



PUTNAM VILLAGER

©2026, Issue #4

Friday, January 30, 2026

Serving Putnam since 2005

Complimentary to homes by request

Shephard, Vogt inducted into CT Veterans Hall of Fame



Everett Shepard III of Woodstock is congratulated on his induction during last week's ceremony.



Sherri Vogt of Brooklyn is honored at last week's induction ceremony.

Early PFAS testing shows positives in Rogers

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

KILLINGLY — PFAS testing continues to expand in the Rogers area of Killingly as the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection continues to try to narrow down a source or cause of the contamination.

Since beginning PFAS testing in 2025, over a hundred homes have been contacted for potential well testing with many recent tests coming back positive for the “forever chemical” often associated with numerous household products and firefighting foam. During a Town Council meeting in December, it was revealed that state officials have unofficially ruled out the local fire department training site as a cause of the contamination believing the source to be industrial, but as of January a precise cause had not been determined.

Town Manager Brian Palaia provided an update to the Town Council on Jan. 13, reporting that 113 homes had been contacted for potential testing, and 66 had already tested positive. None of these recent tests have helped determine the exact source of contamination.

Turn To TESTING page A11

BY JASON BLEAU
VILLAGER —
CORRESPONDENT

REGION — Two local veterans have been inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame as part of a 14-member class recognized on Thursday, Jan. 22.

Inducted as part of the 21st Hall of Fame Class were Everett Shepard III of Woodstock and Sherri Vogt of Brooklyn, both veterans of the U.S. Army. In a statement prior to the ceremony which announced the full class in January, Gov. Ned Lamont commented on the significant achievement these veterans had accomplished and their undying dedication to their country.

“The Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame celebrates the many veterans from Connecticut

who have gone above and beyond in their service to our nation by continuing to contribute to our communities in so many ways, even after leaving the military,” Lamont said in a release. “These veterans answered the call to serve our nation and then returned home to continue strengthening our state through leadership, advocacy, and civic engagement. This class of inductees reflects the values of dedication and selflessness that define Connecticut.”

Everett Shepard III has a long history in the Quiet Corner, born in Putnam and eventually settling in Woodstock. However, his youth took him through several schools due to his father's career as a navy pilot, eventually graduating high school in Virginia. Shephard followed his father's lead by joining

the U.S. Army in 1967 and serving until 1970 as a military intelligence coordinator at the Army Intelligence School. He eventually graduated from Nichols College in Dudley and became a computer programmer before he worked as Connecticut Department adjunct. He has also been an active member of the Woodstock community as a past member of the town's Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, and Board of Finance.

He joined the American Legion Benson-Flugel Post 111 in Woodstock in 1976, and became an honorary life member serving four terms as Post Commander and 4th District Commander, Department Commander, and Department Adjutant. Most recently he served as national sergeant-at-arms of The American Legion

from 2024 until August 2025. He still serves as adjutant and treasurer of the Tri-Town American Legion Baseball program and continues to serve the district as judge advocate and the department as chair of the Convention and Conferences Committee and as president of the Connecticut American Legion Foundation.

Sherri Vogt knew that the armed forces were destiny for her. Inspired by her father's patriotism and service in the 173 Airborne Brigade as well as both of her grandfathers who served in World War I and World War II, she enlisted in the Army at 17 years old in 1986. While this service was a forgone conclusion for her at a young age, it would serve to inspire outside careers and involvement in her community as she sought to make a difference in the

lives of those around her, especially the generations of the future.

After a visit to the Berlin Wall in 1989, Vogt was inspired to become a teacher to spread the values of democracy. She became a history teacher after graduating from Eastern Connecticut State University and became a volunteer for the local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. But her mission didn't end there. She eventually moved from teaching to the larger stage of state politics working in the Norwich District Office for Congressman Joe Courtney and eventually was asked by Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty to serve as a liaison for veterans and military service members and families. She helped form ideas for federal

Turn To VETERANS page A11

Killingly teen named Division 1 Young Marine of the Year



Courtesy

Mason Steele of Killingly has been named Division 1 Young Marine of the Year. He will compete with Young Marines from five other divisions for the title of National Young Marine of the Year to be awarded in March.

KILLINGLY — The Young Marines, a national youth organization, has selected Mason Steele, 16, of Killingly as

its Division 1 Young Marine of the Year.

A member of the Natchaug River Young Marines in Danielson, Steele has been part of the program for seven years. He is currently a junior at Bacon Academy in Colchester. He will now advance to compete against five other division winners for the title of National Young Marine of the Year, the organization's highest individual honor.

As Division 1 Young Marine of the Year, Young Marine Sgt. Major Steele will spend the next year traveling throughout the division to lead, motivate, and serve as a role model for fellow Young Marines. Division 1 encompasses 40 units across 13 states and the District of Columbia.

The Young Marines organization is divided into six divisions nationwide. Division Young Marine of the Year candidates must meet demanding standards, including graduation from Advanced Leadership School at the National Leadership Academy, strong academic performance, and exceptional mentoring skills and physical fitness. The National Young Marine of the Year will be selected at the Young Marines 2026 Awards Banquet on March 13, 2026, at the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport—Herndon.

Founded as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) youth education and service organization, the Young Marines program serves boys and

Turn To STEELE page A11

WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors team recognized as 2025 Five Star Wealth Managers

POMFRET CENTER/TOLLAND — WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors (WHZ) is proud to announce that Jim Zahansky, AWMA®; Laurence Hale, AAMS®, CRPS®; and Leisl L. Langevin, CFP®, CDEA® have once again been named Five Star Wealth Managers by Connecticut Magazine and Five Star Professional. This recognition marks 11 consecutive years in which every eligible advisor on the WHZ team has earned the Five Star Wealth Manager distinction, underscoring the firm's continued commitment to delivering exceptional, client-centered wealth management.

The Five Star Wealth Manager Award is based on a rigorous, multifaceted research process that evaluates candidates using criteria such as industry experience, professional credentials, client retention, and regulatory history. A total of 3,641 Connecticut-area advisors were considered for the 2025 award; 236 advisors (6.5 percent) were recognized. Wealth managers do not pay a fee to be considered or selected for



the award, although a fee is paid for use of marketing materials. The award is not indicative of future performance, and individual client experiences may vary.

“This recognition reflects

Turn To WHZ page A11

It takes a village...



Jane Rider (left), Foundation President, sharing a laugh with Sandra Ahola about some of the memories they shared over the years serving on the board together as she presents Ahola the Founder's Spirit Award.

Courtesy

REGION — To keep an all volunteer, not for profit foundation like the Windham County 4-H Foundation viable and successful year after year. As is our custom at our annual meeting in January, we take the time to recognize the contributions made by our many volunteers, on the board and in the community over the past year.

The 2025 Community Spirit awards were given to Rich Tompson, Johnson Electric, Ben Buell and Dave Sirrine. Rich is a camper parent and has contributed his time and HVAC expertise to repair air handlers in the lodge and fix the lack of heat connection to the basement. Paul Johnson of Johnson Electric has been on speed dial for many years to handle electrical emergencies. We appreciate his dedication and rapid service and wish him the best in his retirement. Ben Buell is a former camper, his wife is on the board and we seem to find lots of building projects and pond maintenance he can help with. That is his trailer that we use for the Razzle Dazzle Light parade every year. Dave Sirrine is another board member's husband that pitches in. He created an online scheduling program for our camp that is a life-saver and provides tech support at all hours of the day or night. He also keeps staff morale up with his Sunday night deliveries of homemade chocolate chip cookies and other sweet treats.

We are very grateful to these community partners, and appreciate the opportunity to acknowledge their support.

The Founder's Spirit Award is given to one board member who goes "above and beyond" in their commitment to the organization, exemplifying the spirit of the original founders. This year, Sandra Ahola received this recognition. Ahola has been on the board for forty five year and served as Treasurer for the Foundation since 2001. In that time, she has spent uncountable hours fulfilling those fiduciary responsibilities and still keeps a smile on her face. She is retiring from the Treasurer's position this year, but not from the Foundation Board. You can still expect to see her at the cashier's desk at the annual auction, or off picking up furniture or plants for the tag sale in her husband's farm truck. This is a special award, definitely earned by this special lady.

Certificates of service were presented to the following board members: For five years of service – Judy Buell, Dan and Jessica Tracey, Jane and Ron Smith, and Margaret Varga. For ten years – Steve Curry and Susan Shanahan. For fifteen years – John Dinsdale. For thirty years – Eileen Fritz and Barry and Jane Rider. For forty-five plus years – Sandra Ahola and Mary Seguire. For fifty plus years - Carol Hagan. That adds up to 295 years of service just from this group alone! With support from community members as well, over 4,000 hours of volunteer service were donated last year to Foundation activities and property maintenance. We are extremely grateful to our village.

University of Hartford students named to Dean's and President's Lists

WEST HARTFORD — The University of Hartford is pleased to announce that 2,327 students have been named to the Dean's List and President's List for the spring 2025 semester.

The Dean's List recognizes students achieving superior academic standing. The requirement, with some exceptions, is a grade point average of at least 3.0 and no grade below C.

The President's List recognizes a select group of students reaching the highest level of academic standing. To be placed on the President's List, students must maintain a GPA of at least a 3.75 and receive grades of C or better.

Among those recognized are:

Javier Dejesus of North Grosvenordale - Dean's List

Brooke Fettig of Thompson - Dean's List and President's List

Addy Beausoleil of Eastford - Dean's List and President's List

Ella Lach of Pomfret Center - Dean's List

Nicholas Halloran of Woodstock - Dean's List and President's List

Bailey Nordman of Woodstock - Dean's List and President's List

Madison Brown of Woodstock Valley - Dean's List

Alayla Gebo of Brooklyn - Dean's List and President's List

Jack Wiggin of Brooklyn - Dean's List

Jill Wiggin of Brooklyn - Dean's List

Annika Leboeuf of Dayville - Dean's List and President's List

Congratulations to 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.

Area residents named to dean's list at Quinnipiac University

HAMDEN — Timothy Mozzi of Pomfret Center, Lilah Moran of Putnam, and Ava Simoes of Woodstock Valley were named to the dean's list for the Fall 2025 semester at Quinnipiac University:

To qualify for the dean's list, students must earn a grade point average of at least 3.5 with no grade lower than C. Full-time students must complete at least 14 credits in a semester, with at least 12 credits that have been graded on a letter grade basis to be eligible. Part-time students must complete at least six credits during a semester. Names followed by an asterisk denotes with honors.

About Quinnipiac University

Quinnipiac is a private, coeducational institution located 90 minutes north of New York City and two hours from Boston. The university enrolls 9,700 students in more than 100 degree programs through its Schools of Business, Communications, Education, Computing and Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Medicine, Nursing and the College of Arts & Sciences. Quinnipiac is ranked 51st in The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse "2026 Best Colleges in the U.S." and is also recognized by U.S. News & World Report and The Princeton Review's "The Best 391 Colleges." The university is expanding innovative programs for both traditional and adult learners and developing dynamic corporate partnerships. Quinnipiac recently completed a significant capital expansion on its main campus, including a state-of-the-art new School of Business and an interdisciplinary science and innovation hub. For more information, please visit qu.edu. Connect with Quinnipiac on Facebook and Instagram and follow Quinnipiac on X @QuinnipiacU.

Local student explores healthcare in Japan

BOSTON, Mass. — Nursing student Elizabeth Walker of Thompson recently gained a wider perspective on trends in healthcare through a 10-day trip to Japan organized by Emmanuel College.

Walker and 20 other students explored cultural, historical, and medical sites through the journey, with stops in Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Osaka to visit healthcare facilities, Sensoji Temple, Hiroshima Castle, and more.

The trip was organized by the Maureen Murphy Wilkens School of Nursing & Clinical Sciences at Emmanuel College and the Emmanuel International Studies program, which promotes service and peace by building increased understanding of how cultures and beliefs interact on an international scale.

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

Local student earns Dean's List recognition at Norwich University

NORTHFIELD, Vt. — Norwich University is pleased to announce that Gunnar Basak of Woodstock has earned Dean's List honors for the Fall 2025 semester. Founded in 1819, Norwich University is recognized for its emphasis on experiential education and leadership development.

