

New SRO becomes “member of the family” at EBES



Courtesy
East Brookfield Police Officer Patrick Clements has enjoyed his first month-plus as School Resource Officer at EBES.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER
EAST BROOKFIELD — School Resource Officer Patrick Clements has only been on the job for a little over a month at East Brookfield Elementary School, but he already feels like a longtime member of the family.
Having worked at the East Brookfield Police Department for three years as a part-time officer, Clements was thrilled with his recent expansion to full-time with the department, as of Oct. 1.
Prior to working in East Brookfield, Clements was a member of the UMass Medical School Police Department in Worcester for three years.
In his latest role as a school resource officer (SRO), Clements enjoys serving as a role model and having a positive impact on students.
“I wanted to be an SRO to help bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community. I saw this position as an opportunity to give back to the younger generation, while also providing them with a foundation of what police officers do, as well as who we are,” Clements told the New Leader. “Being an SRO allows me to protect our

future, while also being a positive role model for the community.”
Recognizing that students often associate first responders mostly with stressful circumstances, Clements appreciates opportunities to build connections with youngsters in a relaxed, comfortable environment. These bonds can be beneficial far down the road, putting students at ease when they interact with police.
“It helps when you go to a call and you’re recognized as a positive role model within the community, rather than showing up in a time of crisis and being looked at in a negative light,” Clements said.
School officials echoed the importance of first responders creating connections with students at an early age.
“At the elementary level, an SRO provides far more than safety and security. The presence of an SRO allows our youngest learners to build positive, trusting relationships with law enforcement,” said EBES Principal Christine Lavin.
To become an SRO, Clements took a 40-hour course and earned national certification. He also worked closely with the EBPD leadership team to prepare for the role.
“I am constantly learning

Turn To **SRO** page **A8**

Leicester residents head to the polls this month

LEICESTER — Voters are reminded of two important voting dates this month.
On Oct. 28, from 12-8 p.m., Leicester will hold a Special Town Election at the Town Hall gymnasium. The election will feature the following ballot question:
Shall any prior ballot vote by the Town accepting the applicability of Chapter 31 of the General Laws, the civil service law, for the rank of police patrolmen and supervisory positions (including sergeant and lieutenant) within the Leicester Police Department, be hereby revoked, including but not limited to such acceptance previously adopted by ballot vote on March 3, 1969?
The last day to register to vote for the October Special Town Election is Friday, Oct. 17. The last day to apply for an in-person absentee ballot is Monday, Oct. 27, at 12 p.m.
The town will also hold a Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 21, at 6 p.m. at the Town Hall gymnasium. The last day to register to vote for the Special Town Meeting is Friday, Oct. 10.

Local author releases second novel



Courtesy
Spencer author Mary Anne Slack recently released her second novel.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER
SPENCER — Local author Mary Anne Slack will celebrate the release of her second novel with a book launch event at Richard Sugden Library.
The program is set for Thursday, Oct. 16, at 6 p.m. Guests will be able to meet Slack and learn about her inspirations for “Painting a Family.”
“Being a woman, growing up in a family of sisters—these were the catalysts for this book,” Slack told the New Leader. “I worked on this book for over ten years, and for a long time I didn’t really know where it was taking me. After I retired

from teaching, I dug into it again and figured out how to craft the story and make it work.”
“Painting a Family” tells the story of Jane, who endures a strict Catholic upbringing in the 1960s and 1970s. Aspiring to become an artist, Jane dares to follow her dreams—until she meets handsome, stalwart Tim O’Connell. They marry and have four daughters, but when her girls are nearly grown, Jane faces a challenge for which she is completely unprepared.
Slack, who resides in Spencer, enjoyed the process of converting portions of real-life occurrences into the realm of fiction. From

the first page of the book, readers are gripped by a fast-moving plot with compelling characters.
“My favorite part of writing the book was creating the part of the story set in the 1970s,” Slack added. “I pulled from some things that happened to me, which I enjoyed. I also liked digging into thorny family issues between the mother and her daughters.”
After enjoying Slack’s debut novel, “The Sacrificial Daughter,” local readers can’t wait to turn the pages of her second book.
Looking ahead, Slack has a busy schedule of autumn

Turn To **SLACK** page **A8**

Community to salute local veterans at annual breakfast

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER
LEICESTER — The community will come together next month to honor and thank veterans during the Senior Center’s annual breakfast ceremony.
This year’s program is set for Nov. 13 at 9 a.m. Town leaders, students, community organizations, and area officials will unite in support of veterans.
The breakfast is open to all Leicester veterans and their families. The program typically includes a special MIA/POW commemoration ceremony, a keynote speaker, and involvement from local students and organizations.
“This year, we are celebrating the 15th year anniversary of Project New Hope and William ‘Bill’ Moore as founder,” said Senior Center Director Rachelle Cyr.
School officials and students always appreciate the opportunity to participate in the event and thank veterans.
Turn To **BREAKFAST** page **A9**



Courtesy
Last year, North Brookfield Elementary School started a free pancake breakfast for our senior citizens, and it was such a success that they are continuing with a monthly breakfast. The first breakfast of the year was held last week, and it was well attended and enjoyed by all. The children are the waitstaff, and the cooks and they bring food and joy to our senior citizens.



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Cornerstone Bank supports Dismas House with \$3,000 donation for winter heating assistance

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank has donated \$3,000 to Dismas House of Massachusetts, Inc., to help provide winter heating support across the non-profit's four residential programs for former inmates reentering society. The funds will help cover utility costs during the colder months, ensuring that residents have a safe, warm environment as they work toward rebuilding their lives.

Dismas House offers transitional housing, support services and a pathway back to the community for individuals most in need of recovery, decent work and housing. With locations across Worcester County, the organization provides not only shelter, but also critical programs that foster stability and hope.

"Dismas House plays a vital role in providing dignity and opportunity for people in need across our community," said Todd Tallman, CEO of Cornerstone Bank. "We're proud to continue our support for their mission, particularly during the winter months when reliable heat is essential."

This most recent gift builds on Cornerstone Bank's ongoing partnership with Dismas House, which included a \$2,500 donation in 2024 to support youth hunger initiatives and a \$4,000 donation in 2023 for the same cause.

Cornerstone Bank is committed to strengthening local communities through charitable giving and volunteerism. Its support of Dismas House underscores the bank's dedication to addressing urgent community needs and improving the lives of neighbors across Central Massachusetts.

About Cornerstone Bank

Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank's local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank's personal and business banking offerings, please visit cornerstone-bank.com or call 800-939-9103.

Longtime dream comes to fruition with opening of new store

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

BROOKFIELD — After years of hard work and persistence, Bonnie Toomey's dream of opening her own store will finally become a reality this weekend.

Post Road Trading will open on Saturday, Oct. 11, at its Route 9 location in town (1 Post Rd.). Patrons are invited to explore an eclectic lineup of locally created products, including pottery, paintings, knitted wool items, herbal remedies, blankets, all-natural soaps, candles, books, maple syrup, honey, and much more.

"I am so excited about opening the store. It's been a dream of mine for over a decade to have a store that showcases local artisans, crafters, authors, and musicians – a place where you can sit and have a cup of coffee and scrumptious baked goods from JARS Cafe & Bakery, relax, visit, and shop," Toomey told the New Leader. "This is what Post Road Trading will be about. We are even lucky enough to feature Victorian jewelry from Sadie Green's – and some beautiful nursery items from Bemis Farms."

The store's opening day is expected to draw a large, excited crowd, as it will coincide with the 46th annual Apple Country Fair in town (Saturday, Oct. 11, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the Brookfield Town Common).

Featuring more than 90 local crafters, artists, and growers, the event will draw thousands of guests from across the area. The fair will also include live music, lawn games, baked goods, food trucks, raffles, and an apple pie contest.

For Toomey, it's a thrill to celebrate area creators with the opening of her store on the same day the entire town focuses local at the festival. Guests are invited to stop in and discover new ways to support central Massachusetts artists, growers, and business owners.

"People seem very excited to have a place to gather with creative energy. We will have a food truck on the opening day, Oct. 11, in case you want some lunch while you're here," Toomey said. "We chose October 11 because it is the same day as the Apple Country Fair on the Brookfield Common, and that is just a short walk up the driveway from us."

The Brookfield Community Club has organized the fair since 1979. Money raised at the event has generated grants for several community service projects over the years.

The fair, held rain or shine, also provides an excellent platform for local businesses and organizations to showcase their offerings. Several area shops and restaurants see major boosts on festival day.

Looking ahead, Toomey has many plans for expanding her business into a hub of local creativity and inspiration.

"Eventually, I will have a calendar of events, including art and craft lessons where our local artists teach classes in their specialties; local musicians sharing an afternoon with us; and local authors doing book signings and possibly writers' groups, etc.," Toomey said.

The store will be open each week from Thursday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

To learn more about the fair and what guests can expect on the big day, visit www.applecountryfair.com.

For additional questions about the fair, or to inquire about volunteer opportunities, please send an email to: applecountryfair@gmail.com.

SPENCER ALMANAC

REAL ESTATE

BROOKFIELD

\$350,000, 29 River St, Dagilis, Michael, to Cronin, Timothy.

EAST BROOKFIELD

None

LEICESTER

\$700,000, 1-3 Bottomley Ave, Union, Roberta, to 1024 W Boylston St LLC.

