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Friday, December 13, 2024

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A special visitor from the North Pole greeted youngsters and families.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

WEST BROOKFIELD — It's been a while since the beloved White Christmas in West Brookfield program has received the proper weather conditions to match its name, but the 32nd annual event featured a perfect winter backdrop.

Unlike recent events, which saw wet or foggy conditions, the Dec. 8 program drew

thousands of guests to enjoy seasonal celebrations amid a spread of glistening snow.

Special activities were held for families and guests of all ages. One of the event's largest programs is a craft and vendor fair at West Brookfield Elementary School, as guests always enjoy finishing their Christmas shopping while supporting local crafters.

Several vendors and shoppers at the WBES craft fair told the New Leader they attend the event every year.

Others enjoyed the program for the first time this year, and they plan to be back again in 2025 to make the tradition part of their annual lineups.

Pictures with Santa took place in the Great Hall, and the Senior Center hosted gingerbread decorating activities. Additionally, the always popular elf hunt took place at several venues.

Meanwhile, open houses were set up at multiple businesses, town departments, churches, and other locations

across the center of town. These include the library and WBES.

"It's always nice to be able to get together and welcome the community, especially around the holidays," said Kathy Savary, the office manager for Bell and Hudson Insurance Agency, one of many locations to host an open house.

On the Town Common, guests once again discovered an array of outdoor activ-

Turn To **CHRISTMAS** page **A14**

Artist Rob Surette brings speed painting program to LMS

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

LEICESTER — Students and staff at Leicester Middle School recently welcomed artist Rob Surette to present his acclaimed speed painting program, "Be Somebody."

Surette, a nationally celebrated artist whose resume includes collaborations with Disney, DC Comics, DreamWorks, "Star Wars," and The Muppets, captivated the audience with his unique blend of art and inspiration.

"Thirty years ago, I created my Be Somebody speed painting show, hoping that I could flood kids' minds and hearts for one hour with awe, hope, beauty, love, and self-empowerment, inspiring them to aim to the highest possible good in life and change the way they looked at the world," Surette said.

During his Nov. 26 performance at LMS, Surette painted six-foot portraits of several historical figures, including

Courtesy

LMS officials welcome renowned artist Rob Surette (right).

Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, Albert Einstein, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Each figure was

brought to life in vivid colors and rapid brushstrokes, as Surette shared stories of the figures' contributions to humanity.

Additionally, Surette discussed the accomplishments and contributions of many famous athletes and musicians.

School officials were thrilled to welcome Surette for a program combining education and inspiration.

"Rob Surette captivated the hearts and minds of our staff and students. He left us all with the message that we could achieve anything we set our minds to," said LMS Assistant Principal Christine Barbato. "His show was the most inspirational performance I have ever witnessed."

Turn To **PAINTING** page **A14**

Stuff the Bus campaign an "amazing" success

Courtesy

Local residents, first responders, and businesses teamed up to make the annual Stuff the Bus campaign a success.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION — Local residents, public safety officials, and business owners teamed up with AA Transportation to assist families this holiday season.

The company's ninth annual Stuff the Bus campaign was held on Saturday, Nov. 30. AA Transportation officials parked buses at three

Turn To **STUFF** page **A14**

Leicester PD program makes locating missing loved ones easier

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

LEICESTER — The police department reminds residents to take advantage of a program that helps increase community safety and locate missing individuals.

The "Take Me Home, Keep Me Safe Project" allows residents to register information with the police department to enable officers to better identify and assist loved ones in the event they go missing. The program is frequently utilized by individuals with family members who are deaf or hearing-impaired; developmentally disabled; medically disabled; autistic or nonverbal; and those dealing with various forms of dementia.

In addition to providing residents with an opportunity to include photos of their loved ones, the project also records information that may be helpful to police. These items include specific words or phrases that officers can use to calm the individual or get their attention.

"The program is designed to help keep individuals safe that may need some help. We have had several families dealing with Alzheimer's sign up so we have critical information available at a moment's notice," said Chief Ken Antanavica.

Each listing also includes records of likely places where the registered individual may be found. For example, if the person is known to frequent the library or the Town Common, those locations can be entered into the form to better assist police with locating them.

Additional records include lists of prescription medications the person uses; sensory or dietary issues; favorite toys or items; identifying marks like tattoos or scars; method of preferred communication; and a description of how they typically respond when approached by strangers.

All information submitted for each record is voluntary. The goal is to give first responders the best opportunity to not only locate the individual, but to provide comfort while approaching them. Additionally, if the individual has a medical condition or requires medications, the

Turn To **MISSING** page **A14**

Holidays bring early deadlines

Along with merriment and good cheer, the holiday season brings with it an accelerated press schedule for our next few editions.

The submission deadline for any press releases and letters to the Editor intended for publication in our Dec. 27 edition will be Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 4 p.m.

For the Jan. 3 edition, the deadline will be Friday, Dec. 20 at 4 p.m.

Please note that our offices will be closed Dec. 23-25 in observance of Christmas and Dec. 30-Jan. 1 in observance of New Year's.

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Sheriff's Office S.T.O.P. Program named Mass. Sheriff's Association Program of the Year

WEST BOYLSTON — The Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association (MSA) proudly celebrated the outstanding achievements and unwavering commitment of law enforcement and corrections professionals at the 2024 Law Enforcement & Corrections Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, Nov. 19. The event, held at The Great Hall in the Massachusetts State House, honored recipients in 10 award categories for their exceptional dedication and service.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) Substance Opportunity Treatment Program (S.T.O.P.) was awarded the title of Program

of the Year by the Massachusetts Sheriff Association.

S.T.O.P. was recognized for its innovative, evidence-based approach to treating substance use disorder, offering personalized care, therapeutic activities, and comprehensive re-entry support that has significantly reduced recidivism rates among participants.

Those accepted into S.T.O.P. are removed from the general population for the three- or six-month duration of the program. They are placed in the state-of-the-art stand-alone rehabilitation unit and treatment clinic twenty-four hours

a day, seven days a week. This separation eliminates the external pressures of being in the general population for those struggling to achieve sobriety.