Dean's List recognition is awarded to full-time undergraduate students who achieve a semester grade point average of 3.4 or higher, acknowledging sustained academic achievement and dedication to scholarly success.

About Norwich University


Norwich University is a diversified academic institution that educates traditional-age students and adults in a Corps of Cadets and as civilians. Norwich offers a broad selection of traditional and distance-learning programs culminating in baccalaureate and graduate degrees. Norwich University was founded in 1819 by Captain Alden Partridge of the U.S. Army and is the oldest private military college in the United States of America. Norwich is one of our nation's six senior military colleges and the birthplace of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). www.norwich.edu

Vermont State University congratulates Tommy Blevins for earning President's List honors!

RANDOLPH CENTER, Vt. — Vermont State University is pleased to recognize Tommy Blevins, of Brooklyn, for earning a place on the President's List for Fall 2025.

This highest academic distinction honors fulltime students who achieved a 4.0 semester grade point average. Congratulations!

Vermont State University provides a high-quality, flexible, and affordable education for students seeking associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees, certificates, and in-demand professional credentials. The university builds upon a history of public higher education in Vermont dating back to 1787. More information about Vermont State University can be found at: VermontState.edu.



ARTHRITIS?

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

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

Charles A. Birbara, MD
Associate Professor of Medicine, Umass-Chan Medical School
25 Oak Ave., Worcester, MA 01605 508-799-2674
"Committed to Advancing appropriate care to people with arthritis"



TO PLACE A BUSINESS AD:
MIKAELA VICTOR
RETAIL ADVERTISING
860-928-1818 EXT. 313
mikaela@villagernewspapers.com
SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:
KERRI PETERSON
860-928-1818, EXT. 303
kerri@stonebridgepress.news
TO PRINT AN OBITUARY:
E-MAIL
obits@stonebridgepress.news
CALL: 860-928-4215
OR send to Villager, P.O. Box 90,
Southbridge, MA 01550
**TO SUBMIT A LETTER
TO THE EDITOR: OR PRESS
RELEASE**
E-MAIL:
brendan@villagernewspapers.com
OR send to Villager, P.O. Box 90,
Southbridge, MA 01550

**VILLAGER NEWSPAPERS
PUBLISHED BY STONEBRIDGE PRESS**

PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER
FRANK C. CHILINSKI
Frank@salmonpress.news

BUSINESS MANAGER
RYAN CORNEAU
860-928-1818 EXT. 102
ryan@salmonpress.news

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
JIM DINICOLA
508-764-6102
jdinicola@stonebridgepress.com

EDITOR
BRENDAN BERUBE
860-928-1818, EXT. 303
brendan@villagernewspapers.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER
JULIE CLARKE
860-928-1818, EXT. 305
julie@villagernewspapers.com

The Putnam Villager (USPS 025-154) is published weekly by Stonebridge Press, 10A Beeches Ln, Woodstock Ct 06281. Periodical postage paid at Putnam, CT and additional mailing office(s). POSTMASTER: send address changes to Villager Newspapers c/o Stonebridge Press, P.O. Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550.

Scramble the Duck, Eastford’s weather predictor, to make annual prognostication

EASTFORD — Scramble the Duck’s handlers are excited to share that Scramble will once again appear to make his annual prediction. Scramble the Duck, who holds a perfect accuracy record in contrast to all groundhogs, will predict whether the following months will be marked by spring or winter weather. Scramble’s prediction will be announced on Feb. 2 at 7:30 a.m. at Eastford’s Ivy Glenn Memorial.

The event, which is known as Duck Day, has become a town tradition over the past decade. Locals enjoy gathering to hear Scramble’s long-awaited announcement, which anticipates how to prepare for the coming months. Scramble follows a method very similar to many groundhogs. If he sees his shadow, he will forecast another six weeks of winter. If he does not find any shadow, he will predict an early spring. A poetic scroll will be read by Scramble’s duck-speaking handlers to announce his findings.

Unlike any groundhog, however, Scramble’s past record is marked by a perfect accuracy record. Scramble, who maintains a close eye on the weather and performs cutting edge, up-to-date meteorological research at Stormy Heights Academy, promises that this year’s prediction will be similarly accurate. Scramble will choose one of the two scrolls himself, which will declare his careful, accurate prediction.

Fans are invited to watch Scramble at the event, which will be held at the Ivy Glenn Memorial, located at 179 Route 198. For those not able to attend in person, the event will also be live streamed at scrambleduck.org/livestream.

Regis College students named to Fall Dean’s List

WESTON, Mass. — Regis College today recognizes students whose academic excellence and commitment to learning have earned them a place on the fall 2025 Dean’s List.

To qualify for the Dean’s List, students must earn a GPA of 3.5 or higher. First-year students qualify with a GPA of 3.25 or higher.

“Earning recognition on the Dean’s List reflects the discipline, curiosity, and perseverance students bring to their academic work,” said Mary Erina Driscoll, PhD, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. “At Regis, learning is not just about mastering coursework but about developing the intellectual rigor and sense of purpose that will guide students long after graduation.”

Founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph nearly a century ago, Regis College educates students to lead with integrity, purpose, and com-

passion. Through an inclusive and innovative learning community, Regis prepares graduates to build meaningful careers and make a positive impact in the world.

The university congratulates the following students on this significant achievement:

Shannon Cuniff, of Woodstock. Salena Thongsouvanh, of Danielson.

Area residents named to Dean’s List at University of New England

BIDDEFORD/PORTLAND, Maine — Fiona Rigney of Woodstock has been named to the University of New England’s Dean’s List for the fall semester 2025. Dean’s List students have attained a grade point average of 3.3 or better out of a possible 4.0 at the end of the semester.

The University of New England is Maine’s largest independent university, with two beautiful coastal campuses in Maine, a one-of-a-kind study-abroad campus in Tangier, Morocco, and an array of flexible online offerings. In an uncommonly welcoming and supportive community, we offer hands-on learning, empowering students to make a positive impact in a world full of challenges. We are the state’s top provider of health professionals and home to Maine’s only medical and dental colleges, a variety of other interprofessionally aligned health care programs, and nationally recognized programs in the marine sciences, the natural and social sciences, business, the humanities, and the arts. Visit www.une.edu.

Springfield College recognizes Dean’s List students

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Springfield College Recognizes Dean’s List Students for the 2025 Fall Semester.

Springfield College has named Aurissa Boardman from Brooklyn to the dean’s list for academic excellence for the 2025 fall semester.

Boardman has a primary major of Education.

Springfield College has named Carah Bruce from Woodstock Valley to the dean’s list for academic excellence for the 2025 fall semester.

Bruce has a primary major of Psychology.

The criteria for selection to the Dean’s List are as follows: The student must have completed a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded coursework for the term, exclusive of “P” grades. The student must not have any incompletes or missing grades in the designated term. The student must have a minimum semester grade average of 3.500 for the term. Student must not have been barred from Dean’s List due to disciplinary action.

Heidi Clyne named to Dean’s List at University of Maryland Global Campus

ADELPHI, Md. — Heidi Clyne of Woodstock was named to the Dean’s List for the fall 2025 term at University of Maryland Global Campus. To be eligible for the honor, a student must complete at least six credits during the term, earned a grade point average of at least 3.5 for the term, and maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.5 at UMGC.

University of Maryland Global Campus was founded more than 75 years ago specifically to serve the higher education needs of working adults and military servicemembers. Today, UMGC is the largest provider of postsecondary education in Maryland and continues its global tradition with online and hybrid courses, more than 175 classroom and service locations worldwide, and more than 135 degrees and certificates backed by the reputation of a state university and the University System of Maryland. For more information, visit umgc.edu.

WANTED TO BUY

Antiques & Old Stuff

- Bottles • Crocks •Jugs •Costume Jewelry • Pottery •Toys
- Games • Glassware •Sterling Silver • Coins • Gold
- Silver Plated Items •Watches •Typewriters •Sewing Machines
- Tools • Radios • Clocks • Lanterns •Lamps • Kitchenware
- Cookware •Knives •Hunting • Fishing • Military • Masonic
- Fire Dept • Advertising Signs & Much More

CALL DONALD ROY 860-874-8396

THE SIDING STORE INC.

Siding • Roofing • Windows • Decks • Sunrooms

WINTER SPECIALS

NOW IN EFFECT

\$\$\$\$

Financing available to qualified customers!

thesidingstoreinc.com

860.423.7771 860.963.9035

860.886.1718 860.564.7088

References Galore • Fully Licensed • Senior Discounts • Lead Safe

Better Hearing Dream Team!



Ralph Campagna, BC-HIS Stephanie Balducci, AuD Doctor of Audiology Jim Verge, BC-HIS

Call **860-315-9656** to schedule a hearing evaluation.


Let us check your insurance benefit. We are providers for: Anthem BCBS, United Healthcare, Aetna, Connecticare, Humana, Wellcare, Care Partners, Cigna, CT Medicaid, etc.

amplisound

HEARING CARE CENTERS

19 Quinebaug Ave, Putnam
351 Merline Road, Vernon
www.amplisound.com

Truly Holistic



WHZ, I've been able to navigate career moves and balance competing priorities while always feeling comfortable that my family's plan remains on track.

Thank you!

Dave


Absolute Confidence. Unwavering Partnership. For Life.

Visit whzwealth.com to read more about Dave's story

(860) 928-2341
697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret Center, CT 06259
392-A Merrow Road, Tolland, CT 06084

WHZ
STRATEGIC WEALTH ADVISORS

This statement was provided 3/14/2024 by David Farnum who is a client. The image shown is a model and not the actual client. This statement may not be representative of the experience of others and is not a guarantee of future performance or success. For additional reviews, search us wherever local businesses are reviewed. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Advisor.



P.O. Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550

TELEPHONE: (860) 928-1818
FAX: (860) 928-5946
WWW.VILLAGERNEWSPAPERS.COM

FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

When small errands mean something more

There is a rhythm to daily life in Northeastern Connecticut that often goes unnoticed until it changes. A quick stop at the post office. A familiar face behind the counter at the hardware store. A few minutes spent chatting in line at the pharmacy. None of it seems remarkable, and yet it is exactly these ordinary moments that quietly define how small towns work.

In larger places, errands are transactions. You go in, you get out, and you move on. Here, they are interactions. They are where neighbors exchange updates about family members, ask after one another’s health, or quietly check in on someone who has not been seen for a few days. Over time, those small exchanges form a web of awareness and care that no formal system could ever replace.

Local businesses play an outsized role in this rhythm. The clerk who notices when a regular has not stopped in for a while. The café owner who knows which customers prefer a booth near the window. The librarian who asks about a child’s reading project weeks after it was mentioned. These are not just niceties. They are signs of belonging.

Even our public spaces reflect this dynamic. Town halls, libraries, senior centers, and schools are not just buildings with schedules and agendas. They are places where people linger. A meeting may end, but the conversation continues in the hallway. A program wraps up, but no one rushes out the door. The value lies as much in the connection as in the purpose of the visit.

This matters more than we sometimes realize. In a time when so much of life is conducted through screens and automated systems, the chance to be recognized and remembered carries real weight. It reminds us that we are not anonymous here. We are known.

That sense of familiarity does not happen by accident. It is sustained by people who choose to stay local, shop local, and show up for one another in small, consistent ways. It is sustained when we take an extra moment to speak, listen, or ask a simple question instead of rushing on.

The strength of our towns is not measured only in budgets, buildings, or long-term plans. It is measured in these everyday interactions that quietly knit us together. When we value them, we preserve something rare and deeply worth keeping.

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

Opinion and commentary from the Quiet Corner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Woodstock: Happy New Year

To the Editor:

Woodstock property owners finally received their supplemental tax bills the week ending the 11th of January and due by the end of January – tax bills amended as of Dec. 18 – so now, taxpayers can see what last year’s increase actually cost them. If you pay through your mortgage/bank, you can look up on-line and see what you will pay. Remember, you get to pay this now, and then it just rolls right into the bill you will get in June. And then you will get an adjustment reflecting the change in your assessment due to the revaluation.