\$700,000, 238 Main St, Union, Roberta, to 1024 W Boylston St LLC.

\$456,500, 7 Glen Ellen Ln, Cantwell, Matthew, and Cantwell, Jamie, to Webber, Christopher J, and Maldonado, Ana.

\$389,000, 22 High St, Robertson, Robert W, to Garcia, Mariela V.

\$317,500, 46 Locust St, Daly, Daniel, and Salem Five Mtg Co LLC, to Perez, Carlos.

NORTH BROOKFIELD

\$440,000, 115 School St, 1115 School Street Rt, and Decoteau, Randall E, to Sanchez, Melvin J, and Galarza, Zuemylee Z.

\$301,000, 13 Birch St, Gauthier Jr, Leo R, to Dumas, Jody R, and Dumas, Laura M.

\$219,000, 50 Town Farm Rd, T-C-P Enterprises Inc, to Lamountain, Michael J, and Hayes, Cheri L.

SPENCER

\$495,000, 26 Main St, Spencers LLC, to Ofosuhen, Karin A.

\$350,000, 11 Mill St, Lavallee, Erica, to Anderson, Daniel J, and Anderson, Courtney M.

\$320,000, 3 Parent St, Macmillan, Joanne M, to Agustiliano, Jose J.

WARREN

\$550,000, 146 Bragg Rd, Garay, Michael, and Kelly-Garay, Karen, to Lavallee, Sean, and Lavallee, Erica.

WEST BROOKFIELD

None

ATTENTION

WEST BROOKFIELD RESIDENTS

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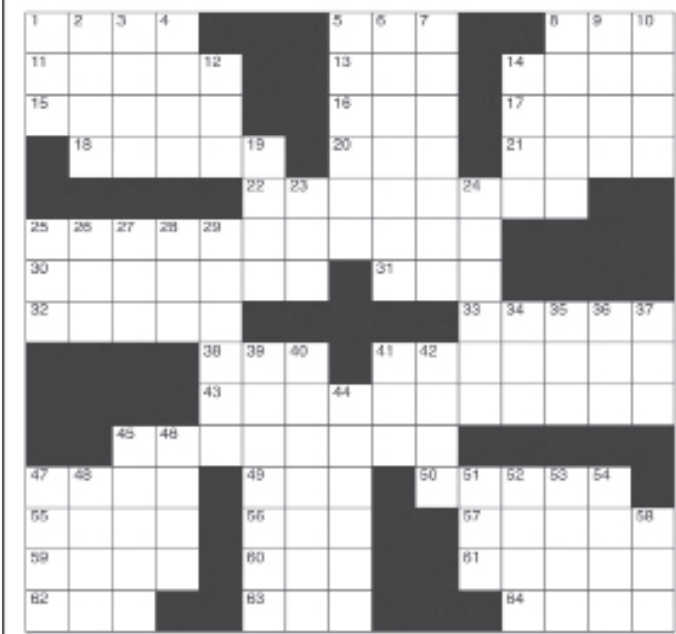
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Comedic actor Rogen

5. Bits per inch

8. Tire pressure measurement

11. Angels great Mike

13. Own (Scottish)

14. Notable F1 racing team

15. Upper bract of grass

16. Tax collector

17. Electronic counter-countermeasures

18. Informal loan clubs

20. Skeletal muscle

21. Popular fish type

22. Salts of acetic acid

25. Arriving early

30. Worded

31. Single Lens Reflex

32. Amphibians

33. Warm greeting
38. Belonging to a thing

41. Segmented worm

43. Concerns

45. Audacious

47. Wings

49. Type of drug

50. Wind chill formula scientist Charles

55. Island close to the U.S.

56. "To the __ degree"

57. Daniel __, French composer

59. A way to march

60. Where golfers begin

61. Spiritual leader

62. Of she

63. Mental disorder concerning body odor (abbr.)

64. Tall, slender-leaved plant

CLUES DOWN

1. Engine additive

2. Amounts of time

3. Fragrant brown balsam used in perfume

4. Color properties

5. One who hands over

6. Thieves of the sea

7. Put in

8. Nocturnal rodents

9. Pouches

10. Systems, doctrines, theories

12. Greek alphabet letter

14. Greek goddess of youth

19. Satisfy

23. Partly digested food

24. Dictator

25. Parts per thousand (abbr.)

26. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet

27. A major division of geological time
28. Angry

29. St. Francis of __

34. Romanian monetary unit

35. Stale

36. Go quickly

37. Commercial

39. Canadian city

40. One who slices

41. Perform perfectly

42. Nest of pheasants

44. Tactile sensations

45. Sword

46. Climactic

47. Adrenocorticotrophin

48. Fisherman's tool

51. Swiss river

52. Plant that makes gum


53. A French abbot

54. One point east of northeast

58. Get free nf

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O	E	E	R		S	R	O		R	E	H
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First registered healthcare apprentices graduate from QCC, UMass Memorial program

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College, in partnership with UMass Memorial Health, the Worcester SHARE union and the Massachusetts Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), held a ceremony this week for the first graduates of the Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Program. This is the first registered healthcare apprenticeship program in Central Massachusetts.

Twelve UMass Memorial employees have successfully completed this training program to become nationally certified medical assistants. The participants underwent 2,000 hours of full-time, on-the-job training, complemented by eight weeks of classroom instruction.

The program uses an “earn-and-learn” model that allows employees to maintain their salary and benefits while in

the program.

Kathie Manning, QCC’s dean of the Center for Workforce Development and Continuing Education, credits DAS for funding a medical assistant pre-apprenticeship program, which provided supports that enabled students to earn a livable wage while advancing their careers.

“I’ve seen far too many students who must choose between working and getting an education. When we force them to make that decision, it doesn’t benefit the workforce and it doesn’t benefit the student,” said Manning.

Lynn D’Angelo, director, Ambulatory Clinical Excellence at UMass Memorial Medical Center, noted that medical assistants are critical as they often serve as the first point of contact for patients.

“We have filled many medical assistant positions and

have had a 26 percent reduction in vacancies. Our medical assistants have also helped to increase patient access, enhance patient experience and deliver safe, quality care,” said D’Angelo.

“Helping others is something I always knew I was put on this earth for. Becoming a medical assistant allowed me to do that while building a relationship with my patients, coworkers, and providers, all while learning something new every day,” said Graduate Lindsey Leahy, who works at Spencer Internal Medicine, a part of UMass Memorial Community Medical Group.

Undersecretary of Labor in the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Josh Cutler, noted that apprenticeships have grown as a workforce tool, no longer just for the building trades and applicable to many industries,

such as cybersecurity, biotech and advanced manufacturing. He also thanked Gov. Maura Healey and the state legislature for supporting the apprenticeship model.

“In Massachusetts...our greatest natural resource is our people; it’s our skilled workforce. You are a shining example of us building and investing in our workforce,” Cutler said to the graduates.

Graduate Afia Dampthey, who works at the Spine Center at UMass Memorial Medical Center, commented that she was apprehensive about the program at first because she hadn’t been in school for so long.

“I didn’t realize how much this program was going to change me and further my education,” said Dampthey. “At UMass Memorial Health, you can become whoever you want to be.”

“Quinsigamond College played such an amazing role, ensuring all of us students were provided with everything we needed to succeed, especially our teacher; Cheryl DeCoff (QCC Assistant Professor of Medical Assisting, who constantly braved the storms of the unknown and the new to ensure we met our end goal,” Leahy added.

Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District joins National League Learning Collaboratives to elevate AI literacy

SPENCER — In the 2025-2026 school year, the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District joined the League of Innovative Schools (The League), a national network of school districts that connects and supports the nation’s most forward-thinking leaders in education. The League is dedicated to innovative learning and leadership practices to achieve equitable outcomes for every student. One key way superintendents and district leaders realize such innovation and change is through the League Learning Collaboratives (LLCs).

The 2025-26 LLCs focus on pressing topics in education, including AI literacy, career readiness and workforce development, and educator recruitment and retention. League leaders choose the learning collaborative in which they want to participate based on their district’s needs and interests, and meet regularly to engage in peer-to-peer learning, co-create solutions, and share best practices. The Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District is specifically participating in the AI literacy League Learning Collaborative (LLC) to access innovative professional learning, resources, and a national network of leaders to advance AI literacy, career readiness, and innovative teaching and learning practices to achieve equitable outcomes for students. Districts can collaborate on shared priorities, pilot new models, adapt promising practices to their local needs, and scale successful innovations to better prepare students for a future where AI is integrated into daily life and the workforce.

The key goals and benefits for our regional school district are aimed at:

Access to Innovative Resources: League members gain access to cutting-edge tech-

nology, innovative approaches, and unique pilot programs for new learning and teaching models.

Advance AI Integration: Districts aim to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool and resource to expedite teaching and learning and improve student success.

Foster Peer Collaboration: Leaders from across the country collaborate on shared challenges, learn from each other, and develop innovative frameworks to address pressing educational issues.

Promote Equity: Through collaborative efforts and new practices, members work to achieve equitable outcomes for every student.

Shape Future of Education: The League equips superintendents and district leaders to shape the future of teaching and learning through hands-on opportunities for collaboration and learning; and

Enhance Career Readiness: The League also focuses on improving career readiness, workforce development, and ensuring students are prepared for the future,” said Superintendent of Schools, Paul Haughey.