The multi-departmental effort works to address the root causes of addiction and co-occurring disorders while also setting individuals up for success beyond sobriety. The program is coupled with specialized classes and vocational opportunities, only seen in a select few correctional facilities in the country.

"The Worcester County Sheriff's Office has created a model approach for dealing with substance use disorder in a correctional setting," commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. "We have presented on S.T.O.P. at national Sheriffs and Human Services conferences. Industry professionals are impressed with the level of care and services offered to those in S.T.O.P. The staff of the program



Courtesy

Sheriff Lewis Evangelidis, Abigail Rotti (S.T.O.P. Director), and Crystal Torres (S.T.O.P. Assistant Director) accept an award from Mass Sheriff Association President, Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi.

works hard to make this program successful. Being recognized at the state's capitol building is a well-deserved honor."

Evangelidis represents the largest county by

area in Massachusetts. Since 2011, he has adopted a policy emphasizing the importance of drug and alcohol rehabilitation while also maintaining a tough stance on crime. This approach

has enabled WCSO staff to tackle the issue of substance abuse comprehensively while ensuring the safety and security of Massachusetts residents.

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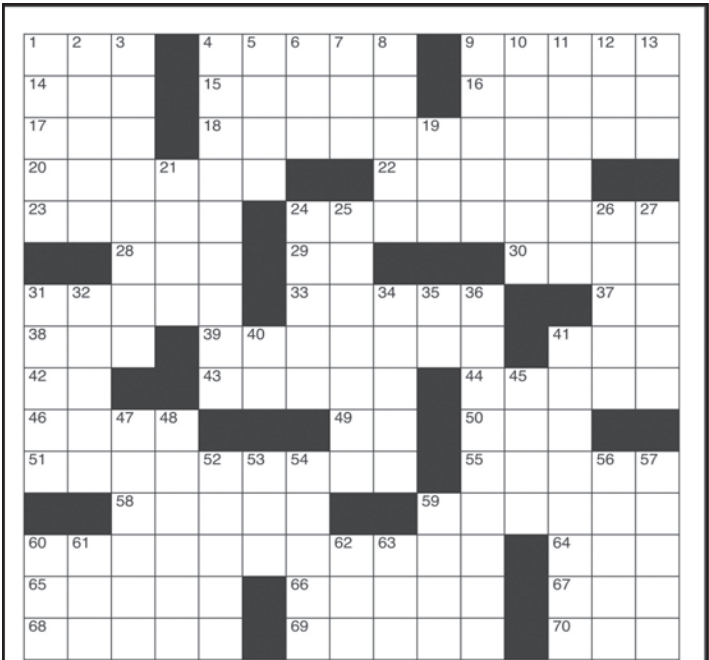
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Miller beer variety

4. Member of people inhabiting Bering Sea islands

9. Stomach

14. Investment vehicle

15. Fictional soccer coach Ted

16. Irregular in botanical parlance

17. Cease standing

18. "American Horror Story" actress

20. Grow milk teeth

22. Plant parts

23. Snow house

24. Most contemptuous

28. Note to repay

29. Old English

30. Wings

31. Financial institutions

33. Parks and Lopez are two

37. Mr. T's "The A-Team" character

38. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
39. Give off

41. Semitic alphabet letter

42. Farm state

43. Actress Sarandon

44. Back parts

46. Zoroastrian concept of holy fire

49. Touchdown

50. One point north of due east

51. Refurbishes

55. Silver and Dogg are two

58. Former Tigers catcher Alex

59. Type of envelope

60. Seriously considered

64. Unhappy

65. Past (archaic)

66. Asian wild dog

67. Old English letter

68. Young domestic sheep

69. Football players need to gain them

70. Witness

CLUES DOWN

1. Dormant Peruvian volcano

2. Norwegian composer

3. Indicates location

4. Pubs

5. Unable to walk easily

6. Electronic warfare-support measures

7. World leader

8. Midsection

9. Jewish calendar month

10. Urological condition

11. A small quantity of anything

12. Mountain Time

13. Affirmative

19. Word element meaning ear

21. Carried away

24. Short-billed rails

25. Newborn child

26. Sword

27. Groups of people
31. Prickly, scrambling shrubs

32. Become less intense

34. Polishes

35. Indicates position

36. Songs sung to one's beloved

40. The 12th letter of the Greek alphabet

41. Insects

45. Israeli politician

47. Pre-digital

48. Roaming

52. Ambience

53. Brew

54. Late

56. Make ecstatically happy

57. Semitic alphabet letter

59. Blend

60. Dash

61. Self

62. Exclamation of satisfaction

63. Hill or rocky peak

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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North Brookfield teen launches fundraiser for Second Chance



NORTH BROOKFIELD — Cooper Mann, 16, a student at North Brookfield High School, has decided to host a fundraiser for Second Chance Animal Shelter for the month of December.

Mann chose this organization for his school community service project because the shelter is where he had adopted his dog eight years ago. He has made arrangements with

local businesses in North Brookfield and surrounding towns to place collection bins for donated items off of the shelter's wish list. He has also set up a bank account at North Brookfield Savings Bank for collecting monetary donations from Venmo and PayPal.

This is the second time that Mann has run this

fundraiser; the first was three years ago, when he raised \$800 and more than \$1,000 in donated items for the shelter. He hopes to pass that goal this time around.

The collection bins can be found at North Brookfield Savings Bank (North Brookfield and West Brookfield Branches), Strandz Hair Salon (North Brookfield), Kara Anderson's Dance Studio (North Brookfield), North Brookfield Elementary School, North Brookfield Senior Center, Twitches Nutrition (Barre), Bonin's Wood Products and Landscape Supply (West Brookfield), Howe Lumber (East Brookfield) and Studio 538 (Sturbridge).

For those that are unable to bring an item to a collection spot, Cooper created a wish list on Amazon, it can be found by searching "Second Chance Donation list- Cooper Mann" in the gift/registry area.