For a couple of people who talked to me, their bills due this month just for primary residences, were up \$270 and \$330, and in these cases their assessments went up 41 and 44 percent, respectively, so they were looking for some idea of the impact of this. As I outlined in my last letter, the town assessor tells me the average (preliminary) increase for the town was 31 percent, so if this holds in the two cases, they can expect an additional increase of in case 1 of 10 percent/1.31 or 7.6 percent and for the other 13 percent/1.31 or 9.99 percent; or more clearly, an additional \$330

and \$550 respectively come June. And we’re not done. See, the Board of Finance has given the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education guidelines for this year budget increase of 4 percent - see the December minutes. This will tack on an additional \$200-\$300. What a deal. Think about it: in one case, they can expect to see their primary residence property tax increase around \$800 in one year. In the other, almost \$1,200. And remember, this is after a roughly 24 percent increase over the last four years. These are daunting numbers to many but still just the tip of the iceberg. The underlying problem is spending is increasing at an unsustainable rate and the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, Board of Education seem to be oblivious. Where will this end? No one knows. The “Bowen Fund” kicks in in ’27, and will bring some relief, but realistically can’t keep up with the spender’s ability to spend. It will fall to the voters to take charge and simply start saying “No,” emphatically.

Now, if this doesn’t motivate you to start paying attention and voting, I’m not sure what will.

DAVE RICHARDSON
WOODSTOCK

Defying federal authorities is a tragic mistake

To the Editor:

The opening up our southern border and admitting upwards of 15 million illegals into our country is considered by many as Biden Inc.’s abdication of American sovereignty. Most everyone knows their actions were intended to bring in millions of “new neighbors” and secure them as Democrat voters and hold one party power in the USA: hopefully forever.

President Trump campaigned on and won the Presidency largely by promising to fix the illegals situation that Biden Inc. created. And that is precisely what the President is doing now with ICE and other enforcement officials. However, the craziness and violence currently going on in many blue precincts is simply the left’s efforts to keep their “new neighbors”/new voters. And as federal agents and civilian investigators also

discover billions of fraud dollars going to old and new neighbors in blue cities and states, it seems Democrat management steers clear of “best practices.” And blue “sanctuary city” officials and citizens are in violation of the Constitution’s Supremacy Clause when they impede federal officials’ actions to correct illegal alien violations and government welfare fraud issues.

History reminds us that Civil War kinetic action began after those in Charleston, S.C.’s Fort Moultrie began defying federal mandates and started bombarding federal troops on Fort Sumpter’s island. Those currently defying and attacking ICE and other federal enforcement officials in our blue precincts are repeating a tragic mistake.

ED CLEMENT
THOMPSON

Mr. Day’s hypocrisy

media have turned what they’re referring to as being “a murder,” and whatever their version of a “peaceful protest” now is into a “take and run with” talking point, and Mr. Day, Jr. did just that. (And whatever happened to “mostly peaceful?”) Taking flak for my opinion is one thing, but accusing me of doing what you yourself are doing is hypocritical.

End of chapter. (Jab intended.)

ED DELUCA
NORTH GROSVENORDALE

Trump takes lessons from the wrong Wizard

To the Editor:

The moral of the 1939 classic film “The Wizard of Oz” is that a trinket is not necessary to define one’s character. A diploma did not make the Scarecrow any smarter, the Tin Man was compassionate with or without a heart, and a medal was not what made the Lion a brave hero.

All this seems to have been lost on President Trump, who probably was more enamored by the pretty emerald horse carriages or smitten by a young Judy Garland. In other words, receiving the physical Noble Peace Prize medal from its true recipient, or on Ebay for that matter, does not make one a winner. For reference, the only other man in history to be bestowed another winner’s Nobel Peace medal was Nazi leader Joseph Goebbels (the one who helped orchestrate the Holocaust). And Trump not only kept it, he then proceeded to write a letter to the Norwegian president saying that their government was to blame for the faux pas (not true the Nobel committee makes this decision), and that the slight will make him “...no longer feel an obligation to think purely of Peace.” All of this shows that the man is not only undeserving, it demonstrates the emotional intelligence of, a, well, whatever the antonym of the word genius is.

Of course, Mr. Trump was never a “man of Peace.” Nor did he end eight wars, and even if he did, the award is for the effort. The real winner, Maria Corina Machado, never actually succeeded in getting elected nor ousting the Venezuelan dictator, Nicholas Maduro (Mr. Trump, of course, did this without changing the regime and with killing at least 75 bystanders). One wonders whether Mother Theresa would have threatened the Nobel committee with kicking her lepers out on the street before she was recognized (or the Catholic Church for not guaranteeing that she would be anointed Sainthood posthumously). Maybe this will be brought up in Trump’s next communication with Pope Leo.

Now Trump is ratcheting up his global bullying. He has already declared himself President of Venezuela despite never having set foot in the country and supporting the current president rather than the man who is actually recognized as the victor of the last election. He is threatening to invade Panama and Cuba, as well as coerce Canada into joining the US. He is also the new Chairman of the Gaza Board of Peace. It’s a

wonder he has time to golf let alone run an executive branch with the mission to Make America Great Again. But the most contentious deed is his declaring that the Greenland needs to be part of the US to ensure world safety. More heinous is that the threat is being delivered to our most trusted allies.

This is wrong. First, the US already has a 1951 treaty to place as many military bases in Greenland as it sees fit. He argues that without a strong US presence, Russia or China will surely invade. Well, Russia would have to create a supply line thousands of miles long over the Arctic Circle to do this. There could be no secret invasion, especially with the country tied up with a real war in Ukraine. And China is on the opposite end of the globe. In addition, since Greenland is part of Denmark and Denmark is part of NATO, any action would immediately lead to a pan-European, as well a US, response. It’s farcical that Trump could even ponder any of this. Finally, there is a 1916 treaty between Denmark and America, after the US purchased what is now the US Virgin Islands, “that the US Government would not object to the Danish Government extending their political and economic interest to the whole of Greenland.” But Trump has proven that America’s word is worthless.

Trump wants to increase the US defense budget 50 percent, to \$1.5 trillion to fund his mad schemes. All on our own. Engaging close allies ensures our domestic tranquility at a fraction of this cost. Treaties are also good for the economy which is tanking due to his tariffs and harsh anti-immigration policies. Indeed, he now threatens our biggest trading partner, Canada, with 100 percent tariffs should it sign a treaty with China. He ignores the fact that the reason Canada, along with other longstanding friendly markets, are looking to China is because of his restrictive trade barriers.

In the end, Trump is acting more like the Wizard from the movie “Wicked.” Vile, conniving, craving power. Eliminating his political opponents by any means necessary. Using his government and the military to harass and even murder its citizens. Living in a fantasy world filled with propaganda and lies. If only a mythical tornado could be reversed to bring a certain Witch to our world. Perhaps... Look to the Western sky.

LEE WESLER
WOODSTOCK

The Corner of Kindness

There is a small bulletin board near the exit of a local market that I pass a few times a week. Most people walk right by it. It sits a little crooked, thumbtacks holding up curling flyers that promise piano lessons, snow plowing, lost cats, church suppers, and the occasional handwritten plea that begins with “If found, please call.” It is not flashy. It does not beep or glow or scroll. But I find myself stopping there more often lately, reading it the way I once read the front porch notices tacked up at the town hall or the handwritten cards in the window of the hardware store.

That board, in its quiet way, reminds me that Northeastern Connecticut still runs on small connections.

We live in an age where almost everything is supposed to be instant. If you want to sell something, you list it online. If you need help, you send out a post. If you are lonely, you scroll. There is nothing wrong with any of that. I use plenty of modern tools myself. But there is something grounding about seeing real paper with real handwriting, tacked up by someone who took the time to walk into a building, pull out a pen, and say, “Here I am. This is what I need. This is what I can offer.”

Last week, I watched a young man study that board carefully. He stood there longer than most, phone in hand, taking pictures of a few notices. After a moment he smiled, shook his head, and said to no one in particular, “People are still doing this.” He did not say it with sarcasm. He said it with surprise, and maybe a little admiration.

I wanted to tell him that yes, people are still doing this, and in many ways they always will.

The Quiet Corner has a habit of holding on to things that matter. We hold doors. We wave at drivers we do not recognize. We shovel not just our own walkways but sometimes the neighbor’s, too. We still believe that a conversation at the post office can be as important as a hundred online comments.

There is kindness in these small routines, even when we do not label it as such.

I see it in the way folks wait patiently at the deli counter, letting the person who looks confused go first. I see it in the quiet nods exchanged at the gas pump when someone offers to hold the door open in the cold. I see it when a cashier asks, sincerely, how someone’s day is going, and then actually listens to the answer.

None of this will ever trend on the internet. It will not be shared thousands of times. But it is the glue that keeps small towns from coming apart.

I think that is why the bulletin board caught my attention in the first place. It is not just about selling a couch or finding a missing glove. It is about trust. It is about believing that if you put your name and phone number out there, someone on the other end will treat you decently. That belief is not automatic. It is built slowly, through years of shared sidewalks, shared snowstorms, shared school concerts, and shared nods in grocery store aisles.

When I was younger, my mother kept a little corkboard in the kitchen. It held phone numbers, reminders, birthday cards, and newspaper clippings she thought were worth saving. Over time it became messy and crowded, but she refused to clear it off completely. “You never know when you’ll need one of these,” she would say. What she really meant, I think, was that memories and connections should not be thrown away too quickly.

Our communities work much the same way.

We do not need to choose between old ways and new ones. There is room for both. There is room for smart-phones and handwritten

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Loving our neighbors shouldn't be a crime

To the Editor:

Enough is enough. How many more GoFundMe accounts will there be like "Support for Renee Good's Widow and Family" and "Alex Pretti is an American Hero?" What is happening in America with the federal immigration enforcement response is heartbreaking, deadly, and was unimaginable before the Trump/Vance administration.

In Connecticut, ICE activity has been reported in Stamford, Windham, East Hartford, New London, Waterbury, Willimantic, Bridgeport, New Haven and Norwich. According a 2023 Pew Research Center report, Connecticut had an estimated 150,000 unauthorized immigrants. I pray we will not suffer the same fate as our friends in Minnesota. Minnesota's unauthorized population was less than Connecticut, at about 130,000. While Florida's was an estimated 1.6 million and Texas' an estimated 2.1 million. Yet this administration is aggressively targeting Democratic-leaning states, which many see as political retribution.

The latest tragedy is the death of a U.S. citizen shot by a U.S. Border Patrol agent working with ICE in Minneapolis. Alex Jeffrey Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and lawful concealed-carry permit holder, was killed on Jan. 24. Federal officials said Pretti approached agents while armed, prompting an agent to fire. Bystander videos show him holding a cell phone with hands in the air while being pepper sprayed, violently beaten, and his holstered weapon being removed. While surrounded by six to eight agents, he was then shot at least 10 times. A doctor who attempted to help Alex stated in her affidavit that agents did not appear to check for a pulse or administer CPR. "Instead of doing either of those things, the ICE agents appeared to be counting his bullet wounds." It should be noted that in 2020 Kyle Rittenhouse (who republicans praised) carried an AR-15 rifle into a protest, fatally shooting two men and injuring a third. The Trump Administration did not label him a domestic terrorist like Alex and Renee.

The NRA has weighed in on the Alex Pretti shooting, saying that carrying a lawful concealed weapon should not be a death sentence and asserting that federal agents

are unlikely to be legally justified in shooting licensed carriers who approach them lawfully.

According to a DHS whistleblower, an internal memo to ICE and related federal officers asserts that they may use force to enter homes without a judge's warrant. Legal scholars, civil-rights groups, and critics say this practice raises serious Fourth Amendment concerns. This could lead to dangerous escalations. Federal judges in California and elsewhere have ruled that ICE and Border Patrol entries without judicial warrants violate the Constitution.

Sadly, some churches are telling parishioners to get their affairs and wills in order, saying it's time to use our bodies to stop what they call immoral government actions. Religious leaders are saying it's time to start fighting, to do Jesus's work, not just through our words. They're saying it's time to protect immigrants saying, 'Loving your neighbors is holy'. Wow! Imagine that!