Organized by Digital Promise and facilitated by current or former superintendents with extensive experience in these focus areas, LLCs provide an interactive space for school district leaders across roles to discuss and explore tangible strategies for addressing shared problems of practice around these key issues. Each collaborative centers on a topic directly aligned to the Digital Promise Challenge Map—areas nationally identified as critical for student success.

“Education leaders regularly face new evolving challenges that directly impact teaching and learning,” said Tasia King, network learning experience

designer at Digital Promise. “Continuous learning opportunities that directly address those big issues, like the learning opportunities offered through the LLCs, give district leaders the insights and tools to tackle those challenges and foster innovation throughout their districts.”

Over the next six months, the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District will join other leading districts across the nation to explore challenges, share promising practices, and collaborate toward meaningful, common goals. These professional learning communities provide a supportive space to gain new ideas, receive accountability for implementation, and strengthen the impact of the network by fostering innovation and accelerating growth.

Through the LLCs, the Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District can contribute to a national community of practice while bringing back tested strategies, leadership insights, and tangible outputs that can be applied to strengthen our schools and directly benefit our students and educators.

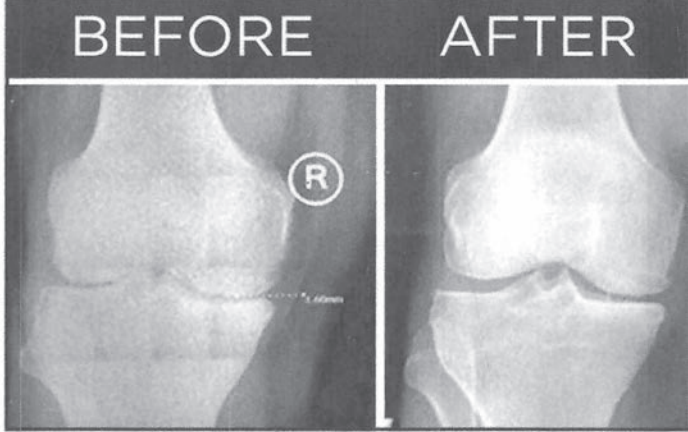
In all, school and district leaders from 61 school districts across 19 states will participate in one or more learning collaboratives for the 2025-26 school year.

For more information on the League of Innovative Schools’ League Learning Collaboratives and a full list of district participants, visit: digitalpromise.org/initiative/league-of-innovative-schools/league-learning-collaboratives/.

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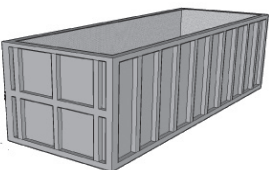


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NOTICE HYDRANT FLUSHING TOWN OF SPENCER

The Town of Spencer Water Department will be flushing fire hydrants throughout the eastern part of the distribution system starting October 1st thru October 24th 2025.

Flushing removes sediment from the water mains to help maintain water quality. When the Water Department staff is in the immediate area, residents could experience loss of pressure and short periods of rusty water. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause. A daily list of the flushing locations will be posted on the Spencer town website www.spencerma.gov each day by 8:00AM (click on Departments, then click Water

Department, then click Hydrant Flushing 2025). If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact the Spencer Water Department office at 508-885-7525. Thank you.



Attention North Brookfield Water Users: WATER MAIN FLUSHING

October 1 – 31, 2025

The North Brookfield Water Department will be flushing water mains throughout town beginning Wednesday, October 1st through Friday, October 31st 2025.

The purpose of the flushing is to remove sediment buildup in the mains. The flushing may result in temporary discoloration of the water, caused by small particles dislodged during the flushing. This discoloration might stain your laundry, especially white materials.

Flushing is performed between the hours of 7:30AM and 3:30PM. We post our daily flushing schedule on the North Brookfield Happenings Community Facebook Page. If you would like additional information, please call the Water Department at (508) 867-0207.

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BRENDAN BERUBE
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EDITORIAL

A season of service and small-town strength

As another New England autumn settles in, the rhythm of local life shifts from summer festivals to school committee meetings, budget hearings, and community fundraisers. In the Brookfields, Spencer, and Leicester, this season always seems to draw out the best of what small-town living means — neighbors showing up, not for recognition, but because someone has to keep the lights on, the library open, and the band uniforms paid for.

You see it in the volunteers at every church supper and food pantry, in the veterans’ groups hosting flag-raising ceremonies, and in the parents who put in long evenings at the football field concession stand. They aren’t chasing headlines or awards. They’re holding together the quiet fabric of towns that survive, year after year, because ordinary people refuse to sit on the sidelines.

There’s an easy temptation to think that small-town civic life has faded — that nobody shows up for meetings anymore or that volunteer rosters are thinning. In some ways that’s true. Every local board could use more fresh faces. But beneath the surface, there remains a core of residents who still believe that showing up matters. These are the folks who fill out grant forms, repaint playground benches, and keep the community centers humming when budgets fall short.

And when challenges do arise — whether it’s an underfunded fire department, a school project delayed, or a storm cleanup that takes every available truck in town — those same people are first on scene. Their reward isn’t fame or profit; it’s the simple satisfaction of seeing their neighbors safe and their town cared for.

That kind of civic spirit can’t be legislated or purchased. It grows in the daily interactions of people who know one another — the friendly nod at the post office, the shared shovel during a snowstorm, the borrowed ladder that gets returned a week late but never begrudged. These small exchanges build a resilience that no large city or bureaucracy can replicate.

As we move into another fall full of meetings, debates, and budget discussions, it’s worth remembering that our towns depend less on policy than on participation. Decisions about schools, safety services, and local priorities are shaped by the people who take the time to show up, ask questions, and care enough to keep asking.

Our region has long prided itself on being a place where neighbors still look out for each other. That’s something worth protecting. So if you’ve been thinking about joining a board, volunteering at a fundraiser, or simply attending a public hearing — go. Your voice and your presence matter more than you might think.

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.

VIEWPOINT
OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who is paying?

To the Editor:

After the sham they called DOGE, and getting rid of or cutting many of our most worthwhile services and programs, this administration is on track for the highest deficit spending, in amount and percentage of GDP in history. If you foolishly think it is to address the deficit or eliminate waste, the grift has succeeded. In getting rid of US Aids, you have already starved 500 million people to death, you have eliminated ant healthcare or the ability of other charities to deliver it.

Does it make you proud watching your country incinerate over 500 tons of food, or millions of dollars worth of contraceptives, enabling babies to be born, then starved? Remember when the peoples house controlled the purse? This fascist administration routinely vetoes passed spending bills.

In addition to these illegal acts, the level of frivolous lawsuits and prosecutions is nuts. The Trump administration has lost 96 of the last hundred of them. Someone has to pay for the prosecutors and courts (guess who), while saddling those the indict with massive legal bills. I doubt it is even legal to sue the government to recover those costs? Guess who would pay?

Tariffs 101- guess who pays. Is it the country he sets them on? No — it is those doing business with those countries. At some level, those taxes get passed on to consumers, whether, when imported or when you buy them, it’s included in the price. In a logical world, this revenue, would go back into the pot for disbursement, or paying down debt. Apparently, the Trump plan has him seizing the funds in his slush fund. Farmers voted for him overwhelmingly. The last figure I

heard is that 75 percent of small farms will go under, having lost most international sales outlets and US Aids to sell surplus to. Deep pockets will buy up small farms, both foreign and domestic, while Trump plans to help the hard pressed Venezuelan farmers who now sell the soy we can’t, while our tariff taxes supplement their income.

In addition to hiring every bully they can find, for \$50,000-plus and putting them in masks and battles gear, we are deploying troops who cannot legally do law enforcement. It will only be a matter of time before Trump recreates the Kent State fiasco, and uses his own foolishness and angering the citizenry, to declare martial law. Not only will we pay, we become a national Gitmo or Alligator Everglades, except with the comforts of home, with curfews.

When Trump was sworn in, he used no Bible because they would not allow the Chinese version he sells. Quite appropriate as he ignores both Christianity and the constitution. He promised an end to the Ukraine war (ostensibly by abandoning the country whose borders we swore to defend for giving up nukes). He promised to reduce your costs for groceries and other things. Every single thing is going up, as tariffed goods are arriving just in time for the holidays.

I skipped over what his “free” plane will cost you, and your tab for supporting his crypto grift his sons came with on his official Arab visits, and left with billions in lucrative contracts.

Still wondering who pays? Buy a mirror.

KEN KIMBALL
BROOKFIELD

The best defense is a sane defense

To the Editor:

Today, I am spending a bit of time in reflection. My mother was born this day (Oct. 5) in the year 1907. So much has changed since that day. Women could not vote. Cities were segregated. Jim Crow laws and racist attitudes kept many minorities and poor from being able to fully participate in our evolving democracy and to enjoy opportunities in our ‘land of the free and home of the brave’.

Since the youth of my parents, our country has made a lot of progress toward evolving into a true democracy, but not without serious setbacks. We are currently experiencing perhaps the most dangerous setback, one that threatens not only our democracy and democracies throughout the world, but the actual survival of the planet. Yes, I am ‘Woke’ (‘awake’ to problems facing others besides myself), and I hope to convince many of you to become more woke.