SPENCER ALMANAC

REAL ESTATE

BROOKFIELD

\$133,000, 5 Mechanic St, Sisco Jr, Leon, to Logyn Shea Re Inc.

EAST BROOKFIELD

None

LEICESTER

\$498,000, 130 Pleasant St, Ivel, Leonard L, and Ivel, Judith C, to Beucler Jr, John P, and Gordon, Amanda.

\$450,000, 214 Pine St, Beucler Jr, John, and Gordon, Amanda, to Canfield, Stacey.

NORTH BROOKFIELD

None

SPENCER

\$581,500, 195 Charlton Rd, Gibson 3rd, Elwin F, to Smith, Allison L, and Gibson, Sarah.

WARREN

\$585,000, 78 Town Farm Rd, Messier, David M, and Messier, Paula J, to Beall, Seth, and Beall, Rebecca E.

\$25,000, Brimfield Rd #1, Landry, Jennifer L, to Samek Properties LLC.

WEST BROOKFIELD

\$266,000, 67 Juniper St, Allen, Joshua R, and Allen, Michael T, to Leblanc, Kelsei.

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Busy holiday season ahead at Haston Library

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER
NORTH BROOKFIELD — Guests of all ages will enjoy a busy holiday season of programming at Haston Free Public Library. Craft Night for Adults returns on Thursday, Dec. 12, at 6 p.m. Guests will learn how to make simmer pots during a special workshop. Please register for this event in advance by contacting the library by phone or email. The library's Book Discussion Group will next meet on Jan. 28 at

7 p.m. The next featured book is "Indian Horse," written by Richard Wagames. The library's Movie Discussion Group will change its format this month. Members are invited to watch "A Christmas Story" from the comfort of their residences. "We will not be holding a meeting in the month of December, but we will still have copies available for checkout for the selected movie," read a statement released by the library. Several December sto-

ry-time programs will be offered to youngsters on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. Winter-themed books will be paired with craft activities covering such topics as snowmen, reindeer, stockings, and others. The library continues to host the Children's Art Club on the first and third Monday of each month. All sessions last from 4-5 p.m. The library's Lego Club takes place every Thursday at 4 p.m. As a reminder to guests and community members, the library is always seeking support in vari-

ous forms. Your generosity helps make programs and services available for all guests. "Again this year, The Friends of the Haston Library are conducting the annual fall fundraising appeal as we continue to support the library and its many programs and activities," read the library-issued statement. "The Friends help fund the library's annual budget for books and materials, as well as the library pass program, which offers patrons free or reduced admission to sites such as the

Worcester Art Museum, Ecotarium, and Tower Hill Botanic Garden." The Friends of the Haston Free Public Library, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations to the Friends are tax-deductible. If you have questions or would like additional information, please visit the library's website. For those looking to help brighten the holiday season for area residents, there are still plenty of ways to give back. "Consider donating a new book from our children's wish list. For

more information, talk to a staff member or email: blamb@cwmars.org," read the library-issued statement. The library will be closed on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. For more information about upcoming library events, or to register for an activity, call 508-867-0208. You may also send an email to: hastonfree-publiclibrary@gmail.com. The library is located at 161 North Main St.

Open Sky Community Services appoints Mandell as VP of Integrated Behavioral Health Services



Elizabeth Mandell

WORCESTER — Open Sky Community Services, a nonprofit behavioral health and human services organization, has announced that Elizabeth Mandell, MSW, LICSW has been named Vice President of Integrated Behavioral Health Services. "Elizabeth's direct clinical experience with individuals of all ages and her previous management of varied behavioral health programs across the care continuum make her an instrumental addition to Open Sky and the clients we serve," said President and CEO Ken Bates. "We are thrilled to welcome Elizabeth as Vice President of

Integrated Behavioral Health Services and are excited about the innovation and clinical leadership that she brings." In her role, Mandell is responsible for overseeing the implementation of a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant for Open Sky's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). The CCBHC provides comprehensive, evidence-based behavioral health services and support for health-related social needs for children, adolescents, adults and families affected by mental health challenges and/or substance use disorders. Prior to joining Open Sky, Mandell was Senior Director at Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership/Carleton Behavioral Health, managing the statewide Community Behavioral Health Center Mobile Crisis Intervention programs, including all clinical, financial, operational, analytical and behavioral health service delivery components. She also served as Regional Mental Health Specialist/Placement Coordinator at the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, providing oversight and management of clinical operations to the Urgent Care Center and Crisis Stabilization Service programs within Southeastern Massachusetts. Mandell, of Bridgewater, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and earned a Master of Social Work degree from Boston College with a clinical concentration in children, youth and families. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in social work from Bridgewater State University. About Open Sky Community

Services Open Sky Community Services is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency based in Worcester that has been helping individuals in our community achieve more than they imagined possible for more than 50 years. The agency provides a wide range of services throughout Central Massachusetts for children, adults and families with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, brain injury, homelessness and other complex challenges. Open Sky Community Services has more than 1,300 dedicated employees and nearly 150 programs throughout the region, supporting more than 8,000 individuals annually. Open Sky is committed to race equity and is on a journey to learn, grow, teach and transform. For more information, please visit www.openskycs.org.

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Leicester Senior Citizens Club sponsors winter bus trip

LEICESTER — Guests are invited to take part in a winter bus trip organized by the Leicester Senior Citizens Club. The "Foxwoods Bingo/Casino Trip" will take place on Feb. 13. The bus will depart the Senior Center at 7:45 a.m. Passengers will arrive at the casino in time for Bingo. Others can opt to enjoy the rest of the casino on their own. As of press time, the casino is not offering any credits. The bus will leave the casino for home at 4:15 p.m., with arrival at the Senior Center expected at 5:30 p.m. The Senior Center is located at 40 Winslow Ave. Departure times are strictly enforced, so please arrive early. Payment for the trip must be made in the form of a check. Please make your check payable to: Leicester Senior Citizens Club. For more information about the trip, or to make a reservation, call trip coordinator David Wood at 508-330-1118.

