delightfully eclectic New England jazz trio, the StarCats was formed in 2017 by vocalist Sarah Clay with the vision to make jazz more fun, accessible, and entertaining for everyone. The StarCats create a new themed concert program each year. For 2026, the StarCats present Day Dream. Where do you go when your mind wanders? Sweet reverie, thoughts of love? Or rueful rumination? There's music for every mood.

Inspired by the public outreach of Winton Marsalis, the vocal brilliance of Ella Fitzgerald, and the humor of Mose Allison, the StarCats intertwine standards by greats like Duke Ellington and Thelonius Monk, Bossa Nova by Jobim, and arrangements of Stevie Wonder, Sarah Bareilles, Joni Mitchell and Soundgarden. You'll hear swinging Retro-pop, spicy Latin rhythms, soul-aching ballads and mellow blues.

Sarah Clay (vocals/flute) thrills with expressive, crystalline tone and sultry flute. Bob Ferrier (guitar) sparks joy with



tasty chords and playful improvisation. Steve Bulmer (upright bass) lays down a sweet, rhythmic groove that soothes the soul.

"The StarCats are magnificent! Sarah's scat and flawless range... ingenious bass riffs... fingers dancing up down the guitar... I left inspired and uplifted," says Rev. Pirtle, Westhampton.

The StarCats have performed at the Northampton Jazz Festival, the Litchfield Sunrise Concert Series, the Pittsfield Jazz Festival, the 1794 Meetinghouse, Workshop 13, Summer on Strong Street Festival, the Westfield Athenaeum, the Berkshire Athenaeum, and more.

This concert is supported in part by a grant from the Southbridge Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

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