This past week, we witnessed our “Secretary of War,” Pete Hegseth, admonish an audience of our seasoned military leaders to change their ‘Woke’ ways and to purge from the military any traces of the influence of DEI (diversity, equality, inclusion). He emphasized the importance of the ‘warrior ethos’, stating that “the era of the ‘Department of Defense is over.” Like a peacock spreading his feathers and strutting about on the stage, he exclaimed with braggadocio “Should our enemies choose foolishly to challenge us, they will be crushed by the violence, precision, and ferocity of our War Department.” Were you impressed? I was not, and nor were many who were forced to travel thousands of miles to attend this pep talk (judging by their sea of faces).

To remake the military into this unstoppable fighting machine, Hegseth is already purging the military of leaders he believes gained their positions as a result of woke attitudes encouraging greater diversity. I have news for Pete. He did not gain his position because of his demonstrated capable leadership, but for his sycophantic loyalty to our Commander in Chief, Donald Trump; and what a warrior Trump is! With impressive leadership like the current Commander in Chief and the Secretary of War, what could possibly go wrong?

Hegseth’s speech was followed by words of ‘wisdom’ from our Commander in Chief. Trump suggested using U.S. cities as “training grounds for our military”. He spoke of the “enemy within”. Which enemy is that? I could argue that the enemy within is the enemy within all of us, whether it be apathy, prejudice, cowardice, greed, or whatever affliction most severely limits our ability to be caring human beings who can have a positive influence on our world. Trump

appears to interpret the enemy within to be Portland, Oregon and other ‘dangerous’ Democrat-leaning cities. But these are not his only apparent military targets. This past month military aircraft, on two occasions, attacked and sank small crafts in international waters off the coast of Venezuela, killing at least 14 men. What is the true motivation behind these aggressive actions? Is it meant to be a distraction to help us forget about the Epstein files, or does it reflect the desires of a few billionaire campaign donors from the oil industry?

Is it too ‘Woke’ to expect our Commander in Chief and our Secretary of War to abide by the rules of law or to follow international humanitarian laws and standards of engagement developed during the Geneva Conventions? The Supreme Court may have given Trump immunity from prosecution, but what about soldiers or military leaders ordered by their Commander in Chief to perform illegal acts. This warrior mentality can result in many of our young men and women serving in the armed forces being placed in very dangerous situations. I remember the My Lai Massacre during the Vietnam War where U.S. soldiers killed at least several hundred unarmed Vietnamese civilians (primarily women, children and the elderly in the village) and committed other atrocities, including abuse of women and children. Those atrocities were initially covered up. Does that sound familiar? We are currently experiencing a government shutdown, and Trump clearly hopes that the shutdown continues. He is no more motivated to end this shutdown than is Netanyahu to end the fighting in Gaza. Both men want to delay prosecution for their illegal acts.

Another quote from Pete Hegseth’s speech: “If the words I’m speaking today are making your heart sink, then you should do the honorable thing and resign.” With a Commander in Chief in serious mental decline and a sycophant Secretary of War willing to target “the enemy within” or to ignore rules of law or accepted military standards of behavior, I suspect that many of our most intelligent military leaders are feeling heavy hearts. Would you question orders to launch missiles coming from our Warrior Commander in Chief with the self-proclaimed “genius brain?” You have probably heard the saying that “the best defense is a good offense.” I would argue that the best defense is a sane defense. Destroying our democracy and rewarding greed and corruption at the expense of the common good can destroy a nation without firing a shot.

DAVID W. BROWN
NORTH BROOKFIELD

Making the most of Medicare open enrollment



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When you turn 65, Medicare becomes a vital part of your health care coverage. But signing up is just the beginning. Many people don’t realize that Medicare isn’t a “set it and forget it” program. In fact, you have the opportunity — and often the need — to review and adjust your coverage every single year.

The annual Medicare Open Enrollment period, which runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7 each year, is your chance to take a fresh look at your health care needs and make sure your Medicare plan still fits your life. Then you can determine whether your medical and prescription plans need to be switched or dropped.

Just like your health can change from year to year, so can Medicare plans. Insurance companies may adjust their coverage and costs or even discontinue certain plans entirely. By taking time during the open enrollment period to compare your options, you might discover a plan that saves money, offers better coverage or both.

As a reminder, you have several options when it comes to your Medicare coverage.

Original Medicare (Parts A and B) covers hospital stays and medical services such as doctor visits. Part A typically comes with no monthly premium if you’ve worked for at least 10 years. Part B requires monthly premiums — \$206.50 or more in 2026, depending on your income. They may also be copays and deductibles.

Medicare Advantage (Part C) offers an all-in-one alternative to Original Medicare. These plans are offered by private insurance companies. They often bundle together hospital, medical and prescription drug coverage. They may also include extra benefits like vision, dental and wellness programs that Original Medicare doesn’t cover.

Medicare Part D provides standalone prescription drug coverage for those who stick with Original Medicare.

Medicare Supplement (Medigap) policies help cover the out-of-pocket costs that Original Medicare doesn’t pay, such as copayments and deductibles.

When shopping for Medicare plans, there are several important areas you should consider to determine which options are right for you:

Out-of-pocket costs such as monthly premiums, deductibles, copayments and any other expenses Medicare doesn’t cover. Sometimes a plan with a higher premium saves you money overall because of lower copays.

Prescription drug coverage deserves special attention. All Medicare plans for 2026 will include a \$2,100 cap on what you pay out of pocket for covered prescription drugs, up from \$2,000 in 2025. However, this cap only applies to drugs that your plan covers, making it crucial to verify your medications are included.

Your health care needs for the coming year matter too. Do you have surgeries planned? New health conditions to manage? You’ll want to make sure your potential plan covers the care you expect to need.

Travel plans can also influence your choice. Original Medicare typically doesn’t cover services overseas, so frequent travelers might want supplemental coverage for emergencies abroad.

If you don’t make any changes during open enrollment, you’ll likely be automatically reenrolled in your current plan for the following year, as long as it’s still available and you continue paying required premiums.

Don’t let your Medicare plan run on autopilot. Take advantage of the annual open enrollment period — between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7 — to ensure your coverage continues to serve you well in the year ahead.

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

Plant flavorful and nutritious garlic in Fall



Melinda Myers

Separate garlic cloves right before planting and plant the largest cloves with their papery covering.

Lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, fight heart disease, boost your immune system, and add a bit of flavor to your meals by growing your own garlic. This vegetable has been used as both food and medicine for thousands of years.

Purchase firm, healthy bulbs of garlic sold for growing in the garden. One pound of garlic typically fills a 30' row but this can vary depending on the variety. It's best not to use garlic sold at the grocery store as it may have been treated to prevent sprouting and it may not be suitable for growing in your climate.

Select the best variety for your growing conditions and preferred flavor. Hardneck garlic typically prefers colder climates while most softneck garlic prefers warmer climates, but this varies with the varieties

within each group. Hardneck garlic varieties develop a stiff flower stalk, tend to have larger cloves, and flavors ranging from mild to spicy. Softneck varieties vary in their adaptability to long cold winters, cool moist springs and warm summers. They lack the stiff flower stalk so the leaves can be braided, and the bulbs tend to have a longer shelf life.

Garlic bulbs typically contain seven or more individual cloves. The larger the clove you plant, the bigger the bulb you'll harvest. Separate the cloves right before planting and do not remove the papery covering. Use the largest cloves for growing and the smaller ones to flavor your favorite fall and winter meals.

Grow garlic in a sunny location with well-drained soil. Prepare the soil by adding organic matter like compost and a low nitrogen slow-release fertilizer. Avoid high nitrogen, fast release fertilizers that promote top growth with smaller bulbs. Fertilize again in spring as growth begins.

Plant the cloves in the fall about six weeks before the ground freezes in cold climates and late fall or early winter in warmer regions. Space individual cloves six inches apart with the pointed side up and the base of the clove two to three inches below the soil surface. Space single rows 12 to 14 inches apart or double rows six inches apart with 30 INCHES between each set of double rows. For more intensive wide row and square foot growing, plant multiple rows with four to eight inches between cloves.

Spread a six-inch layer of weed-free straw over the soil surface after planting to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. This also provides added insulation in colder regions and helps prevent frost heaving that occurs when temperatures fluctuate, causing soil to alternately freeze, thaw and shift throughout the winter. Cover the straw with evergreen boughs in windy locations to help hold the straw in place.

Water newly planted garlic thoroughly at planting and as needed in fall to encourage the roots and a shoot to form. Water often enough to keep the soil evenly moist during the growing season. Inconsistent moisture when the plants are actively growing results in smaller and misshapen bulbs. Keep the soil around the plants covered with organic mulch to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.

Make this the season you plant garlic. Then enjoy the homegrown flavor and health benefits it provides.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" streaming courses and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

In the summer of 1803, six American warships sliced through the Atlantic, crewed by fewer than 2,000 barely trained men—farm boys, fishermen, and dockhands.

POSITIVELY
SPEAKING

TOBY
MOORE

The newly formed United States was broke, its Navy skeletal, its trade raided by Barbary pirates from North Africa, bleeding off an estimated 20 percent of American maritime commerce.

Their orders: reach Tripoli and challenge a rogue regime that extorted even the greatest empires. Few expected them to return.

For generations, European powers had bought peace with gold—but as Barbary raids on American merchants escalated, President Thomas Jefferson faced a choice: submit, or fight with a navy that barely existed.