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DA urges participation in Worcester County gun buyback

WORCESTER — Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. is urging county residents to take advantage of the 23rd annual Guns to Gardens program by turning in unwanted firearms on Saturday at participating police departments.

More than 4,000 guns have been turned in since 2002, when the program started in the City of Worcester. The program welcomes citizens of all Worcester County communities to voluntarily turn in unwanted firearms to participating police departments in Fitchburg, Northborough, Milford, Southbridge, Worcester or City Welding & Fabrication located at 10 Ararat St. in Worcester where owners can watch their weapon be destroyed.

Those who turn in firearms will receive gift cards in the amount of \$50 for a rifle, \$100 for a pistol, and \$150 for an automatic or semi-automatic weapon. Free gun locks are also available, even if you aren't turning in a firearm, and replica guns will be accepted.

"With this program, we're aiming to get unwanted and unsecured guns out of homes to avoid the potential tragic loss of life that can occur," Early

said. "These guns pose a risk of theft, misuse, and tragedy. By participating in the Guns to Gardens buyback program, we are reducing the chance of these guns being involved in accidents or violence. This program helps save lives and prevent the high costs associated with treating gunshot victims. Reducing gun-related tragedies in our communities benefits us all."

Early praised Dr. Michael Hirsh, medical director of Worcester's Division of Public Health, for his continued gun safety advocacy and for starting the gun buyback program.

"An unsecured weapon in the home is a public health danger that leads to more frequent homicides, burglaries, lethal domestic violence, accidental shootings, and suicide in the home," Hirsh said. "Please honor the memories of all our citizens, young and old, harmed by gun violence by bringing in your unwanted/unsecured weapon(s), unloaded please."

In recent years, Dr. Hirsh spearheaded a program to turn the destroyed weapons from the buyback program into garden tools to be used in the UMass community garden. The garden is maintained by members of the UMass community and the

produce is donated to those in need.

As in the past, Mr. Early will relax enforcement of the law prohibiting the carrying of firearms for people participating in the program. Residents should bring unloaded weapons wrapped or in a bag. Ammunition will also be accepted but should be separately bagged. Participants are reminded to treat all firearms as though they are loaded and dangerous.

Firearms can be turned in at the following locations during the specified hours:

Fitchburg Police Department: 10 a.m. to noon

Northborough Police Department: 9 a.m. to noon

Milford Police Department: 9 a.m. to noon

Southbridge Police Department: 9 a.m. to noon

Worcester Police Department: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

City Welding & Fabrication: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Guns to Gardens is sponsored by the Worcester County District Attorney's Office, UMass Memorial Medical Center, the City of Worcester, the Worcester Police Department and the Worcester Department of Public Health.

Worcester area bank named among best workplaces

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank, a community bank with locations throughout Central Massachusetts, has been named one of the 2024 Best Banks to Work For, creating a positive and supportive environment for employees. The rankings were created by American Banker magazine in partnership with Best Companies Group. The recognition is based on an anonymous employee survey and a thorough review of the benefits and perks offered. Cornerstone was ranked number 40 nationwide.

"We know that a successful business starts with happy employees who feel secure working in a healthy environment," said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. "We're grateful for the hard work our team puts into making sure our customers get the highest level of service, and in order for them to bring their best to work every day, they need to feel supported and empowered. It's an honor to be recognized for this."

Cornerstone offers employee benefits that are considered outside the usual scope, such as pet insurance and programs to help employees pay down student loans. Tickets to sporting events and theatre productions are given to employees, and the company rewards hard work with service anniversary awards and success-sharing bonuses.

Determining the Best Banks to Work For involves a two-step process. The first focuses on workplace policies, practices and demographics, worth about 25 percent of the total evaluation. The second consists of employee surveys assessing workplace experiences and attitudes, worth approximately 75 percent of the total evaluation. The combined scores determine the final ranking. To be considered for participation, banks must have been in business for at least a year and have 50 employees or more in the U.S.

Early elected President of MDAA

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

REGION — Worcester County District Attorney Joseph Early, Jr. was elected President of the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association (MDAA) in a unanimous vote by the state's district attorneys last week.

"I am honored and grateful to my colleagues for their trust and confidence in me," Early said. "I look forward to continuing to work together on all the issues impacting public safety, including promoting crime prevention programs and supporting victims. I am eager to continue building on the progress we've made together."

The Massachusetts District Attorneys Association is an independent state agency dedicated to supporting the eleven elected Massachusetts district attorneys and their staff members, including approximately 785 prosecutors and 260 victim witness advocates. The MDAA promotes public safety, justice, and fairness through collaboration and statewide policy initiatives.

This marks the second time DA Early has been chosen to lead the organization, having previously served as MDAA President in 2012. Most recently, he served as the association's Vice President.

"Since taking office in 2007, Early has com-

mitted his time in office to crime prevention, including providing safety programs to youth and seniors that have now reached more than 700,000 people," read a statement released by the DA's Office. "He is also committed to supporting community programs, especially those that keep kids around responsible adults between the hours of 3 to 6 p.m., a proven strategy for preventing crime."

Early has also been at the forefront of addressing the drug overdose epidemic and eliminating the stigma surrounding substance use disorder. He has built a Prevention and Support Network of more than 700 community members who work together to address the substance use and mental health needs of residents across Worcester County.

"As MDAA President, District Attorney Early will bring his wealth of experience and commitment to justice to the role, continuing his efforts to foster collaboration, advance public safety initiatives, and ensure fairness and integrity in Massachusetts' legal system," read the statement released by the DA's Office.

To learn more about community outreach initiatives, safety programs, and other efforts led by the DA's Office, visit www.worcesterda.com.

Leicester schools invite community to winter concerts

LEICESTER — The Leicester Public Schools Music Department invites guests to check out performances featuring multiple schools this month.