We the People can stop this madness if we unite. Another Government Shutdown is looming and may happen on Friday, Jan. 30. Please call your legislators before midnight on Jan. 30 to demand common-sense reforms. Tell Congress to:

- Oppose homeland security funding for ICE and claw back and/or cancel funds (like Republicans did in 2025).
- Require full congressional oversight and transparency on enforcement tactics.
- Require mandatory congressional inspections of ICE detention facilities.
- Initiate independent investigations into the deaths of Renee Good in Minnesota, Alex Pretti in Minnesota, and Geraldo Lunas Campos in Texas.
- Restore and strengthen funding for health care access, including the Affordable Care Act, so that millions of Americans have insurance.
- Prioritize diplomacy and restraint in foreign policy, not military interventions.

Release all Epstein files and bring everyone involved in the sex trafficking of minors and the cover-up to justice.

Federal agents and pedophiles must be held accountable. Our Constitution and our communities depend on peace, justice and 'loving thy neighbor.'

LISA ARENDS
BROOKLYN

First, they came for the immigrants...

To the Editor:

Any lingering doubt that the United States is now being run by an out-of-control authoritarian regime utilizing state-sponsored violence and terrorism against its own people has been dispelled by the murder of ICU nurse Alex Pretti on the streets of Minneapolis by masked ICE agents last weekend. I was reminded immediately after hearing of the murder of the poem "First They Came" by Pastor Martin Niemoller: "First they came for the Communists/ And I did not speak out/Because I was not a Communist/Then they came..." The killing was horrible, but the lies from the Administration immediately following were telling: He was a "domestic terrorist." He was out to "massacre law enforcement." Kristi Noem, the homeland security secretary, said his motive was "to inflict maximum damage on individuals and to kill law enforcement." In fact, Pretti was going to the aid of a woman who was being pepper sprayed. It takes an extraordinary person to work

as a nurse in an ICU (as I know well as a retired ICU physician) and Preeti chose to work caring for America's veterans but has been callously smeared willy-nilly by the Administration's cowardly lies. It is important to remember that \$170 billion allocated in the Republicans' "Big Beautiful Bill" over the next four years, for the administration's brutal immigration crackdown, took money from Medicaid and multiple other programs which actually help people. That money came from your and my tax dollars. The deafening silence of Congressional Republicans, as well as Republicans across the gamut of state and local officials, has been remarkable — it is now incumbent upon each and every freedom-loving citizen, particularly those Republicans who care about the rule of law and individual liberties, to speak out against this horror. After all, first they came for the immigrants, then they came for the Democrats, then they came for...

JOHN A. DAY, JR.
WOODSTOCK VALLEY

Earth — a one percent risk!

To the Editor:

None of us who lived through it will ever forget Sept. 11, 2001. In the weeks and years that followed, the horror and heartache receded, but two enduring side effects of the day stayed with me. The first revealed itself the very next morning, as I walked to work through Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, a routine I'd followed for years. That day was different. I remember making deep eye contact with every stranger I passed. No words were exchanged—only a shared look that said we understood and felt a stronger connection with each other. We knew we were all in this together.

The second side effect was political. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration adopted an extraordinary defensive posture known as the One Percent Doctrine, championed by Vice President Dick Cheney. As Cheney put it, if there were even a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists were helping al-Qaeda develop a nuclear weapon, the United States had to treat that risk as a certainty. Americans largely agreed. Faced with an existential threat, however small the odds, we acted decisively in the name of self-preservation.

A quarter century later, humanity faces another existential threat—one scientists around the world warn could undermine the life-support systems of our planet. Unlike the sudden collapse of the Twin Towers, captured in real time and seared into our collective memory, this planetary danger advances in slow motion. It unfolds beyond easy perception, barely registering in our fear centers, and never quite commanding our attention.

Humanity's hyper consumerism, pollution and waste, known as our "ecological footprint" on the Earth has gotten so big, it now produces its own side effects that are both staggering in scale and bizarre in nature. While our oceans fill with plastic trash, tiny particles of plastic (microplastics) literally fall from the sky and pulse through our bloodstream. It is estimated each of us ingest a credit card's worth of plastic per week! At the same time, half the Earth's coral reefs have died, the Jet Stream and Gulf Stream currents are destabilizing, extreme weather events are intensifying, food systems growing more fragile, biodiversity is rapidly shrinking, forests are disappearing, and human migration, driven by mounting environmental pressure, is accelerating. The economic cost of climate change alone, now estimated globally at seven trillion dollars per year, remains largely unacknowledged by society. We must wonder: how long can Earth's life-giv-

ing systems continue to hold up under such stress?

Against this backdrop, it is difficult to comprehend the Trump administration's policies that weaken environmental protections and delay the transition to clean energy. In one recent example of profit over the planet, Trump's EPA announced it would rescind regulations for four types of "forever chemicals" in drinking water and delay the compliance deadline for two others. As the name implies, these harmful chemicals never break down in the environment, but pollute our Earth (and us) forever. This move effectively rolled back the first-ever national drinking water standards for these chemicals, which had been finalized by the Biden administration in April 2024. Just who is profiting from this and why is that profit more important than our planet's and our own health?

The Twin Towers stood for about an hour before their structural systems failed under immense stress. In real time, we saw them collapse. How long can Earth's far more intricate living systems endure the growing weight of human activity? The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we grow, and the climate we depend upon are destabilizing before our eyes and we should be very concerned.

As a matter of self-preservation, we should apply the same standard used after 9/11 and ask: are we putting the planet and ourselves at risk? What is the current risk that we will push the natural systems of the planet over the edge? Given the threats described above, few could honestly say that risk is safely below the 1 percent threshold applied after 9/11. Could the real risk be 2 percent, 5 percent, or even higher? That complex question exceeds our capacity to answer, but evidence and instinct tells us we have drifted into dangerous territory! As parents, teachers, leaders - as an intelligent species - aren't we supposed to recognize this obvious threat and move ourselves away from danger? Do we simply ignore the fact that 90 percent of the Earth's coral reefs will be dead by 2050?

Scientists across the world have been warning humanity for decades that time is running short to change course, reduce our footprint and protect our planet. Like 9/11, we're all in this together and we must demand our leaders respond to this risk with a new One Percent Doctrine - for the Earth, and our children's future. We risk everything if we don't.

KEN WOLSLEGEL
WOODSTOCK

Cell phones get to the truth of instinctive, automatic, barrage of bold faced lies

To the Editor:

Homeland Security Secretary (what a bitter joke) Kristi Noam looked straight into the TV cameras and lied outright twice in a couple weeks. We all plainly saw an ICE agent pull his gun and shoot Renee Good through her car windshield then twice more in her face through the open driver's window. Then calmly re-holster his pistol and ask another agent to call 911. Just as cool a murderer as you could ever see on TV. Secretary Noam lies, saying Good tried to run over and kill the agent.

A few weeks later, we all see footage of five agents swarming all over pepper-sprayed Alex Pretti lying on the ground

as another agent runs away holding the pistol Pretti was licensed to carry (but was not holding) as he was filming, or trying to, with his cell phone. Then the agents riddle him with 10 shots. But 'no', Secretary Noam says, flattened, swarmed over, pepper-sprayed Pretti was trying to kill the agents.

Straight out lying, repeatedly. 'Don't believe your own eyes, believe me.' Then the agents involved are hustled off, hidden, identities concealed, local cop's investigation blocked. The cover up begins under a layer of lies.

Thank goodness for citizens with cell-phones. Without them our government would get away with this instinctive, automatic, barrage of bald faced lying.

TIM McNALLY
POMFRET

CORNER
continued from page A4

notes, for digital calendars and paper flyers, for fast messages and slow conversations. The danger is not in change

itself. The danger is forgetting the value of the simple, human things that cannot be automated. So, the next time you pass one of those quiet little boards, or notice a handwritten sign taped to a window, pause for a

moment. Read it. Smile at the crooked letters. Appreciate the small courage it takes to ask for help or offer something to a stranger. In a world that moves fast, these slow, ordinary gestures

are acts of quiet kindness. And around here, in our little corner of the state, quiet kindness has always gone a long way.

Additional Letters to the Editor, See Page A-7



Community Connection



WE BUY GOLD

Trusted with Appraisals, Custom Design, Repairs, and more since 1947!

42 Central St, Southbridge MA
(508) 764-7415 | www.Cormiers.com



Crooked Creek Farm

East Brookfield, Massachusetts

Stock up now!

Retail Cuts, Quarter, & Half sides of Beef Available!

To purchase your meat packages
CALL/TEXT: (774) 200-7308
www.crookedcreekfarmma.org

FREE LOCAL DELIVERY!



Morin JEWELERS

The Jewelry store where you buy with confidence

WE BUY GOLD

Specializing in Custom Designs
All types of Jewelry Repairs

MASTER JEWELERS™
BRILLIANCE YOU DESERVE®

409 Main St. Southbridge, MA
morinjewelers.com • 508-764-7250
Located at CVS Plaza

Quest Martial Arts Master Kristin Duethorn promoted to Seventh Degree Black Belt

THOMPSON — Quest Martial Arts and the United States Goodwill Tang Soo Do Association announce the promotion of Master Kristin Duethorn to Seventh Degree Black Belt. Master Duethorn, owner and head instructor of Quest Martial Arts, continues to train and compete at national and international levels while teaching the next generation of martial artists.

Under Master Duethorn’s leadership and coaching, Quest Martial Arts has flourished into a thriving community with children, teens, and adults at all skill levels, including over 40 active black belts and senior masters who train weekly. In 2025 alone, her coaching has led the Quest competition team to three international competitions in the United Kingdom, with Quest competitors producing multiple grand champions at local, national, and international levels.

Master Duethorn serves on the board of two Tang Soo Do associations and is the highest-ranked female instructor in both organizations. Her promotion to Seventh Degree Black Belt required demonstration of teaching ability and technical expertise before a panel of grandmasters from



across the Eastern United States.

The certification process included observations of Quest masters teaching clinics, multiple demonstrations by her black belts, and Master Duethorn’s own performance and training record.

Master Duethorn invited distinguished grandmasters Grandmaster Frederick Scott (AMKOR Karate, Pennsylvania), Grandmaster Steve Voelker (Pyang Hwa Kwan, CT), and Grandmaster Wesley Jenkins (Tiger Dojang, Maryland) to sit on her panel for their dedication to the art as both teachers and practitioners, and for their high standards and character. The grandmasters are pictured below.

Quest Martial Arts focuses on developing well-rounded black belts who possess not only self-defense skills but also strong character and mental fortitude. The school’s philosophy blends traditional martial arts values with modern applications for self-defense as well as skills for achieving goals and facing life’s challenges.

Advantage Truck Group honors Putnam resident with Pete DePina Legacy Award

PUTNAM — Advantage Truck Group has named its 2025 Pete DePina Legacy Award winners, recognizing one individual at each of its eight locations across Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont for making an impact on their fellow employees, customers and the company.

Putnam resident Dan Maranda, engine shop foreman, received the legacy award for ATG’s Shrewsbury facility.

“Dan has built his career at ATG, rising steadily through the ranks into a leadership role. His commitment to our customers is unparalleled. He often stays late, long after shop operations have quieted, to ensure everything is done right and every piece of work is flawless. Beyond his technical skill, his character embodies everything ATG stands for. He is an incredible mentor, always willing to go the extra mile to share his expertise and ensure those around him succeed,” said ATG President & CEO Kevin Holmes.

The highest recognition an ATG team member can receive, this award is given annually to one team member at each of ATG’s eight locations who most embodies the values and qualities employee Napoleon “Pete” DePina was known for, including

integrity and a quiet leadership grounded in humility, generosity and selfless service to others.

“Our ability to provide the best service for our customers reflects the dedication and contributions of our team members,” said Holmes. “It is an honor to recognize team members who go beyond expectations, and whose efforts and attitude, like Pete’s, elevate the quality of service across our network and make a positive impact on the people around them.”

ATG team members were nominated by their peers for the award. Winners were presented with a monetary award that they will continue to receive as part of their profit-sharing bonus each year throughout their employment with the company.