When the Americans arrived, the enemy was waiting—light, fast, and ruthless. They were outnumbered, but not outmatched.

The Americans trapped them in port, daring the pirates to come out and fight.

However, just as momentum was building, disaster struck. The Philadelphia, one of the strongest of the American warships, ran aground off Tripoli and

was seized with all 307 aboard. The captured ship was refloated, turned against its own fleet, and now flew the flag of the enemy—one of America's greatest warships, lost in a single day.

Refusing to let the ship be used against them, they launched one of the boldest raids in naval history: Under the cover of night, disguised as Maltese sailors, they floated into harbor on a captured pirate vessel, boarded the Philadelphia, and turned her into a floating inferno.

The raid ignited American morale, but the war dragged on—until one man dared to rewrite the story.

Enter William Eaton—former US consul to Tunis, burning with vengeance, armed with a wild plan. Eaton's target? Derna—a coastal city, lightly defended and exposed to the desert. Eaton would cross the sands and strike it from behind. The goal was to show that the US could do what no European power dared: land troops in North Africa, raise an army, and defeat the pirates on their own soil.

In March 1805, William Eaton assembled a ragtag force of 8 U.S. Marines, 40 Greek and Italian mercenaries, about 100 Arab cavalry, and scattered

Bedouin fighters.

Fewer than 500 men—fractured by language, loyalty, and purpose—marched forward. They crossed hundreds of miles of desert where water vanished, men hallucinated, and camels collapsed in blinding sandstorms. Sun scorched by day, the cold bit at night. Food ran short, tempers flared, tribal help deserted, and the campaign nearly collapsed over broken promises.

The road to Derna was carved through hell.

After seven weeks, they arrived at the gates ready for war: Eaton attacked as US warships unleashed cannon fire from offshore. The fighting was brutal—gunfire ripped through tents, smoke choked the hillside, and Eaton was shot through the wrist, but pressed on with his arm in a sling. After fierce close combat, Derna fell, and for the first time in history, the Stars and Stripes flew triumphantly on foreign soil. It was this moment that inspired the famous line still sung today in the Marine Corps Hymn: 'to the shores of Tripoli'.

The victory stunned the Barbary world. Eaton marched across a wasteland and took a city no one thought could fall. The pirates' resolve broke, and they signed a peace agreement within weeks, and the American prisoners from the

Philadelphia walked free. What began as a desperate gamble became one of the boldest military feats in the early history of the United States.

The message was clear: the United States would not just send ships; it would send men, cross deserts, storm walls, and bleed on foreign ground to defend its people and principles.

This October 13th marks the 250th anniversary of the United States Navy—born in uncertainty, and defined by resolve.

From the shores of Tripoli to every ocean since, the US Navy, along with the US Marine Corps and the entire American military, has stood as a shield for freedom and a symbol of courage. To all who have served and continue to serve: Thank You.

Today, we face new adversaries—One nation with a fleet much larger than our own. Once again, we may be outnumbered, but we will never be outmatched.

Like Eaton before us, we'll rise to meet the challenge. May God bless the USA!

Toby Moore is a columnist, the star of Emmy - Nominated A Separate Peace, and the CEO of Cubestream Inc.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Three thank yous

To the Editor:

To begin, a thank you to the New Leader Editor for his continuing Editorials on the importance of our communities and need for all of us, despite what problems and differences we have, to keep them strong,

Likewise, thank you for the writer who, in last week's edition, wrote "Welcome to Hungary." President Trump, after denying (that is, lying) this week said this Hungarian anti-democracy and anti-American. model is the one that he and his very powerful senior staff person Russell Vought follow - with only one difference. As the letter so well indicates, they and others in this Trump administration do it to us with far more violence and destruction. This destruction includes our government and the values of our Founding Fathers and those who for 250 years have built on them, both Republican and Democrat.

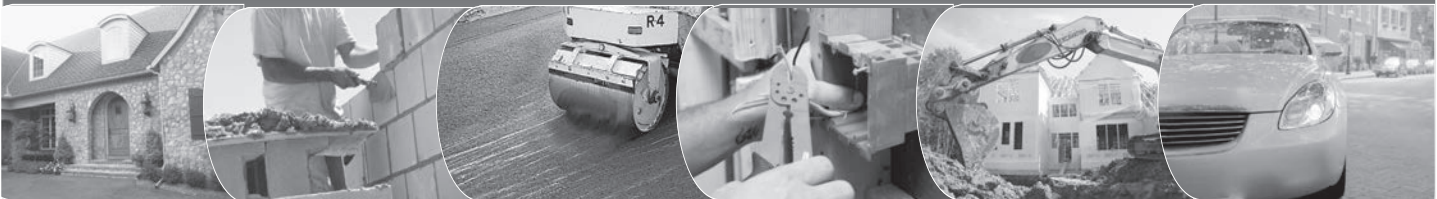
This is the choice we have. Do we continue to follow our Founding Fathers Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and later Lincoln, who wanted to build and retain a better country for all or Trump and his Project 2025 Hungarian model destroyers?

Then, a final thank you to the writer of "Confusing Hippocratic Oath with hypocritical." The writer excellently provides a detailed list of the damage and destruction that has taken place since the beginning — just eight months ago — of this out of control Trump and his administration. This happens not only to America, but to our friends and allies across the world. Only dictatorships like Russia and China applaud this weakening of the United States.

Again, thank you all. I hope not just these writers, but we all work to correct the Trump wrongs, especially for our innocent children and grandchildren.

KEVIN KANE
SPENCER

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Former Bay Path Nursing Academy director attends emergency preparedness workshop



Dr. Bolandrina and Lois Luniewicz of CMMRC.

HUBBARDSTON — In a time when natural disasters and public health emergencies are becoming more frequent and severe, proactive preparedness can be the difference between chaos and coordinated care. That was

the message delivered loud and clear on Saturday, Oct. 4, as the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) hosted the “One Step Ahead... Before the Storm” Emergency Preparedness

Workshop at Hubbardston Center School.

The event, held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., brought together community members, volunteers, and emergency preparedness professionals from across the region for a day of collaboration, hands-on learning, and resilience-building.

Representing health, education, and volunteerism

Among the attendees was Dr. Gretheline Ramos Bolandrina, a long-time MRC volunteer, nurse educator, and former Academy Director of the Bay Path RVTHS Practical Nursing Academy in Charlton and her husband, Joseph Bolandrina of Athol, also a long-time MRC volunteer. Representing both their commitment to community health and professional education, the Bolandrinas joined fellow volunteers such as Lois Luniewicz (of CMMRC), in refining emergency response skills and fostering connections vital for coordinated disaster readiness.

“As a nurse, educator, and volunteer, I see the value of this kind of community engagement firsthand,” said Bolandrina. “Preparedness is not just about knowing what to do; it’s about building a network of people who are trained, informed, and ready to act together.”

Training for the unexpected
The workshop focused on three main objectives:

Fostering collaboration between area residents, CERT, and MRC members before emergencies happen;

Reviewing critical response skills for disaster events; and

Encouraging preparedness among individuals and families.

Participants rotated through a series of interactive sessions, including:

Emergency Preparedness Bingo – A fun, prize-filled game led by Judie O’Donnell, teaching participants about essential items to keep on hand for storms and power outages.

Stop the Bleed – Taught by Paul Laitenen and Arthur Elbthal, this crucial hands-on workshop equipped attendees with life-saving techniques to help injured persons before EMS

arrives.

Social Media Messaging During Emergencies – Hosted by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), this session explored how effective messaging through social platforms can aid communication during crises.

Shelter Setup and Management – Instructed by Rich Curtis, this course detailed the steps to open, operate, and close a community shelter—something that requires more than just opening doors.

Remember the Pets – With insights from JoAnn Griffin, this session highlighted the importance of including pets in emergency plans, ensuring they remain safe and unharmed during disaster scenarios.

A community effort with national impact

CERT and MRC programs are federally recognized volunteer initiatives designed to supplement professional responders by training local citizens in basic disaster response. From fire safety and medical aid to shelter logistics and emotional support, volunteers help fill vital roles when communities are overwhelmed.

For Bolandrina, the workshop was a perfect reflection of the mission she promoted at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy and through her public service.

“This is how we build resilient communities—by coming together to learn, practice, and prepare,” she said. “It’s empowering to know that we have the tools to help—not just in hospitals or classrooms, but right here in our neighborhoods.”

Looking ahead

With hurricane season and winter storms looming, the timing of the workshop served as a call to action for all residents to review their personal emergency plans, check their supply kits, and consider how they can serve others during times of crisis.

As Bolandrina remarked, “When we prepare together, we respond better together.”

West Brookfield zoning bylaw amendment put on hold

WEST BROOKFIELD — West Brookfield’s Annual Town Meeting that was held on June 3 has received a decision from the Attorney General’s office regarding Article 15, which states:

“To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town of West Brookfield Zoning Bylaws by amending Section 3.23 Commercial Use by adding Section 17 Indoor Storage as follows:

17 Indoor Storage
Use of existing structures for indoor storage of boats, automobiles and/or equipment as determined by the Zoning Board of Appeals, including the rental of structures for said use, but excluding the storage of liquid hazardous materials, as defined in G.L. c.21E.

or take any other action relative thereto. (Sponsored by the Planning Board).”