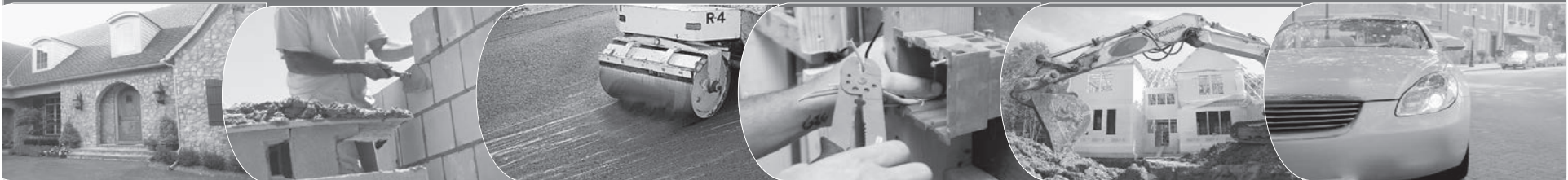
Winter concerts will be held on several nights in December. Elementary school students will perform throughout the day on Dec. 11, while high school students will perform on Dec. 12 at 6 p.m.

Middle school students will hold a concert on Dec. 17 at 6 p.m.

All performances will be held at the Leicester Middle School Fine Arts Center (174 Paxton St.).

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Holiday creations from indoor and garden plants

Don't let winter stop you from bringing a bit of the outdoors inside. Take a break from the holiday rush for a bit of gardening and crafting relief. Grab a pruner and basket then wander through your landscape gathering a few evergreen branches, berry-laden stems, and cones to create a holiday centerpiece or décor.



No landscape, no problem. Ask a gardening friend if you can collect a few items from their gardens. Invite them to join in the fun and create their own arrangements.

Gather a variety of greens to create a foundation of texture and backdrop for the other additions. The fan-like sprays of arborvitae, blue-green sprigs of juniper, and stems of other evergreens like yews, boxwoods, pines, and spruces provide all the greenery you need.



Melinda Myers

A houseplant with branches and berries from the landscape becomes holiday décor.

Now explore mixed borders and hedges for items with interesting colors or shapes. Red and yellow twig dogwoods, curly willow, contorted filbert, and fantail willow provide interesting color and form.

GARDEN MOMENTS

MELINDA MYERS

Collect a few cones, berries, and fruit such as rose hips, blue berry-like cones of junipers, sweet gum seed-pods, and alder's cone-like fruit. These are great substitutes for flowers often used in summer arrangements.

Make a stop at your flower gardens for seedheads of coneflowers, alliums, penstemon, milkweeds, balloon plants, and more. Collect fluffy seed heads of non-invasive ornamental and native grasses for filler. All these add beautiful natural elements to any centerpiece or can be painted or glittered for added glitz. And don't be afraid to add a few shiny ornaments for a bit of holiday flair.

Then dress up your indoor plants for the holidays. Add glittery holiday picks, silk flowers, faux berry-laden branches, and decorative ornaments for more color and sparkle. Add these to small potted plants to create a centerpiece and larger plants to provide more seasonal color to your holiday décor.

Stop by your favorite florist or garden center and purchase a few water picks and cut flowers. Place the cut flowers in the picks and sink them into the pots of your favorite houseplants. This adds some color and seasonal interest to any green plant.

Make them shine year-round with a few seasonal updates. Plant several compatible indoor plants in a large container. Sink a small empty pot in the space where you want to create a seasonal focal point. Set a small potted flowering plant like a miniature poinsettia, azalea, hydrangea, African violet, or cyclamen inside this empty one. Replace the flowering plant occasionally to freshen up the container garden or create a seasonal display.

Make it even easier to change the display by filling a large basket with a collection of individually potted green and flowering plants. Switch flowers as they fade and foliage plants as the holidays, your mood or the décor changes.

Consider creating a few extras as gifts to share throughout the holidays. You and the recipient will enjoy the festive creation.

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

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Friday's Child



Alanna
Age 17
Registration # 7562

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with other children and not be isolated from them. These activities should be things like an after school program and extracurricular activities. In school Alanna receives assistance with staying focused and on task in her classroom from an educational advocate.

<https://adopt.mareinc.org/waiting-child-profiles#gallery/child/7562>

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

To learn more about adoption from foster care visit www.mareinc.org. Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) can give you guidance and information on the adoption process. Reach out today to find out all the ways you can help children and teens in foster care.



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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Artificial intelligence: Humanity's smartest frenemy

Artificial intelligence (AI) is like that new kid in town who knows everything from helping you find the best Thai food at midnight to crafting the perfect apology text to your partner (“No, you’re right. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to eat the last doughnut”). It’s efficient, helpful, and eerily insightful. But as with all new friendships, there’s a fine line between awe and mild existential terror. Let’s start with the good stuff. AI is a whiz at handling the mundane. Tedious tasks like sorting emails, balancing budgets, and even diagnosing diseases are no match for the lightning-fast algorithms working behind the scenes. For writers (and would-be procrastinators), AI is like having an overachieving friend proofread your work and suggest snappier titles. It’s also a democratizing force: AI in education, for example, can help students in remote corners of the globe access the same quality resources as those in urban centers. Impressive, right? But there’s a catch. AI is a mimic. It learns by absorbing patterns from mountains of data—which means it’s less like a wise sage and more like a parrot with a doctorate. While this mimicry has its perks (who wouldn’t want a bot to whip up a dinner recipe based on the random five ingredients left in your fridge?), it also poses a risk. The more we rely on AI, the more human creativity and originality could start to wilt. Picture this: a world where everyone writes in the same witty, polished, AI-generated tone. Every wedding toast, blog post, and Tinder bio starts to sound suspiciously familiar. Instead of unique voices, we might end up with a global chorus of AI-crafted “perfect” responses. The quirks and idiosyncrasies that make us human—like mixing metaphors or inventing words like “hangry”—could fade into uniformity. Then there’s the “Big Brother” side of AI. While it’s not (yet) plotting to take over the world, AI does have a penchant for gobbling up data. Every time you scroll through social media, ask your smart speaker for the weather, or upload that cat video, you’re feeding the algorithm. AI knows more about you than your best friend does—possibly even more than you know about yourself. Creepy? Just a smidge. But before we panic and unplug our devices, it’s worth noting that AI isn’t inherently good or bad. Like fire or a karaoke machine, it all depends on how we use it. Harnessed wisely, AI can do wonders. But if we lean on it too heavily, we risk trading our humanity for convenience. So, what’s the solution? Balance. Use AI as a tool, not a crutch. Write your own jokes, even if they’re cheesy. Read a physical book and scribble in the margins. Embrace the imperfections that make you, you. And if AI starts getting too clever for its circuits, remind it who’s boss by pulling out a rotary phone. In the end, the future of AI is like a choose-your-own-adventure book: thrilling, unpredictable, and potentially disastrous if we stop paying attention. Let’s just make sure we’re the ones writing the story, not the machines.