Courtesy

Dan Maranda, engine shop foreman at Advantage Truck Group in Shrewsbury, receives the 2025 Pete DePina Legacy Award for making an impact on his fellow employees, customers and the company. Shown (from left) are ATG employees Steve Georgallas, Kevin Holmes, Dan Maranda, Chris Pentedemos, Chris Marsh and Mike Ramian.

Local students named to Dean’s List at Fitchburg State

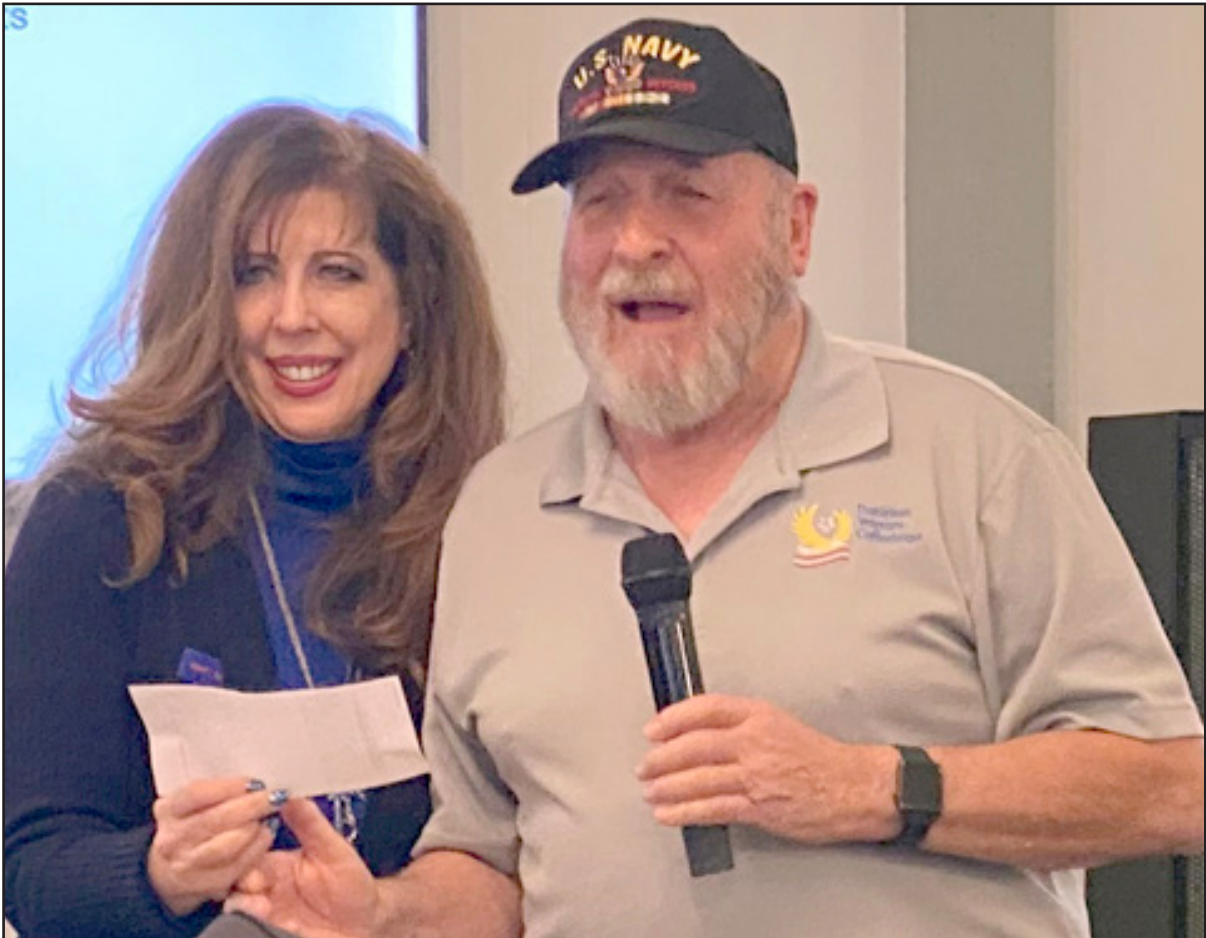
FITCHBURG, Mass. — Fitchburg State President Donna Hodge has announced the students who qualified for inclusion on the Dean’s List and President’s List for the Fall 2025 semester.

A student is placed on the Dean’s List for the semester if an average grade of 3.20 or better is attained, and the student is attending the university full time.

The President’s List honors students for consistently high academic achievement. A student is named to the list after achieving a 3.75 average in each of three successive semesters.

Sophia J. Moore of Danielson and Fatimah S. Velez of Moosup were named to the Dean’s List.

For Advertising Information
Call 860-928-1818 Ext. 326
email: mikaela@villagernewspapers.com



Courtesy

The Putnam Rotary Club recently donated \$1,000 to the Danielson Veterans Coffeehouse. From left: Kathy Kirk, Rotary club president; and Fred Ruhlemann, president of the coffeehouse.

The Week in Sports at Woodstock Academy

Boys Basketball
Woodstock Academy 76
Montville 71
The Centaurs roared back from a 10-point deficit on their home floor at the end of the third quarter on Jan. 20 by putting together a 24-point fourth quarter to snare the victory.
Drake Abdulloviski led Woodstock Academy (5-4) with 25 points while Mert Coker added 13 and Jamie Dean-Stewart 11 in the win over the Wolves (5-5).
The Centaurs also received a pair of 3-pointers

in the decisive final eight minutes from James Dong and a couple of big plays down the stretch from Nate Couture.

Girls basketball
Woodstock Academy 58
East Lyme 47
Point guard Kaylee Saucier scored a season-high 22 points with six 3-pointers to lead the Centaurs (7-4, 3-0 Eastern Connecticut Conference Division I) past the Vikings on Jan. 21.
Isabel D’Alleva-Bochain

added 10 for Woodstock Academy while both Vivian Bibeau and Elise Coyle tossed in seven apiece.
Caillin Delaney tied Saucier for game-high honors as she scored 22 for East Lyme (7-4, 1-2) while Bella Dmowski finished with 16, all in the second half.

Wrestling
NFA 57
Woodstock Academy 18
Aidan Soukaloun and A.J. Landreville both had first-round pins, but it was not enough to carry the

Centaurs (2-10) to the win on Jan. 21.
Owen Hamilton and Rosano Rodriguez added wins by decision to account for the Woodstock Academy points.
The Wildcats (2-6) had six victories by pin including first-round finishes by Niam Wallace and Savion Witherspoon.

Girls Hockey
Avon 6
Woodstock Academy co-op 3
A quick response by the

Centaurs co-op early in the third period seemingly had them in good position against the sixth-ranked Nighthawks on Jan. 21.
Alana Paz had scored a short-handed goal just eight seconds into the third period to tie the game, 2-2, for visiting Avon at the Jahn Ice Rink at Pomfret School.
But just 15 seconds later, Stonington’s Zi Qing Biondo, with help from East Lyme’s Sophia Bonner, answered with her second tally of the game to give the Centaurs the one-goal lead back.
That’s when Madison Holl became a one-person wrecking crew.
She tied the game with 8 minutes, 41 seconds left, put the Nighthawks (7-2-1) ahead to stay with another goal a minute later and 90 seconds after that, completed the 2 ½ minute hat trick to give Avon a little insurance.
Waterford’s Summer Discordia had the other goal off of assists from Biondo and Bonner for the Centaurs (2-9).

Killingly High School Weekly Sports Wrap-Up

Boys Basketball
Killingly Basketball (7-4) bounces back in the win column on the road at Montville (5-6) Jan. 23!
Final Score: 72-42.

Quinn Sumner added 12 points and 9 boards, while Greyson Marquez had 8 points and 5 assists for Killingly!

Jace Chung led Montville with 16 points.

Ethan Hall led all scorers with 26 points, including 8 threes! Quin Crowley recorded a double-double with 20 points, 10 rebounds, and 6 assists!

Girls Basketball
Killingly Girls Basketball (6-5) was led in a win against Griswold (4-6) on Jan. 21 behind 22 points 4 assists and 4 steals from Ella Adams, while Gianna Peters added 15

points 4 steals and 4 blocks!
Final Score: Killingly 51 - Griswold 30
Catrina Turgeon contributed 6 points, 6 steals and 3 assists while Amaya Spadola added 10 rebounds.
Kaidence Michael had 10 points for Griswold.
The girls (6-6) were led in a loss against Stonington (7-5) on Jan. 23, behind 15 points from Ella Adams while Gianna Peters added 8 points!

Final Score: Stonington 63 - Killingly 42
Aislynn Hassett added 6 points, while Catrina Turgeon and Gracie West each contributed 5 points for Killingly.
Kalli Mansfield had 21 points and Sophia Hoinsky had 19 points for Stonington.

Espinosa records quadruple double in win



TJ Espinosa drops a pass to Sam Jackel.

PUTNAM — The Putnam High Clippers went on the road Jan. 20 and knocked off division rival the Lyman Bulldogs 93-45. Freshman guard TJ Espinosa recorded a quadruple double finishing with 21 points, 18 assists, 10 rebounds and 10 steals. Espinosa ties the Putnam individual game record for assists with Bob Chenail who had 18 over 50 years ago vs Griswold on Feb. 4,1975. Senior Nick Devlin had a game high 22 points and added 7 rebounds and sophomore Camden Kell had 18 points and 7 steals as the Clippers move to 6-5 on the season.
On Jan. 23, the Clippers won their third straight game after beating Wilcox Tech 82-58 Friday night. Camden Kell and TJ Espinosa each scored 23 points apiece to help Putnam move to 7-5 on the season. Kell finished with 8 assists, 6 rebounds and 4 steals. Espinosa had a double double with 11 rebounds and also added 9 assists. Nick Devlin also had a double double with 19 points and 12 rebounds. Theo Buzanoski scored in double figures with 11 points and added 9 assist for the Clippers.

Woodstock resident named to St. Joseph University Dean’s List

WEST HARTFORD — St. Joseph University in West Hartford Connecticut has named Kaden Murphy of Woodstock to the Dean’s List for the 2025 Fall Semester.
Students named to the Dean’s List must maintain a 3.5 GPA or higher, with no grades lower than a “B”.
This marks the fifth consecutive semester that Murphy has been named to the Dean’s List. Murphy is a member of the Class of 2027 studying Criminal Justice.

Eva Monahan named Little East Women’s Basketball Rookie of the Week

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Rhode Island College freshman forward Eva Monahan (Woodstock) was named the Little East Women’s Basketball Rookie of the Week for her performance in a 2-0 week for the Anchorwomen.

It is the fourth time this season that she has received this accolade.

She had 21 points on 10-for-15 shooting to go along with 13 rebounds in a 70-58 win at Eastern

Connecticut on Jan. 21. Monahan posted 18 points on 9-for-13 shooting, 11 rebounds, one assist and a steal in a 71-36 blowout vs. Plymouth State on Jan. 26.

For the season, Monahan has played in 18 games, starting 15 of them. She is averaging 9.0 ppg and 7.7 rpg.

Head Coach Jenna Cosgrove’s team is 13-5 overall and 7-2 in the Little East.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The TikTok charade

To the Editor:
Anyone who continues to resist the notion that the Trump administration is pursuing an authoritarian project to effectively end democracy should consider TikTok.
In 2024, Congress passed a law that required TikTok’s Chinese owner, ByteDance, to divest its interest (sell) by Jan. 19, 2025 or be banned in the US. The Supreme Court upheld the law.
In a blatant disregard for the law, the Trump administration decided to ignore the ban and allow TikTok to continue in operation by ByteDance after the deadline. Instead, Trump signed a series of (illegal) executive orders extending the deadline, thereby claiming sweeping authoritarian powers to set aside laws. It should be noted that Trump proposed a ban in 2020 before he figured out how he could personally profit from a deal.
Last week, Chinese and the Trump regimes announced a deal changing the ownership of TikTok’s American operation to a combination of US compa-

nies (Oracle, Dell, and Silver Lake), Emerati company MGX, and ByteDance. ByteDance will retain a 19.9 percent interest. Divestment? The idea that the US is a nation of laws is now quaint at best.
Now, a number of users report that TikTok is refusing to allow content critical of the Trump regime. Trump apparently has the new owners in his back pocket. For those who have not been paying attention, the President continues to bully voices he doesn’t like and shift ownership of media to entities he coerces to toe the line or else.
Trump unmistakably continues to follow the authoritarian formula of his heroes Putin and Orbán. They silenced opposition and ignore the law. Maybe it’s worth it so we can enjoy the lower grocery prices Trump promised on Day One?