When the meeting was held on June 3, the article passed unanimously in a simple majority vote.

The Attorney General’s office has decided to place this article on “299 hold” due to the public hearing notice not being posted for 14 days prior to the annual meeting, as required by law.

West Brookfield Knights of Columbus hosting spaghetti dinner

WEST BROOKFIELD — The Knights of Columbus Council 11080 and the Mary Martha Sodality are sponsoring a spaghetti dinner this month.

The dinner will take place on Saturday, Oct. 25, in Dugan Hall at Sacred Heart Church (10 Milk St.). Proceeds from the event will benefit the Blessed Carlo Acutis Parish.

Dinner includes pasta fagioli; a garden salad; meatballs and sausage; spaghetti and sauce; Italian bread; a dessert; and water, soda, and coffee.

The dinner cost is a \$15 donation per person (\$10 for children under 12 years old).

Take-out will be available at 6 p.m. The sit-down dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m.

Admission tickets are also good for entry for a special door prize. Additionally, raffle tickets will be available. Advance ticket purchases are encouraged. Tickets are available from any Knight or Sodality member, or by calling 413-813-8100.

You may also send an email to: wallyconnor122@gmail.com.

Tickets will only be available at the door while they last.

East Brookfield Library hosting annual craft fair

EAST BROOKFIELD — The East Brookfield Public Library will hold its annual Craft Fair Saturday, Oct. 18 from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Stop by and start your holiday shopping early. Knitters, doll makers, candles, woodwork, adult clothing protectors, painters and many more. This program is free and open to the public. You will be supporting local artists with your purchase.

Leicester Public Library announces October programs

LEICESTER — Guests of all ages are invited to enjoy autumn programs at Leicester Public Library.

The Friends of the Library will hold a semi-annual book sale on three dates: Saturday, Oct. 18 (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.); Tuesday, Oct. 21 (9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.); and Wednesday, Oct. 22 (9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

All book sale events will take place at the library. Books, movies, CDs, audio-books, puzzles, and board games are all \$1 each. Only cash or checks will be accepted. All money raised by the Friends goes directly to support library programs and activities.

The library will host a Halloween costume exchange during all hours the library is open between Oct. 4-31.

“Costume donations are encouraged but not required,” read a statement released by the library. “Come pick out a new or gently used Halloween costume. Most are kids’ sizes, but there are a few adult sizes as well.”

The library will hold its annual Halloween party from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 25. The event will include snacks, games, crafts, and a spooky story to kick off the festivities at 11 a.m.

Activities at the Halloween party are designed for preschool and school-aged children, but everyone is welcome to attend. Costumes are optional but encouraged.

For a complete list of upcoming library programs, check out the calendar section at www.leicesterlibrary.org.



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A journey of heart: From Kenya to care

CHARLTON — For Michael Mutunga Wairimu, nursing is more than a job—it's a vow to serve humanity at its most vulnerable. His path into the profession wasn't linear, nor easy, but it was intentional. Rooted in empathy, resilience, and an unwavering belief in people, Michael's journey has taken him from classrooms in Kenya to nursing homes in Massachusetts—always with a focus on healing, hope, and heart. “My nursing journey was a commitment to the most profound parts of the human experience,” says Wairimu. “We meet people where they are, in pain, in fear, sometimes even at the end. That connection—that trust—is sacred.”

A global beginning
Originally from Kenya, Wairimu's passion for caregiving emerged at an early age. After completing his education at Moi Ndeffo Secondary School, he pursued a Diploma in Psychological Counseling at Kenya Psychological Counselling College, followed by a Certificate in Computer Literacy from Egerton University. With a solid foundation in both emotional and practical care, he emigrated to the U.S., where he quickly immersed himself in community service and healthcare roles.

Nursing education & growth in Massachusetts

Wairimu graduated in June 2024 from the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy in Charlton, with a Certificate in Practical Nursing. He also earned certifications in Mental Health First Aid Dementia Training, and BLS/HCP CPR/First Aid—credentials that showcase his commitment to quality care and continued growth.

“The strengths of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy were the learning environment and the professors,” Wairimu reflects. “The school was well-equipped, and the faculty had great knowledge. They were there for us—not just as instructors, but as mentors.”

Among those mentors were Dr. Ana Oliver, who instilled high standards (always do your best), and Dr. Adelina Healy, whom Wairimu describes as an “angel” in his academic journey. “She told me, ‘You will make a good nurse in the future.’ And she meant it. They took me under their wings and modeled true professionalism.”

Wairimu also credits Dr. Gretheline Bolandrina, whose motivational words and tireless dedication to students left a lasting impact: “Thank you for always supporting us and sharing our little winnings.”

Clinical rotations & real-world training

Wairimu's clinical experiences strengthened both his technical skills and emotional intelligence. As a Student Nurse at Quaboag Rehabilitation Center (April 2024 –

June 2024) and Holden Rehabilitation Center (January 2024 – April 2024). He administered medications, monitored vitals, assisted with activities of daily living, and collaborated with healthcare teams. He worked under close supervision to sharpen his judgment, professionalism, and bedside manner.

Professional experience & dedication to care

Wairimu has worked in various healthcare settings, including Westside House Nursing Home (LPN, September 2025 – Present), administering medications, recording vitals, and providing compassionate bedside care. Jewish Healthcare Center (LPN, July 2024 – September 2024) Supporting patients with mobility, medications, and recovery. Venture Community Services (Direct Care Worker, March 2022 – September 2025): Teaching life skills, providing general care, and supporting emotional well-being. Open Sky Community Services (Direct Care Worker, July 2022 – June 2023) Supporting individuals in group homes through meal prep, appointments, and daily activities.

He shared, “What makes a good caregiver isn't just the tasks. Its presence, patience, and persistence. You must listen—not just to symptoms, but to people.”

Emotional challenges and hard-won resilience

Wairimu speaks openly about the

emotional toll of nursing—the exhaustion, the burnout, the struggle to not carry work home and still be present for his family.

“There were times of deep self-doubt,” he says. “I had to fight burnout and learn that asking for help isn't a weakness. It's how we survive.”

His greatest personal success? “Resilience. I survived the toughest days and emerged a stronger, more skilled, more compassionate nurse.”

Fatherhood, faith & fuel for the future

Now a proud father to Ella, his seven-month-old daughter, Wairimu finds renewed purpose in balancing work and family.

“She's my biggest inspiration,” he says. “When I look at her, I'm reminded of why I work so hard. Every shift, every sleepless night—I'm doing it for her.”

He also draws daily motivation from the patients he serves—people who, despite their pain or limitations, teach him about courage.

The road ahead: A prudent nurse
For Wairimu, the NCLEX-PN was a tough battle, but he remained undeterred.

“I did not give up. I worked hard on my weaknesses, and I passed,” he said.

A MassHire Grant Recipient, active volunteer in community clinics and school screenings (Charlton BP Clinic, Shepherd Hill BP Screening, Charlton



Michael Mutunga Wairimu

Middle School), Wairimu continues to serve and inspire those around him.

He closes, “This isn't just a job. It's a life of service. If you lead with compassion, stay teachable, and never stop fighting for your purpose—you'll always be on the right path.”

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OBITUARY

Paul W. Fortune, 77



Paul W. Fortune, 77, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, September 27, 2025. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Regan; his son Tyler; his daughter Ashley and her husband Sean; 4 grandchildren: Kyla, Cole, Augustus and Autumn; his sister Wendy, and her husband Mark, several nieces, nephews, cousins and countless good friends. He is predeceased by his brothers John and Gary.

Paul was born in Worcester the son of the late Harold J. and Rita (Wilson) Fortune before moving to Leicester where he graduated from Leicester High School and later earned his Associates Degree from Quinsigamond Community College. Paul served his country as a member of the United States Air Force and was stationed on Cape Cod as a weather observer.

Paul was an incredibly talented builder and carpenter. He worked as the Supervisor of Building Maintenance/

Construction for Clark University for roughly 30 years. In his free time Paul was an avid outdoorsman and a lifetime member of the Leicester Rod & Gun Club. Paul collected and restored antique tractors and Mitchell fishing reels. On winter days, Paul could be found soaking up the heat of the woodstove carving fan birds. He enjoyed taking drives with Regan in his restored 1957 MGA. Paul loved fishing with his grandchildren at Lake Winnepesaukee, bow season and his sister's cooking. Paul will be greatly missed and always remembered.

Calling hours are Saturday, October 11, 2025 from 1:00-3:00pm at Morin Funeral Home, 1131 Main Street, Leicester, MA 01524. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Paul's memory may be made to: <https://www.plantmemorialtree.com/> or <https://shop.alivingtribute.org/>



SRO

continued from page A1

and bettering myself, as far as staying up to date on my trainings and finding new trainings to grow within this role," Clements said. "My favorite part about being an SRO is getting to know the children and staff within the community. I am able to interact with them and be a positive impact on their life, while also doing what I love in keeping everyone safe."

Added Clements, "Being an SRO is about meeting the kids on their level, and being someone they can look to for advice and guidance. I enjoy getting to know the kids and their backgrounds, while also sharing with them who I am and sharing the joy of my job."

Responsibilities for Clements at EBES vary from day to day. Common focus areas include access control; guidance for students and staff; development of educational programs for students; taking reports within

the school; and handling juvenile-related calls during his patrol time.