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

Our disobedience is subject to God’s discipline

To the Editor:

God has yesteryear and is today, and will continue to be in control and judge and discipline the faithful, the unbelievers and evildoers.

God told the people then, and is telling us today, we will witness unbelievable events (Habakkuk 1:5).

What God is teaching us today – the head of the woman (wife) is the man (husband). This is not teaching the husband is in control, supremacy; what this is teaching is the man was created first, and the woman came from the man, and Jesus comes from God. God is the head of Jesus, Jesus is the head of the man, and the man (husband) is the head of the woman (wife). This pertains to husband and wife, not man and woman. I want to clarify this. This is the order God has ordained us to be (1 Corinthians 11:3).

The question we parents need to ask ourselves – who loves his or her child more, the father or mother; who allows the child to do what will harm him or her; or the one who corrects, trains punishes to help them learn what is right? Discipline is ordained by God; God’s discipline to us is a sign of His (God’s) deep love for us. Those who receive God’s discipline will inherit eternal life; those who reject God’s discipline will inherit eternal death. God does not send us to hell; we send ourselves to hell when we reject God. The choice is yours (Hebrew 12:7).

This Scripture is not referring to the final judgment; it is referring to God’s refining discipline. God often allows believers to experience consequences and to show us our potential for sinning, and to encourage us to turn from our sinful ways and to prepare us to face even stronger temptations in our daily life and to help us stay faithful to Jesus.

Think about this! How much more will unbelievers be subjected to if they are not faithful to God through Jesus? Apart from Jesus, they have absolutely no chance. If it is difficult for the righteous (Christians) to be saved because of God’s grace and mercy, what chance do the unbelievers, those who reject Jesus, have? The choice is ours! (Peter 4:17). Fall for Jesus; He will never leave you.

Dwell in peace!

ROLAND BLAIS
BROOKFIELD

Smoke and mirrors

To the Editor:

I hope everyone is making record of the current status of our national economy. The Dow is currently over 44,000, unemployment is at its lowest point in history, inflation is down near 2 percent target. Gas is at the lowest point since the Covid shutdown. I only mention these because Trump supporters clearly have memory issues. They were asking pre-election if you were better off than four years ago. Four years ago, the economy was in the crapper, schools and businesses were closed. The Dow closed around 19,000, or less than half of current level. We are breaking retail sales and air travel records daily.

In a single term, Biden has presided over yet another recovery from a Republican trashed economy, much like he did with Obama after the mess Bush #43 left him. He has signed more legislation than anyone since FDR or LBJ, all while never having control of both houses as they did. All of this was done, including massive infrastructure repairs, while have sever trillion less deficit than Trump gave us first term.

You have decided to give Trump another term, and this time with both Senate and House of Representatives. As we all know, he only hires the best people, which is why he pardoned or fired half of them last time. When he promised that traffickers of six underaged girls and drug pushers would be brought to justice, we did not think that what he meant was making Matt Gaetz Attorney General. His announced choice as Secretary of Defense is a Fox personality reputed to be a mean drunk and abuser of women, whose own mother says he is a terrible choice. Why would anyone think a nonmedical person who suffered from a brain worm can protect us?

In 1492, the natives discovered Columbus, who was lost at sea. I hope we remember this when dealing with those fleeing intolerable conditions where they came from.

The immigrant round up should be quite a spectacle. I am guessing it will be similar to when the brownshirts round up all non-Aryans.

Because many of the undocumented are pickers, packers, and construction workers, have the stable genius explain how this, coupled with tariffs on farm tractors and produce from the south and lumber from the north, is going to reduce inflation?

Several companies who rely on foreign sources for components have already announced layoffs. That will include electronics, like all TVs and the computers that even run American cars. I suggest you all revisit this choice after his first 100 days, as all before then he inherited. I expect the buyer’s remorse to arrive soon after.

KEN KIMBALL
BROOKFIELD

Latest antique and collectibles auction news



There’s been a lot of auction news lately, and today’s article will focus on two of the top stories. Estate sale and yard sale enthusiasts are always looking for a great find, and an art dealer walked away with one at a barn sale in the Hamptons of New York. He found a painting that he thought had a nice look and paid the \$50 asking price. The painting was dated 1912, signed Emily Carr, and titled *Masset, QCI*. The artist, Emily Carr, depicted a “uniquely modern vision of the British Columbia landscape” that became “associated with the articulation of Canada’s national identity in the early 20th century,” according to the Smithsonian Magazine. She incorporated First Nations (Native Canadian) motifs in many of her works, including the one the dealer purchased. ArtNews interviewed a representative from the Canadian auction house that handled the painting discussing the seller’s luck in finding the piece. He told ArtNews, “it’s rare to come across an artwork that has been hidden away for so long, and it’s one of the reasons why our business is so joyful—it’s not just about the value of the piece, but the thrill of unveiling history and sharing that wonder with the world.” That’s a sentiment that I can agree with. The painting was estimated to bring \$147,000 in the October sale, but I found auction results showing it outperformed that estimate, bringing a little over \$250,000.



ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES & ESTATES
• • • • •
WAYNE TUISKULA

The recent movie “Wicked,” which is based on “the Wizard of Oz,” has been a huge success at the box office. The timing seems perfect to auction a pair of Judy Garland’s ruby glass slippers from the original “Wizard of Oz” movie, and there’s an intriguing story behind the glass slippers being offered. There are four known sets of ruby slippers from the movie, according to

Consider these year-end financial moves



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR NIELSEN

As we enter the holiday season, your life may well become busier. Still, you might want to take the time to consider some financial moves before we turn the calendar to 2025.