BILLY G. TAYLOR
KILLINGLY

This needs to stop

armored, armed and masked thugs that now are employed by homeland security. They work outside the law and are backed by this administration.
We are less than four weeks into 2026, but already there have been three shootings by ICE agents in Minneapolis and six known deaths within ICE detention facilities.
This needs to stop.

KAREN RYKER
WOODSTOCK

Lies come easily to those without conscience

To the Editor:
I am shaken and sickened by the lies this administration is telling about the murder of Alex Pretti. We have seen multiple videos showing the entire sequence of events (including removing a legally registered weapon from his back pocket) before shooting a man restrained on the ground by three officers at point blank range. To call a 37-year-old ICU nurse who worked at a VA hospital who was filming a protest and went to the aid of a woman knocked down a “domestic terrorist” is ludicrous.
The domestic terrorist label belongs squarely on the

Posted on the White House Web site: “Following the President’s speech, the massive crowd peacefully marches down Constitution Avenue to the Capitol to protest the certification of the fraudulent election. The march is orderly and spirited, with flags, signs and chants supporting President Trump.”

This fractured fairy tale is a far cry from the actual behavior of this crowd on Jan. 6. Anyone in this country, or on the planet for that matter, has most likely seen the alarming footage of that day. People crawling up the walls of the Capitol like cockroaches at a feast, breaking windows, chanting “hang Mike Pence.” There was nothing peaceful or orderly about it. I would like all the Trump supporters to think long and hard about the propaganda out there. It isn’t the Democrats, liberals or left wing who are making up these stories. The White House is, and if they can so blatantly lie about this, what else are they lying about? I wish I could say it is just mildly biased, but the entire scenario is an attempt to gaslight the public. Trying to convince people that what they see is not true unless the administration says

so, in effect trying to rewrite history.

The recent deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti are two more examples. There may be some room for interpretation but the fact is these agents acted inappropriately in both situations. In the first case, the shooter, Jonathan Ross, had more of a background in combat settings than protest rallies. Whatever his reasons, Renee is dead, and the government doesn’t appear to be investigating. Pretti’s death was just as horrendous. Ten shots to subdue someone with his hands in the air and a phone in one of them? Where is the justice? These are rallies, not combat zones. And they want us to believe these people were domestic terrorists?

Unfortunately, anything that is posted on the White House pages or released by the Press Secretary is suspect. Trump began by claiming the largest crowds in history at his first inauguration (not difficult to disprove), and has moved on to trying to convince us that law-abiding citizens are terrorists. Quite a leap. But then, when you have no conscience, lies come easily.

JEAN McNALLY
WOODSTOCK

Smart tax planning for high earners in 2026

As we begin 2026, high earners are entering one of the most consequential tax years in more than a decade. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) individual tax provisions officially expired on Dec. 31, 2025, and Congress did not pass legislation to extend or modify those rules. Despite substantial debate throughout 2025 – and speculation that the Omnibus Budget and Border Security Act (OBBBA) or subsequent bills might carry extensions – no federal law ultimately altered the scheduled sunset.

As a result, many Americans are experiencing the return of pre-2018 tax rules at the start of this year. That means higher marginal tax rates for many high earners, reduced deductions, a lowered estate and gift tax exemption, and the loss of certain planning benefits that individuals and business owners had come to rely on. In this environment, proactive tax strategy is essential to preserving long-term wealth.

Understand the impact of higher marginal rates

With the TCJA sunset now in effect, the top federal marginal rate has

reverted from 37 percent to 39.6 percent, and tax brackets have compressed across income levels. This shift may significantly impact after-tax cash flow for executives, business owners, and high-earning professionals.

It is essential to revisit your expected 2026 income and evaluate how the new rules affect your tax liability. That includes reviewing the timing of bonuses, business distributions, and compensation structures. The goal remains minimizing unnecessary tax drag while keeping flexibility in case Congress revisits tax policy later this year.

Maximize tax-advantaged savings and employer benefits

Even with higher marginal rates, tax-advantaged savings opportunities continue to be effective tools for long-term planning.

High earners should ensure they are:

- Maximizing 2026 contributions to 401(k), 403(b), and 457(b) plans
- Using backdoor Roth contribution strategies when eligible
- Leveraging employer-

FINANCIAL
FOCUS

LOGAN LUM

ASSOCIATE
VP, CLIENT
EXPERIENCE &
RELATIONSHIPS

er plans that support mega backdoor Roth contributions

Coordinating contributions and planning between spouses or partners

With today’s higher tax environment, both tax-deferred growth and Roth strategies play an increasingly important role in optimizing lifetime tax outcomes.

Reassess Roth conversion strategies

Roth conversions were a focal point of year-end planning in 2025, and many high earners acted ahead of the sunset. With higher marginal rates now in place, the analysis changes.

There are still scenarios in 2026 where Roth conversions may be beneficial—for example, in unusually low-income years, during business transition periods, or in early retirement. As always, careful modeling is critical, particularly when considering the impact on Medicare premiums, required minimum distributions, and long-term estate goals.

Reevaluate entity structures and business tax strat-

egy

Business owners are now officially operating without the 20 percent Qualified Business Income (QBI) deduction that was available through 2025. This change may materially increase taxable income for pass-through entities.

As 2026 begins, business owners should:

- Reassess whether their current entity structure remains optimal under the new rules
- Review owner compensation frameworks and profit distribution strategies
- Evaluate advanced retirement plan options, including cash balance plans

Consider the timing of equipment purchases or other capital expenditures now that certain depreciation rules have changed

These adjustments can significantly influence long-term tax efficiency and business value.

Clarify and modernize charitable planning

With higher tax rates in place, charitably inclined individuals may find enhanced benefits in strategic giving.

Key strategies include:

- Using Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs) to maximize

flexibility

Bunching charitable gifts to increase itemized deductions

Donating appreciated securities to avoid capital gains tax

Evaluating charitable trusts to support income smoothing and legacy goals

Strengthen estate and wealth transfer strategy

As of Jan. 1, the federal estate and gift tax exemption has reverted to roughly half of its 2025 level. Families who did not take advantage of the elevated exemption before year-end will now need to plan under this more restrictive framework.

There are still powerful strategies available—trusts, intrafamily loans, gifting programs—but each requires careful coordination across financial, tax, and legal advisors.

At WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors, we understand that navigating a year like 2026 requires clarity, strategy, and a steady partner by your side. Our team is here to help you adjust to the new tax landscape and move forward with confidence.

Absolute Confidence. Unwavering

Partnership. For Life.

To discuss your personalized tax strategy for 2026, schedule a complimentary discovery session at whzwealth.com or call (860) 928-2341.

Authored by WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors Associate Vice President, Lead Wealth Advisor Logan Lum. AI may have been used in the research and initial drafting of this piece. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. 697 Pomfret St., Pomfret Center, CT 06259 and 392-A Merrow Rd., Tolland, CT 06084, 860-928-2341. <http://www.whzwealth.com>. These materials are general in nature and do not address your specific situation. For your specific investment needs, please discuss your individual circumstances with your financial advisor. WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors does not provide tax or legal advice, and nothing in the accompanying pages should be construed as specific tax or legal advice.

Good bye, pennies

I n c l e m e n t

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



**KILLINGLY
AT
300
MARGARET
WEAVER**

The Killingly Historical Society is pleased to announce that they have acquired copies of several interesting Connecticut books which are now available for \$20 each at the Killingly Historical Center 196 Main St., Danielson, during regular business hours. The books are as follows: Connecticut Pirates and Privateers by Wick Griswold, Connecticut Witch Trials by Cynthia W. Boynton, Spies of Revolutionary Connecticut from Benedict Arnold to Nathan Hale, Revolutionary War Ghosts of Connecticut by Courtney McIvale, and Hidden History of Connecticut’s Union Soldiers by John Banks.

The Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar is open by appointment. For additional information, please call (860) 207-6044 and leave a message.

February is Black History

Month: As part of their America’s 250th Anniversary programming, the Putnam Public Library and the Aspinock Historical Society will host “Slavery in New England” with Tom Kelleher (Old Sturbridge Village Historian) on Wednesday, Feb. 11 from 6-7:30 p.m. (Snow date- Feb. 18). Tom’s program explores “the peculiar institution” in the colonies, and how it has shaped New England Society from the 1600’s through today. Putnam Municipal Complex.

Have you experienced the effects of the penny shortage yet? I ended up using a card in the Dollar Tree recently, where I would normally pay in cash, so my purchases would not be “rounded up.” Did you know that the United States is no longer minting pennies for public circulation? “The last penny produced for general circulation was minted at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia on Nov. 12, 2025, though the Mint stated it will continue to produce pennies for collector sets and commemorative purposes. The Federal Reserve stated it would continue to recircu-

late pennies for ‘as long as possible.’” (Wikipedia). I guess it’s time to save a few pennies for posterity. I even suggested adding a few to the “collections” at the Killingly Historical Center.

The penny has had a variety of compositions and shapes throughout its lifetime. “The first U.S. cent was produced in 1787, and the cent has been issued primarily as a copper or copper-plated coin throughout its history. In 1792, Congress established the United States Mint, which began producing coins. In the same year, the Coinage Act of 1792 mandated that the penny be valued at one hundredth part of a dollar and contain precisely eleven penny-weights of copper. In March of 1793, the newly established Mint in Philadelphia distributed the first set of circulating U.S. currency – 11,178 copper cents. “The penny was issued in its current form as the Lincoln cent, with its obverse featuring the profile of President Abraham Lincoln since 1909, the centennial of his birth.”

“1943 steel cents are U.S. one-cent coins that were struck in steel due to wartime shortages of copper. The Philadelphia, Denver, and San Francisco mints each pro-

duced these 1943 Lincoln cents. The unique composition of the coin (low-grade steel coated with zinc, instead of the previously 95 percent-copper-based bronze composition) has led to various nicknames, such as wartime cent, steel war penny, zinc cent and steelie. The 1943 steel cent features the same Victor David Brenner design for the Lincoln cent which had been in use since 1909.”

Numerous designs were utilized for pennies over the years including the Flowing hair chain, Flowing hair wreath, Liberty Cap, Draped bust, Classic Head, Coronet, Braided hair (all large cents). Small cents included the Flying Eagles, Indian Head, Lincoln cent, Lincoln Wheat, Lincoln Memorial, Lincoln Bicentennial, Lincoln Union Shield. If you collect coins, perhaps you have a number of them. To see samples of the pennies mentioned above go to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny_\(United_States_coin\)#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny_(United_States_coin)#History).

Bernie Mitchell, president of the Killingly Historical Society, is a coin collector. He reminded me that there were even Half Cent coins in the United States. AI said, “The U.S. Half Cent, the smallest U.S. coin, was minted from 1793 to 1857, established by the Coinage Act of 1792 to

provide small change, initially valued at 1/200th of a dollar but with significant purchasing power (around 14 modern cents). Made of pure copper and nearly the size of a modern quarter, it saw designs like Liberty Cap, Draped Bust, Classic Head, and Braided Hair before becoming obsolete due to rising copper costs and diminishing value, replaced by smaller cents.”

Are you ready for spring? I am! We’ve had more than enough winter weather for these old bones, especially in the past couple weeks. Bitter cold! Snow! Frozen pipes! I wondered if Dr. Edwin Hill was having much winter weather one hundred years ago so turned to his Diary (edited by Marcella H. Pasay). I quote, Thursday, January 20, “Pleasant all day. Colder. Mud frozen. West Killingly p.m. (Danielson) Supper at Frank Gleason’s. Attended Mrs. Jarley’s wax figures at West Killingly Methodist Church last evening. A good deal of fun.” (I wonder who the figures were representing?) Friday, Jan. 21, West Killingly in evening. Heard Davis’ lecture, ‘An Englishman’s First Impressions on America.’ Good. Called at Aunt Polly’s. And Bill’s. Visited Harriet. Saturday, Jan. 22. Snow in evening...I am lonely tonight. Two years have passed since Sarah

(his wife) died. How sadly the years have passed. Tuesday, Jan. 25, Cloudy all day with fine snow in small quantities. Attended Mrs. Scott Siddens reading at West Killingly.”