"I wear many hats when I am here, from police, counselor, educator, friend, etc.," Clements said.

Clements thanks the EBES community for welcoming him into their learning family, as well as the SEBRSD leadership team.

"The first month on the job has been wonderful. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting everyone and getting to know various personalities and ways in which I can have a positive impact in my role," Clements reflected. "I have gotten to know the school, and I've spoken to various staff about problem-solving and law-related issues. I have also had the opportunity to share my story of who I am and why I love being a police officer."

As the school year moves along, Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District Superintendent Paul Haughey looks forward to seeing Clements continue

to strengthen his bonds across the EBES community.

"We are so excited for him to join East Brookfield Elementary School and to become an integral part of our community," read a statement released by Haughey. "We value the connections he will build with our students as he greets them in the mornings, visits classrooms, and participates in school activities."

Clements is currently in the process of developing educational programs in multiple areas, including internet safety and problem-solving.

"I am also looking forward to going to various activities held at the elementary school throughout the year. Just really getting out there and giving back in the best way possible," Clements told the New Leader.

Away from work, Clements enjoys spending time with his wife and two children. He is a big sports fan, cheering on the New York Yankees and Denver Broncos.

SLACK

continued from page A1

promotional events for her book. On Saturday, Oct. 18, from noon to 2 p.m., she will visit A Great Notion (65 Southbridge St., Auburn).

On Saturday, Nov. 1, from 2-3:30 p.m., the author will attend Booklovers' Gourmet (72 East Main St., Webster).

On Wednesday, Nov. 12,

at 6 p.m., Slack will attend Tidepool Bookshop (372 Chandler St. in Worcester).

As she begins the process of sharing her latest release with readers, Slack is also focused on her next writing projects.

"I'm planning to continue to work on the craft of writing to improve my skills. I do have some connected short stories that I could expand into a novel. I'll see where my

energy takes me," the author said.

Slack's short stories have been published in MUSED, Adelaide Literary, and in the 2023 Quabbin Quills anthology, Our Wild Winds.

To learn more about Slack and her works, visit www.maryanneslack.com. The site also allows visitors to sign up for a monthly newsletter released by the author.

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LEGALS

Town of Spencer Conservation Commission PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the requirements of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act, MGL c. 131, s. 40 and the Spencer Wetlands By-Law:

Author Cyr has filed an **RDA** with the Spencer Conservation Commission to replace the septic system located at **43 Borkum Road**, Spencer, MA.

Mark Auger has filed an **RDA** with the Spencer Conservation Commission to remove branches and trees located at **45 Oakland Drive**, Spencer, MA.

George Lussier has filed an **NOI** with the Spencer Conservation Commission for a proposed single-family home, septic & driveway located at **25 Marble Road**, Spencer, MA.

Mike McTigue has filed an **RDA** with the Spencer Conservation Commission to remove branches/trees located at **43 Oakland Drive**, Spencer, MA.

Stephen Boyle has filed an **NOI** with the Spencer Conservation Commission to replace retaining walls, steps and remove trees located at **10 Laurel Lane**, Spencer, MA.

Applications can be reviewed at the Office of Development and Inspectional Services, Town Hall. A public hearing regarding these filings will be held by the Spencer Conservation Commission in McCourt Social Hall at Town Hall, 157 Main Street, on Wednesday, October 22, 2025 at which time all persons having an interest may be present or call in remotely to participate. Conservation Commission meetings open at 6:15 p.m. October 10, 2025

Worcester, MA 01608 (508)831-2200 Docket No. W025C0340CA CITATION ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME

In the matter of:
Aaron Paul Raby-Denham
A **Petition to Change Name of Adult** has been filed by
Aaron Paul Raby-Denham of Warren MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:
Aaron Paul Denham

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: Worcester Probate and Family Court before 10 a.m. on the return day of 10/28/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.

WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: September 22, 2025
Stephanie Fattman, Register of Probate
October 10, 2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 131, Section 40 of the Wetlands Protection Act, the North Brookfield Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on October 14, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Offices, 215 No. Main St., No. Brookfield for an NOI filing and associated activities on 20 Ryan Road, North Brookfield.

Any person interested in this matter is invited to attend the hearing.
October 10, 2025

Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), will hold a public hearing to review and discuss the Spencer Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP):
Date: Monday, October 20, 2025
Time: 6:00 PM
Location: McCourt Social Hall
157 Main Street
Spencer, MA 01562

This meeting can also be accessed virtually using the following link: <https://www.gotomeet.me/TownofSpencerMA/boardofselectmen>

This hearing will take place during the Board of Selectmen meeting. The purpose of the hearing is to:

- Provide an overview of the Hazard Mitigation Planning process
- Discuss the updated Spencer Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Inform the public about the current public comment period for the Plan

Community members are encouraged to attend, learn about the plan, and provide feedback. Public input is a vital part of the planning process to help reduce risks from natural hazards and improve community resilience.

For more information or to review the draft plan, please visit: <https://www.spencerma.gov/home/news/hazard-mitigation-plan-public-comment>

For questions or comments related to the public hearing or the HMP, please contact:

- John O'Leary – joleary@cmrpc.org
- Will Talbot – wtalbot@cmrpc.org

October 10, 2025

Justin Smith

and to all persons entitled to the benefit of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act: 50 U.S.C. c. 50 § 3901 (*et seq*): PennyMac Loan Services, LLC claiming to have an interest in a Mortgage covering real property in East Brookfield, numbered 101 Putney Court, given by Justin Smith to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for Residential Mortgage Services, Inc., dated April 22, 2015, and recorded at Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 53641, Page 238, as affected by a Loan Modification Agreement dated December 26, 2024 and recorded at said Registry in Book 71557, Page 256 and now held by the plaintiff by assignment, has/have filed with this court a complaint for determination of Defendant's/Defendants' Servicemembers status.

If you now are, or recently have been, in the active military service of the United States of America, then you may be entitled to the benefits of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. If you object to a foreclosure of the above-mentioned property on that basis, then you or your attorney must file a written appearance and answer in this court at **Three Pemberton Square, Boston, MA 02108** on or before November 17, 2025 or you may lose the opportunity to challenge the foreclosure on the grounds of noncompliance with the Act.

Witness, GORDON H. PIPER, Chief Justice of said Court on September 30, 2025.
Attest:
Deborah J. Patterson
Recorder
October 10, 2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Worcester Probate and Family Court 225 Main Street

Public Hearing Notice Town of Spencer – Hazard Mitigation Plan
The Town of Spencer, in collaboration with the Central Massachusetts

(SEAL) COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS LAND COURT DEPARTMENT OF THE TRIAL COURT 25 SM 002959 ORDER OF NOTICE TO:

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BREAKFAST
continued from page A1

Members of the Leicester Public Schools enjoy giving back through several events and programs at the Senior Center each year.

At prior breakfast ceremonies, elementary school students made thank-you cards for veterans, while middle school and high school students are always eager to volunteer their time.

"It is incumbent for schools to teach empathy for senior citizens and veterans. I'm ecstatic to see our students working with and respecting our seniors and our veterans. It is a mutually beneficial partnership," said Leicester Public Schools Superintendent Brett Kustigian, who has worked with the Senior Center in recent years to significantly expand intergenerational programming.

Local legislators and first responders also attend the breakfast each year, as well as members of town boards and departments. Additionally, members of the South High Community School Air Force Junior ROTC have led a ceremony at the program for several consecutive years.

At a time of deepening division across the country, local leaders are embracing an opportunity for all guests to unite and show their common support for those who served.

"In this time of regular and often disturbing disagreement of policy and politics, the unified voices of Leicester publicly stand up to respect and honor our men and women who courageously wear and have worn the uniform," said Select Board Chairman Doug Belanger. "This breakfast is only one of our community's ways of saying: Veterans, thank you."

The community thanks Moore and Project New Hope for their ongoing support of veterans and their families. Their efforts, with strong assistance from community members, have supported countless veterans over the years.

Senior Center officials remind the community that, due to seating capacity at the venue, the breakfast is specifically intended for Leicester veterans and their families.

To learn more about the event, or to check out upcoming programs and activities, contact the Senior Center.

Quaboag Historical Society hosting free program

WEST BROOKFIELD — The Quaboag Historical Society (QHS) will sponsor a free presentation this month.

Set for Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. at the West Brookfield Senior Center, the program will be led by Christie Higginbottom, a horticultural historian and plant expert who previously worked at Old Sturbridge Village. Entitled "An Infinite Variety of Fruit: Historic New England Apples," Higginbottom's presentation will focus on the nineteenth century history of apples in New England. Guests will have an opportunity to learn about hundreds of varieties that originated in historic orchards throughout the area.

Additionally, participants will be able to learn about the history of heirloom apples and sample some unique varieties.

"The QHS is dedicated to promoting and sharing local history through talks, events, and activities," read a statement released by the society. "The QHS museum is also a wonderful place to learn about the six towns in the Plantation, which include East Brookfield, Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, Warren, and New Braintree. Our organization always welcomes local historians and specialists to share their knowledge and ideas, so that we can build stronger community connections through a shared history."

The West Brookfield Senior Center is located at 73 Central St. Light refreshments will be served during the program.

If you would like to register for the event, please contact Ed Londergan at: ed.londergan@gmail.com. You may also call 508-864-8685.