Here are a few suggestions:

Review your investment portfolio. As you look at your portfolio, ask these questions: Has its performance met my expectations this year? Does it still reflect my goals, risk tolerance and time horizon? Do I need to rebalance? You might find that working with a financial professional can help you answer these and other questions you may have about your investments.

Add to your 401(k) and HSA. If you can afford it, and your employer allows it, consider putting more money into your 401(k) before the year ends — including “catch-up” contributions if you’re 50 or older. You might also want to add to your health savings account (HSA) by the tax-filing deadline in April.

Use your FSA dollars. Unlike an HSA, a flexible spending account (FSA) works on a “use-it-or-lose-it” basis, meaning you lose any unspent funds at the end of the year. So, if you still have funds left in your account, try to use them up in 2024. (Employers may grant a two and a half month extension, so check with your human resources area to see if this is the case where you work.)

Contribute to a 529 plan. If you haven’t opened a 529 education savings plan for your children, think about doing so this year. With a 529 plan, your earnings can grow tax deferred, and your withdrawals are federally tax free when used for qualified education expenses — tuition, fees, books and so on. And if you invest in your own state’s 529 plan, you might be able to deduct your contributions from your state income tax or receive a state tax credit.

Build your emergency fund. It’s generally a good idea to keep up to six months’ worth of living expenses in an emergency fund, with the money held in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a fund in place, you might be forced to dip into your retirement funds to pay for short-term needs, such as a major car or home repair.

Review your estate plans. If you’ve experienced any changes in your family situation this year, such as marriage, remarriage or the birth of a child, you may want to update your estate-planning documents to reflect your new situation. It’s also important to look at the beneficiary designations on your investment accounts, retirement plans, IRAs and insurance policies, as these designations can sometimes even supersede the instructions you’ve left in your will. And if you haven’t started estate planning, there’s no time like the present.

Take your RMDs. If you’re 73 or older, you will likely need to take withdrawals — called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — from some of your retirement accounts, such as your traditional IRA. If you don’t take these withdrawals each year, you could be subject to penalties.

These aren’t the only moves you can make, but they may prove helpful not only for 2024 but in the years to come.

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.

Virtues of Cranberries

New England cranberries are not just for the holidays anymore. The tart fruit, hailed as the “king of antioxidants,” are enjoying a surge of popularity as fans of the bouncy berries are finding new and delicious ways to work the wee wonders into a daily diet. From stalling a urinary tract infection, to preventing peptic ulcers, cranberries have been credited with an array of health helping benefits. Ongoing research also shows the fruit holds promise in the fight against such illnesses as cancer, heart and gum diseases and more. Add the fact the berries are touted as a powerful antioxidant and are high on the list of 20 anti aging foods and its no wonder the bowl of cranberry sauce could be the most important dish on the holiday table this year!

Humble Beginnings: Cranberries are native to New England, and the Northeast has long been credited with producing top quality bumper crops of the bright berries. Today, cranberries are grown commercially throughout the northern United States, but it was the early Native Americans who first unleashed the impressive properties of the humble, bitter berry.

The Indians used cranberries to make a poultice which proved an effective means to draw out the poison of arrow wounds. The dark, red juice of the fruit also provided an attractive dye for precious blankets and fabrics. In addition,

cranberries mixed with dried venison and fat and dried in the sun formed staple food that could withstand the rigors of travel, providing Native Americans with a valuable food source when they were hunting.

The wild cranberry got its name from the early settlers, who dubbed the round fruit the “craneberry” for its pink blossoms that resemble the head of a crane. The Pilgrims adopted the Indian’s uses of the fruit and expanded its use in cooking to include meat sauces, tarts, jams and nogs. As the early New England settlements expanded, new applications for the berries were discovered including their role in relieving stomach disorders, gall bladder pain, as well as treating blood and liver ailments. The fruit, a rich source of vitamin C, was also credited with preventing scurvy in 17th century seafaring crew members.

Cranberry Cures
Can the common cranberry cures what ails you? Medical studies prove the fruit, for decades overlooked as a health benefit in modern times, is packed with healing properties.



TAKE THE HINT
KAREN TRAINOR

Cranberries are perhaps best known for their role in preventing urinary tract infections. A bottle of cranberry juice is often prescribed as a first response approach to an impending infection. According to medical studies, the cranberries secret weapons are proanthocyanidins, nutrients which prevent certain bacteria from sticking to the lining of the bladder, thus preventing an infection.

Research reveals the same anti stick properties might help stall bacteria from adhering to teeth and gums, slowing or preventing cavity growth. The same components may prevent stomach ulcers by stopping H. Pylori from sticking to stomach cells.

Better yet, according to Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc., the fruit may benefit the heart, as medical studies show cranberries can inhibit oxidation of low-density cholesterol, which is thought to be one way cholesterol becomes sticky, allowing it to attach to the blood vessel wall. In addition, early laboratory studies suggest cranberry juice cocktail may be as effective as red wine in benefiting heart health.

The impressive healing properties of cranberries include the powerful antioxidants, plentiful in the little red berries. These compounds, which include flavonoids and vitamins, are credited with boosting the immune system and reducing free radicals, which can lead

to a healthier body.
*
Current studies indicate a daily dose of ten ounces of cranberry juice can effectively achieve the bacteria blocking benefits to help prevent such health problems as urinary tract infections, gum disease and ulcers.
**
Win Dinner for Two at the Publick House

Your tips can win you a great dinner for two at the historic Publick House Historic Inn in Sturbridge! Simply send in a hint to be entered into a random drawing. One winner per month will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renown restaurant, located on Route 131 across the town common in historic Sturbridge. Because I’m in the business of dispensing tips, not inventing them (although I can take credit for some), I’m counting on you readers out there to share your best helpful hints!