I decided to browse through earlier years in the diary to see if I could find mention of cold or snowy Januarys. 1867 was apparently one. The notation for Jan. 17 said, “Severe snow storm began at twelve midnight and lasted twenty-four hours. Snow drifted very badly. Drift at my east door five feet deep into the road.” It snowed again on Monday, Jan. 21. “Snowed all night. Drifted badly. Blocked the walk completely. More snow than for many years at any one time so said the old people.” (p.10). I wonder what we will say about this winter? Will it go down in memory as another snowy one or not?

Margaret M. Weaver Killingly Municipal Historian, January 2026. Special thanks to Bernie Mitchell. For additional information email me at margaretmweaver@gmail.com or visit the Killingly Historical Center at 196 Main St., Danielson, Wednesday or Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. or call 860-779-7250. Like us at Facebook. www.facebook.com/killinglyhistoricalsociety.

Youth is wasted on the young: A second look at the “do-over”

Now that I am (mostly) retired, I finally have the space to look back on where I’ve been and consider where I’m going. In conversations with friends, I often hear the same “retro” refrain: “If I could do it over again,” “If I knew then what I know now,” or “I didn’t realize how good I had it.”

If you’ve found yourself echoing these thoughts, you aren’t alone. It is easy to look back and spot the wrong turns we have made in life. Let’s revisit those questions with the benefit of the wisdom and knowledge we’ve earned.

“If I could do it all over again...”

It is human nature to look back and spot the wrong turns. However, I hope that if there were better choices to be made, you have already begun correcting



**TIPS FOR
SUCCESS
MIKE
BOGDANSKI**

your course. If not, start today. I live by the mantra: “The best time to start was yesterday; the next best time is right now.”

“If I knew then what I know now...”

Forgive your younger self. Really, it’s ok. At that time in your life, you simply didn’t have the “software” to process the information you have today. Chances are, you likely heard good advice back then, but you lacked the maturity, time, or confidence to act on it. As Oprah Winfrey wisely said: “If I knew then what I know now, I would never have wasted even a single minute doubting my path.” Your path led you to this realization; that is a victory in itself.

“I had it good, but I didn’t appreciate it.”

In my years of teaching, I often said, “Maturity is

the day you learn to walk around the puddle rather than through it. Of course, when looking back, we would have picked different jobs, saved more money, or exercised more. But the secret to happiness is to appreciate what you have right now.

There are people in this world who envy the exact life you are living today. In past years, we compared ourselves to the neighbors; today’s youth compare themselves to a global “highlight reel” on social media. It makes me realize that “appreciating what you have” is actually much harder today than it was forty years ago.

As I mentioned in last month’s article, “Look for the gold in your day.” You can always find one thing daily to be grateful for and maintain an “attitude of gratitude.”

The teacher appears

We often wish we could go back and teach our younger selves to persevere, to sacri-

fice for the long term, and to have the courage to try new things. But there is a hurdle: the old saying, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” Science tells us the human brain isn’t fully developed until age twenty-five—and as many of us know, that’s especially true for young men! Our younger selves might not have been ready or willing to listen.

Passing the torch

While you cannot travel back in time to mentor your teenage self, you can share your “O.P.E.” (Other People’s Experience) with your children, grandchildren, and peers. Having the opportunity to mentor many over the years, I reflected on what advice could be helpful. One of the best things I ever learned personally was to ask people who are more intelligent than I am for advice. I have gotten counsel from elderly veterans to multi-millionaires and everything in between. I believe successful people are

usually happy to share their map if you are willing to ask for directions.

As the saying goes: “Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you’d have preferred to talk.”

My remedies for the “if onlys”

The tragedy of life is often that we get old too soon and wise too late. But it’s never too late to change your self-imposed narrative.

1. Seek Wisdom, Not Do-Overs: Don’t wish for a “do-over”; make today a “do-it.”
2. Keep Growing: Commit to developing mentally, physically, and emotionally, regardless of your age. I once received a desk plaque from a student: “Success is a journey, not a destination.” This woman was a black belt at age 53. When she moved to Florida, she started karate at a new school and was asked to wear a white belt again. She was dismayed to think her previous hard

work was for naught. With her previous experience, she accelerated through the program and got a second black belt at age 56 (enjoy the journey).

3. Find the Spark: Perhaps the goal isn’t to be a teen again, but to bring “teenage” wonder and energy into our adult lives. Let’s take a step forward every day. If you could sit down with your 17-year-old self for coffee today, what’s the one thing you’d tell them?

We often spend our later years wishing for a “back to the future moment,” but what if the real goal isn’t to be young again—it’s to bring youthful inspiration into seeking the wisdom we have now.

My monthly tip — Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.

Mike Bogdanski is A martial arts Grandmaster and anti-bully activist.

Vermont State University congratulates Isabel Porter for earning Dean’s List honors!

RANDOLPH CENTER, Vt. — Vermont State University is pleased to recognize Isabel Porter, of Putnam, for earning a place on the Dean’s List for Fall 2025.

Dean’s List designation is reserved for students who maintain full-time status and a semester grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

Vermont State University provides a high-quality, flexible, and affordable education for students seeking associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees, certificates, and in-demand professional credentials. The university builds upon a history of public higher education in Vermont dating back to 1787. More information about Vermont State University can be found at: VermontState.edu

Local student earns place on Furman University Dean’s List

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Rory Sullivan of Pomfret earned a place on Furman University’s dean’s list for the 2025 fall semester. Furman’s dean’s list is composed of full-time undergraduate students who earn a grade point average of 3.4 or higher on a four-point system. Sullivan’s parents and/or guardians are Colin Sullivan and Stephanie Sullivan.

Furman is a private, undergraduate liberal arts and sciences university of 2,550 students in Greenville, S.C. The university is noted for its rigorous academic program and strong faculty. Its 940-acre campus is widely recognized as one of the most beautiful in the nation.

At the heart of the university’s academic experience is a personalized, four-year pathway that combines engaged learning with immersive experiences outside the classroom. Furman prepares students for lives of purpose, successful careers and community benefit. Learn more at www.furman.edu.

Woodstock DTC expands to record size

WOODSTOCK — The ‘new-look’ Woodstock Democratic Town Committee continued its growth to its largest size ever by electing six new voting members and re-electing 28 current voting members at its annual Membership Caucus on Jan. 7. Three alternate members were also re-elected.

New members welcomed are Matt Anderson, Kevin Bernier, Bob Freudenberger, Aino Kardestuncer, Mike Shepherd, and Dominick Tocci.

“Our growth reflects a community increasingly drawn to Democratic values,” WDTC Chair Ivar McDonald said. “Many of our neighbors are concerned about the current national landscape and recognize that the most effective way to protect our values and make a meaningful difference is through local action.

“By focusing on a clear vision for Woodstock and nominating candidates committed to public service, we are providing a channel for that energy,” he said.

“We are committed to listening to our neighbors and presenting solutions that make a tangible difference for Woodstock,” McDonald added.

The 2026-27 DTC team will be seated at the DTC meeting on Wednesday, March 4, at 6:30 p.m. at Woodstock Town Hall. The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

**WWW.VILLAGER
NEWSPAPERS.COM**

ALL WE KNOW IS LOCAL ~ VillagerNewspapers.com



Pomfret Historical Society returns to Vanilla Bean Café with Fireside Chats

POMFRET — The popular winter Fireside Chats with Pomfret Historical Society’s historians, Donna Dufresne and Walter Hinchman will return on the third Fridays of January, February, and March 2026. This year’s topics will include “Written in Stone - A Virtual Tour of Pomfret’s Sixteen Historic Burial Grounds”; “The amazing Mrs. Whistler in Pomfret 1849 – 1852”; and “Pomfret’s Gilded Age and The Railroad that Built a Summer Haven for the Rich.”

Audiences have enjoyed learning about local history over food and drinks in the cozy atmosphere at the Vanilla Bean Café while experiencing authentic pictures, documents, and stories from Pomfret’s past. This year’s series will help to raise funds for the educational programs promoted by Pomfret Historical Society and the Pomfret America 250 Commission as we celebrate the anni-

versary of the Declaration of Independence. All programs begin at 7 p.m. and a \$10 donation is much appreciated. Dates and descriptions below:

Feb. 20: The Amazing Mrs. Whistler in Pomfret 1849 – 1852

Anna Matilda McNeill Whistler was oh-so-much-more than the famous artist’s mother. She was the CEO wife and mother of the Whistler family while her railroad architect husband George Washington Whistler rose to fame. Tragically, George died of Cholera in April 1849 in St. Petersburg, Russia while building a railroad for Tsar Nicholas I. Anna returned with her two sons, James and William to Connecticut, and by November 1849 arrived in Pomfret where she registered the boys in Roswell Park’s Christ Church Hall Academy. She rented the house next to the Vanilla Bean and built a vibrant social and religious life while managing her

sons’ education. Although a grieving widow, Anna Whistler was not one to pine away. She cared for the sick patients of Dr. Williams, organized the Christ Church fair, cared for her aged mother, and tried to keep her budding artist son, Jamie, out of trouble.

March 20: Pomfret’s Gilded Age and the Railroad that Built a Summer Haven for the Rich.

Pomfret Station (now Putnam) connected Anna Whistler to her family and friends in Stonington, and New York in the 1850’s. By the 1870’s an even better railway came to Pomfret which ushered through the Gilded Age and a new era in Pomfret’s history. Wealthy families from New York and Newport built large estates, gentleman farms, and summer cottages to get away from the heat and bustle of the city. The farms produced fresh eggs, vegetables, meat, cheese, and milk for the summer guests and were shipped to

their town houses in the winter months by rail. The convenience of the railroad brought vacationers to the newly built boarding houses and country inns which took in the emerging middle class. Up until the 1920’s Pomfret was known as “Little Newport” with tennis courts, golf courses, a racetrack and casino on Pomfret Street, and countryside drives and walks organized by the Inns. Walter Hinchman will take us on a virtual tour of some of the grand estates and summer homes from that era and Stewart Chute will share some railroad history. Costumes from the gilded Age encouraged!

The Vanilla Bean Café serves high quality homemade food in a comfortable atmosphere, including a coffee bar, desserts, beer & wine. 490 Deerfield Rd., Pomfret. For more information, contact Donna Dufresne (860-465-7228) or windsong@snet.net.

Quinebaug Middle College recruiting students for School Year 2026-27

DANIELSON — EASTCONN’s Quinebaug Middle College (QMC), a regional, public magnet high school, is currently recruiting academically motivated students for the 2026-2027 school year. Application deadline is Feb. 28. Students who seek a more independent learning environment tailored to their academic and career goals are encouraged to apply.

Located on the campus of CT State College-Quinebaug Valley (CTSC-QV) in Danielson, QMC offers high school students a middle college experience that enables them to earn a high school diploma while also earning free, transferable college credits from CTSC-QV. The school’s unique partnership with CTSC-QV provides students access to college facilities and opportunities for meaningful collaboration with college faculty and resources.

Students select from one of our six distinguished learning pathways: Liberal Arts and Humanities, Education, Business/Leadership, STEM Engineering, STEM Manufacturing, and STEM Health Sciences. Core academic and elective courses, along with industry mentorship opportunities, are carefully aligned to each pathway.

“QMC provides a small, personalized learning environment where students embrace our core values of Inspiration, Kindness and Respect,” said Principal Edward Keleher. “Through access to college-level coursework, our students can explore their interests while families benefit from significant college cost savings. QMC creates opportunities for every student to thrive. We welcome students seeking an engaging, supportive high school experience that prepares

them for future success.”