Spencer PD taking part in Pink Patch Project

SPENCER — The Spencer Police Department is proud to once again take part in the Pink Patch Project this year.

"Our limited-edition Pink Patch gear is now available, with proceeds helping to raise awareness and support the fight against breast cancer," read a statement released by the department. "Every purchase makes a difference and helps us stand together with those battling breast cancer. Wear your patch, show your support, and help spread the word throughout our community."

If you are interested in purchasing a Pink Patch (\$10 each), please stop by the police station with cash or a check.

For additional information about how you can support the project, please send an email to: ntessier@spencerpolice.org.

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LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES

BROOKFIELD
Brookfield Ecumen-
ical Food Pantry
St. Mary’s Church
4 Howard Street,
Brookfield, MA 01506
Distribution: Wednes-
day 9:30 AM-11 AM:
Saturday 9:30 AM-
11AM

CHARLTON
Chip - In Food Pantry
McKinstry Building
37 Main Street, Charl-
ton, MA 01507
Distribution: 3rd Satur-
day 9 AM-12 Noon

St. Joseph’s Church,
Charlton
Tuesday 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Wednesday 9-11 a.m.
Everyone is welcome.

LEICESTER
Leicester Food Pantry
St. Joseph-St.
Pius X Parish
759 Main Street, Leices-

ter, MA 01524
Distribution: Tuesday 5
PM-7 PM

**NORTH BROOKFIE
LD**
St. Joseph’s Food Pantry
Located in the church
hall at 296 North Main
St. North Brookfield
Distribution is the 1st
Thursday of the month
from 5:00-6:30PM
the 3rd Thursday of the
month from 12 Noon-
1:15PM
Any questions should be
directed to the Rectory
office 508 867-6469.

St. Joseph’s Food Pantry
is a community part-
ner affiliated with the
Worcester County Food
Bank.

OXFORD
Oxford Ecumenical
Food Shelf
Oxford Community
Center
4 Maple Road
Oxford, MA 01540
Distribution: Thursday
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

ROCHDALE
The Lord’s Cupboard
Food Pantry
Greenville Baptist
Church
674 Pleasant St.
Rochdale, MA
Distribution: Every

Monday from 12:00 -
2:00 p.m. Open to every-
one.

SOUTHBRIDGE
Saint Vincent de Paul
Society Food Pantry,
Located in the St. Anne
Church basement,
16 Church Street, Fisk-
dale, MA 01518
Stocked by donations
Contact: 508-347-6398

St. John Paul II Food
Pantry
279 Hamilton St, South-
bridge, MA 01550
(508) 765-3701
Distribution: Tuesday
3-5 pm, Wednesday 9-11
am

Southbridge Food Share
Located at Holy Trinity
Episcopal Church, lower
level
446 Hamilton St,
Southbridge, MA 01550
Email:
Southbridgefoodshare.
org@gmail.com
Phone: 508-764-6583
Open Monday, Wednes-
day, and Friday, from
10:00 am
to 11:15 am.

**SPENCER- EAST
BROOKFIELD -
RESIDENTS ONLY**
Mary Queen of the Ro-
sary Food Pantry
60 Maple St, Spencer,
MA 01562
Distribution: Thursday
10 AM-12 Noon

STURBRIDGE
Saint Vincent de Paul
Society Food Pantry,
Located in the St. Anne
Church basement,
16 Church Street, Fisk-
dale, MA 01518
Stocked by donations
Contact: 508-347-6398

WEBSTER
Webster-Dudley Food
Share
4 Church St #2
Webster, MA 0570
Distribution: Tuesday
and Thursday from 8:30
-11:00 am. Open to
Webster and
Dudley residents.
Please call ahead: 508-
943-9171

WEST BROOKFIELD
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Pantry
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Church
36 North Main Street,
W.Bookfield, MA 01585
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Thursday 7 PM- 8 PM




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Emma
Age 15
Registration #9192

She also enjoys creative hobbies such as knitting, writing, and read-
ing, which allow her to express herself and explore new ideas.

Emma is a bright, artistic, and re-
siliient young girl with a wonderful
sense of humor. She is kind, caring,
and energetic, with a natural ability
to connect with adults in meaningful
ways. Emma is a talented artist who
loves drawing and painting, and she
also has a passion for helping oth-
ers. She often talks about pursuing
a career in a helping profession and
has even expressed interest in the
field of biology, which she enjoys
learning about in her science class-
es. Active and adventurous, Emma
likes spending time outdoors hiking,
playing soccer, and shooting hoops.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/25085695902>

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terviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you.
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your family will fit well with. To learn more about adoption from fos-
ter care visit www.mareinc.org . Massachusetts Adoption Resource
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Featured New Listing DUDLEY - 13 OXFORD AVE

2 -FAMILY offers 2,354 SF of living area! 2 Large Apartments, 5 Spacious Rms, 2 BRs, 1 Bath each. Beautiful grand front entry foyer with the charm of yesteryear! double French doors & other unique features. Plenty of Natural light that flows into these apartments! 2nd flr apt has a private enclosed rear entry with it's own outside covered porch. Updates were done to electric & roof to accommodate Solar Panels. Property was family occupied **\$415,000.**

* June Cazeault * Laurie Sullivan* Lori Johnson-Chausse * William Gilmore II * Maureen Cimoch * Bryan Pelletier

Webster Lake - 302 Killdeer Island PANORAMIC VIEWS!



Renovated + move-in ready lakefront home w/1,700+/- sq ft. Open kitchen/dining/living w/cathedral ceilings + wall of windows. Primary suite w/private bath! 2 add'l bedrooms, 2nd Full bath. Lower level family room w/walkout to water. Wraparound deck, new vinyl railings, terraced yard, sandy beach, professional landscaping. Many updates. **\$799,900**

Snug Harbor Villa! WEBSTER LAKE WATERFRONT



WEBSTER LAKE WATERFRONT LIVING AT IT'S FINEST! ** THE VILLA'S at SNUG HARBOR! ** END UNIT** IS TRULY A RARE FIND! ONE OF ONLY 6 UNITS > Custom Built THIS 4000+/- SF w/Special Features & Upgrades. Offers 4 BRs - 3 are Primary BR Suites w/private baths, 4-1/2 Baths Total!! The Outstanding direct lakefront location provides exceptional Southern panoramic views across Middle Pond, a boat dock, & full recreation activities like swimming, fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding -- whatever Floats Your Boat :-) ! Perfect setup for entertaining family, friends & guests! Enjoy All 4 Spectacular Seasons! It's more than a home - it's a Life Style! **NEW PRICE \$1,050,000**



WEBSTER - 24 COOPER RD

NEW CONSTRUCTION Craftsman Style Home! Tucked away on Cooper Rd, Webster Lake w/Access at Lakeside Beach/ Boat Ramp. 3rd of 4 Homes being built at this Site. Offers 2,155 SF +/- of Living Area, 7 Rms, 4 BRs, 2-1/2 Baths, 9' Ceilings. Wood Flooring Throughout w/Ceramic Tile Floors in the Baths. Spacious Main BR Suite w/Walk-in Closet & Private Full Bath, Double-Sink Vanity! Lower level walkout w/Slider. Basement-rough plumbed Central AC! Garage. **\$649,900.**

WEBSTER- 4 PERRYVILLE RD



Hip Roof ranch! Move In Ready. Updated Kitchen. Formal Dining Rm, Living Rm.(18x13) Great Rm. 3+ BRS & full updated Bath w/Tub. Hardwood floors. Fireplace.Quality Owens-Corning finished basement system. 3 large LL rooms & 2nd Full Bath, kitchen area w/cabinets & refrigerator. Morton Barn Style Garage .39 acre **\$435,000**

On the shores of Lake Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg

WEBSTER LAKE WATERFRONT LISTING! KILLDEER RD



Ready for your year round enjoyment. 4 bedroom, 2 bath home. Open floor plan. Garage w/ enclosed entry to mudroom. Open living room with spectacular view! 2 bedrooms + 3rd bath, on main level. Central air. Lower level, additional 2 bedrooms, bath, bonus family room, summer kitchen! Boathouse! 51' of sandy beachfront! **\$799,000.**

Webster Lake Waterfront - 31 Bayview!!



Panoramic View, from this absolutely lovely home. 2600 +/- SF, 3+ Beds, 2 full baths, 2 car detached garage! 63' +/- waterfront. .37 Acres! Sandy Waterfront! **\$1,100,000**

Webster Lake - 53 Colonial Rd



WEBSTER LAKE WATERFRONT! JUST SIMPLY AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY! OVER 31,000 SQ FT OF LAND! Summer Cottage on 9482 SF of land.. assisted sale **\$1,199,900**

Webster Lake Waterfront 8 Long Island



Beautifully Updated Circa 1890s Classic Antique Island Cottage, with Rare Boat House Included! Extremely Unique, Clean & Well Maintained. Modern Conveniences w/the Charm of Yester-Year! 1240 SF 6 Rms, 3 BRs, 2-1/2 Baths. Hardwood Floors! Fireplace w/Wood Pellet Stove, Wrap-Around Screened Porch, Lg Outbuilding w/Full Bath/Shower/Laundry & Workshop. Patrol Town Wtr/Swr + Private Well for Outdoor &/or Off-Season Water Use! 14,300 SF +/- Level Lot w/105'+ of Shoreline. **\$995,000**

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