Housed in a modern, state-of-the-art facility, QMC offers distinct advantages including small class sizes, a personalized competency-based approach, rigorous curriculum, and a collaborative school governance model. QMC students have access to advanced technological laboratories, comprehensive career and vocational resources, public service opportunities, and innovative learning experiences.

The program emphasizes real-world experience in project management, public communications, and community leadership. Service leadership is integrated into the daily schedule, enabling students to actively participate in meaningful community service projects and initiatives.

QMC serves approximately 160 students in grades 9-12 from 18 towns across northeast-

ern Connecticut. The school is administered by EASTCONN through a partnership including CTSC-QV and seven northeastern Connecticut towns. While primarily serving northeastern Connecticut, enrollment is open to students from other regions. Transportation is provided for students within the EASTCONN service area.

For enrollment information and applications, visit www.eastconn.org/qmc. Contact QMC Principal Edward Keleher at ekeleher@eastconn.org for additional information.

EASTCONN is a public, non-profit Regional Educational Service Center that has served the educational needs of northeastern Connecticut communities since 1980. Learn more at www.eastconn.org.

Putnam Area Foundation awards \$30,000 in grants

PUTNAM — The Putnam Area Foundation, Inc. (PAF) announced today that it has approved \$30,000 in community grants supporting organizations that serve families and residents across Northeastern Connecticut—strengthening youth opportunities, improving community access to local history, supporting volunteer service, and providing practical public-safety and veteran resources.

This year’s grant recipients include:

The Hale YMCA Youth & Family Center, to enhance programming for the Cutler

Summer Day Camp, supporting a stronger summer experience for local children and families.

The Putnam Aspinock Historical Society, to add additional walkways at the Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar Children Museum site, improving accessibility and the visitor experience.

The Putnam Police Department, to help fund the purchase of a FLIR Scout Pro thermal imaging monocular—a tool commonly used to support nighttime and low-visibility operations such as search-and-rescue and situational awareness.

The Rectory School, to

support its annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, helping students contribute meaningful volunteer hours and hands-on service in the region.

The Danielson Veterans Coffeehouse, to support fellowship and ongoing community support for area veterans, including the purchase of a box truck from the Manchester Food Bank to aid in the distribution of food to the community.

The Theatre of Northeastern Connecticut, to support 2026 programming at the Bradley Playhouse in Putnam, Connecticut.

“Community founda-

tions should be practical: we listen locally, then fund what improves daily life,” said Thomas A. Borner, President of the Putnam Area Foundation. “This set of grants back programs that matter—summer opportunities for kids, better access to local history, support for veterans, and tools that can help keep residents safer when it counts.”

The Putnam Area Foundation is a local charitable foundation that supports nonprofit organizations and community initiatives serving the Putnam area and Northeastern Connecticut.

The future in high gear

TECHNICAL MASTERY AND CHARACTER BUILDING AT LITTLE T QUARTER MIDGET CLUB



THOMPSON — In the landscape of youth development, few arenas offer the unique intersection of high-stakes discipline, mechanical engineering, and family-centered competition quite like the Little T Quarter Midget Club. As a NASCAR Youth Series sanctioned organization, Little T is more than a racing circuit; it is a premier developmental platform designed to cultivate the technical leaders and professional athletes of tomorrow.

A foundational proving ground for excellence

In motorsports, a “proving ground” is a rigorous environment where engineering and talent are tested to ensure they can withstand the highest levels of pressure. Little T serves as this essential foundation. By providing a structured, professional environment,

the club allows young drivers—some starting as early as age five—to prove their resilience and aptitude.

This sanctioned pathway connects local talent to the broader NASCAR ecosystem, offering a clear trajectory for those with professional aspirations while providing all members with a sophisticated understanding of physics, strategy, and sportsmanship.

The racing season: From training to track

Success at Little T is built on a structured seasonal calendar that prioritizes preparation, safety, and consistent skill development:

March | Rookie Training: The journey begins in March with intensive Rookie Training sessions for new members. This period is vital for new drivers to master vehicle control, track safety, and flag recognition in a non-com-

petitive, educational environment.

April – October | Sanctioned Race Season: Competitive events officially launch in April and run through October. This six-month season allows drivers to accumulate points, refine their technical skills, and experience a full range of track conditions.

Sunday Race Days: During the season, a typical race day is a full-immersion experience. Events begin in the late morning with competitive heats for all classes, followed by the high-stakes main events.

Precision engineering: The Quarter Midget platform

A quarter midget is a masterclass in scaled engineering. Unlike recreational go-karts, these are purpose-built racing machines featuring:

Chromoly Steel Roll

Cages: Engineered for maximum structural integrity.

Independent Suspension Systems: Allowing for precision tuning of “stagger” and weight distribution.

Specialized Powertrains: Regulated engines that require meticulous maintenance and mechanical sympathy.

Under the guidance of a dedicated Board of Directors, the club emphasizes mechanical appreciation. Drivers and their families are encouraged to delve into the “why” behind the machine, fostering a level of technical literacy and confidence that is highly valued in modern STEM careers.

The ROI of Racing: A Value Proposition for Families and Sponsors

For parents and prospective sponsors, Little T Quarter Midget Club represents a high-value investment in community and

character.

For Families: It is a rare “team” sport where the family serves as the pit crew. The bond formed over a shared mechanical challenge is unbreakable, creating a welcoming atmosphere that is safe, inclusive, and deeply rewarding.

For Sponsors: Aligning with a NASCAR Youth sanctioned club offers high-visibility access to a dedicated and tech-savvy demographic. Sponsors are fueling a program that builds discipline, grit, and engineering prowess in the next generation.

Experience the action

The public is encouraged to bring their families to the track, located in Thompson during our season to witness this unique community firsthand. The atmosphere is safe, welcoming, and provides a perfect day of family-oriented excitement.

For those looking to move from the grandstands to the cockpit, the club hosts “Arrive and Drive” events. These sessions allow prospective members to “try out” a real race car in a controlled, supervised environment—providing an accessible entry point into this prestigious sport.

Connect with Little T

We are proud to share our mission and grow our participation. To learn more about becoming a member, exploring sponsorship opportunities, or finding our next Arrive and Drive date, please contact us:

Official Website: www.littlespeedway.com

Membership & Sponsorship Inquiries: secretary@littlespeedway.com

Visit Us: Check our online schedule and join us at the track on a Sunday during our April–October season!

Upcoming programs at the Killingly Public Library

Poets At Large embarks on seventh year

KILLINGLY — The Killingly Public Library invites the community a pair of upcoming programs.

Take Your Child to the Library Day All Ages

Saturday, Feb. 7, 10 a.m. - noon

Top of Form

Register online at killinglypl.org or call 860-779-5383.

Bottom of Form

Celebrate Take Your Child to the Library Day! Get transported to Poppi’s Planet! An interactive performance lesson with

music, dance and puppetry! Get ready to celebrate what it means to be our unique selves! A social-emotional performance art adventure! Big feelings, emotions and lessons to be resilient! Leaving with new tools of mindfulness, and joy in our hearts!

Backstage at the Ballet (Ages 4-12)

Tuesday, Feb. 17, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Top of Form

Register online at killinglypl.org or call 860-779-5383.

Bottom of Form

Connecticut Ballet presents ‘Backstage at the Ballet,’ a 50-minute introduction to classroom technique and pointe work, partnering between male and female dancers, and classical and jazz excerpts. Meet a professional ballerina and her partner! Learn what it takes to become a professional dancer and perform many different ballets. Artistic Director, Brett Raphael, will narrate. This program is made possible with help from the CT Humanities Council and The Friends of the Killingly Library.

POMFRET — Poets at Large will present spoken word/poetry events at The Vanilla Bean Café, 450 Deerfield Rd., in Pomfret as it begins a seventh year.

PAL Coordinator Karen Warinsky said, “Due to the generosity of our sponsors this year, we will be able to present these readings free of charge. We pay featured readers a small stipend for their time and travel. Our featured poets bring their books to sell, so we are hoping patrons will be generous in supporting the poets by buying their books. Donations are also welcome. Besides these events at The Vanilla Bean, we also plan to hold

some events at a few other venues in Connecticut and Massachusetts in 2026, and will announce those later.”

Vanilla Bean events are on Saturday nights and begin at 7 p.m.

Reading at The Vanilla Bean for the winter/spring season will be Denise Abercrombie and Sean F. Forbes (Feb. 21), Christopher Reilley and Carla Schwartz (3/21), Joshua M. Stewart and Doug Anderson (April 18), Jim Finnegan and Irena Kaci (5/16) and Sarah Gagne Wheeler and Laura DiCaronimo (June 20).

Poets at Large has

brought more than 120 published and awarded poets to the area since 2020 and dozens of people have participated in the open mic portions during that time.

Poets at Large is a project of Windham Arts. All events are ADA compliant and are recommended for ages 16 and up. These readings are sponsored in part by Linemaster Switch, WHZ Financial Advisors, bankHometown, The Putnam Area Foundation and Charter Oak FCU. Contact karen.warinsky@gmail.com to sign up for the open mic. Five-minute max as time allows.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!!!

Email Us @

brendan@villagernewspapers.com

Putnam Commission on Aging announces senior dance

PUTNAM — The Putnam Commission on Aging has scheduled a pop-up “Love in the Air” Senior Dance Wednesday, Feb. 4 from 6-8 p.m. at the Putnam Elks lodge, 68 Edmund St.

This event is lovingly sponsored by Christopher Heights Assisted Living in Webster, Matulaitis Nursing Care and Rehabilitation Center, the Putnam Lions Club, and the Putnam Lodge of Elks #574.

www.villagernewspapers.com



New Year's

WINDOW
& DOOR

Sales Event!



Superior Products.
Exceptional Service®



Say "YES!" to a more
comfortable and beautiful
home in 2026.

The ball has dropped, the new
year has arrived, and we're
still feeling festive. So, we're
keeping the celebration
rolling throughout
January with a
tremendous sale on
our windows and doors!



2026

Ends January 31

Pay NOTHING for 12 MONTHS²

NO Money Down NO Payments NO Interest

Interest is billed during promo period but will be waived if the amount financed is paid in full before 12-month promo period expires.

Plus

Buy 1 window or door,
get 1 window or door
40% OFF¹

And

Get an extra
\$600 OFF
your entire project¹



7,126 local
Google reviews

4.9 out of 5



Call before January 31 to book your FREE Window and Door Diagnosis.



Superior Products. Exceptional Service®

959-456-0067

¹Subject to availability, on a total purchase of 6 or more. Buy 3 windows or doors and get the second 3 windows or doors, of equal or lesser value, 40% off – applied to lowest priced window and/or door products in purchase. \$600 discount valid during first appointment only. Cannot be combined with other offers. To qualify for discount offer, initial contact for an appointment must be made and documented on or before 1/31/26 with the purchase then occurring on or before 2/10/26. Products are marketed, sold and installed (but not manufactured) by Renewal by Andersen retailers, which are independently owned and operated under Southern New England Windows, LLC, d/b/a Renewal by Andersen of Southern New England. CT HIC.0634555. MA 173245. RI 36079. All residents of islands will be subject to an island surcharge. See complete information and entity identification at www.rbaguidelines.com. ©2026 Andersen Corporation. ©2026 Lead Surge LLC. All rights reserved.

²Plan 4521. Subject to credit approval. Renewal by Andersen Retailer is neither a broker nor a lender. Loans for the GreenSky® consumer loan program are provided by Synovus Bank, Member FDIC, NMLS #408043, without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or familial status. Rates range from 14.26% - 21.19% APR (interest rates range from 15.99% - 24.99%). Loan amount and rate will vary based on your income and creditworthiness. Monthly payments are not required during the Promo Period. GreenSky Servicing, LLC services the loans on behalf of your lender, NMLS #1416362. www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org. GreenSky® is a registered trademark of GreenSky, LLC and is licensed to banks and other financial institutions for their use in connection with that consumer loan program. GreenSky, LLC is a financial technology company that manages the GreenSky® consumer loan program by providing origination and servicing support to banks and other financial institutions that make or hold program loans. GreenSky, LLC and GreenSky Servicing, LLC are not lenders. All credit decisions and loan terms are determined by program lenders.