Do you have a helpful hint or handy tip that has worked for you? Do you have a question regarding household or garden matters? If so, why not share them with readers of Stonebridge Press newspapers? Send questions and/or hints to: Take the Hint!, C/o the Southbridge Evening News, PO Box 90; Southbridge, MA 01550. Or E-mail KDRR@aol.com. Hints are entered into a drawing for dinner for two at the historic Publick House Inn.

ANTIQUES

continued from page A6

ing to the Minnesota Star Tribune. Three pairs sat in an MGM Studios warehouse until they were uncovered by Hollywood memorabilia collector Kent Clark in 1970. One pair went to auction and another was sold to Michael Shaw, another Hollywood memorabilia collector. Clark kept the third pair. The fourth pair were already owned by

a woman in Tennessee, who won them in a contest. Michael Shaw loaned his ruby slippers to a museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as they went “on tour” in various museums. In 2005, they were stolen from the Grand Rapids museum in a smash and grab robbery. The FBI recovered them over a decade later during a 2018 sting operation. “It had been one last score for a man who had retired from a life of crime and was living

quietly in rural Grand Rapids,” according to the Star Tribune. The thief was disappointed to find they were made from sequins and not jewels when he stole them. He later gave them to his partner in crime, who buried them in a plastic container in his yard until the FBI recovered them. Michael Shaw’s pair of glass slippers were estimated to sell for up to \$10 million. They ended up selling for \$28 million. It’s like the old

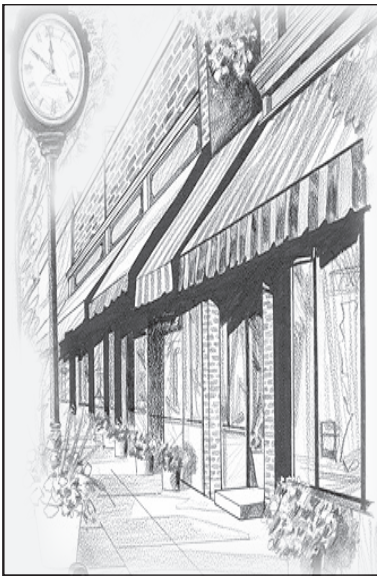
adage says: if the shoe fits, pay \$28 million for it.

We are still cataloging for an online antiques auction in a Beacon Hill Boston estate and a large Civil War collection from a local estate. We have a comic book and sports memorabilia auction scheduled and are accepting consignments for that. We are also accepting consignments of valuable jewelry, sterling silver, coins, antiques and collectibles for future

auctions. Please visit our website <https://central-massauctions.com> for links to upcoming events.

Contact us to consign items or for auction information at: Wayne Tuiskula Auctioneer/ Appraiser Central Mass Auctions for Antique, Collectibles Auctions and Appraisal Services info@centralmassauctions.com or (508-612-6111).

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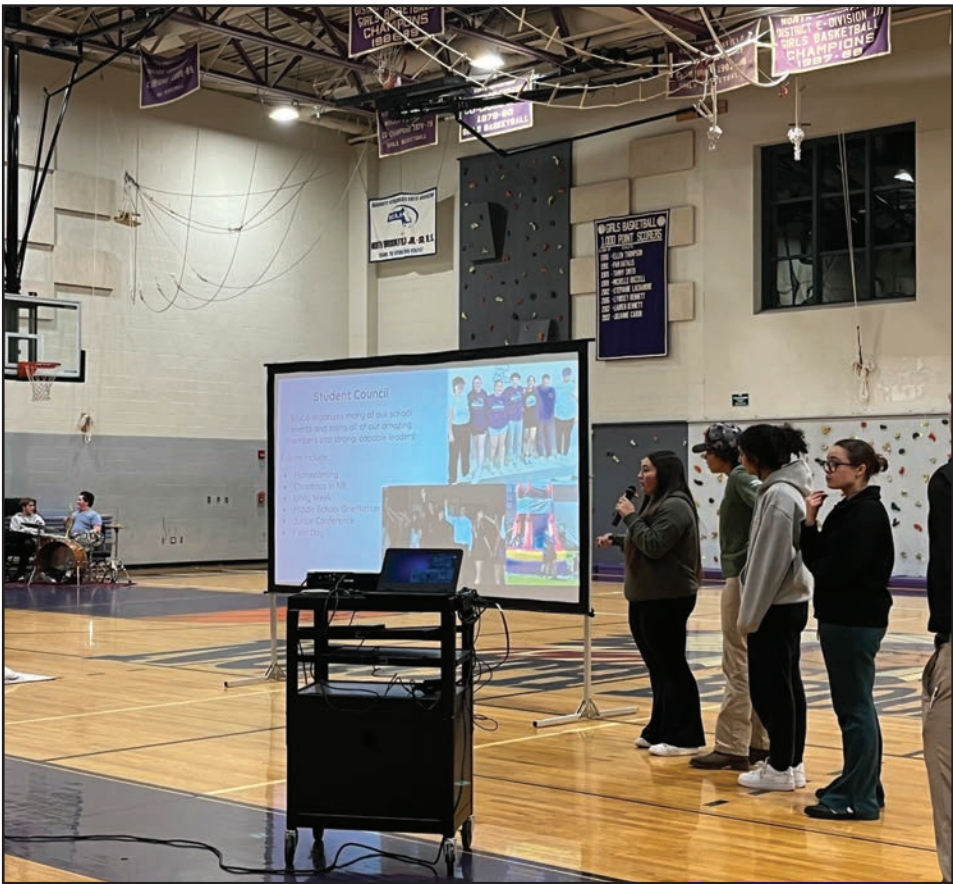
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Vice President

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DA's office takes part in open house at NBJS SHS



Courtesy
North Brookfield students lead a presentation highlighting Student Council activities.

NORTH BROOKFIELD — Representatives of the Worcester County District Attorney's Office recently visited North Brookfield Junior-Senior High School for a special presentation.

"Hope from our Outreach Team had a great evening at the NBJS SHS open house and parent night last week, where she held a resource table," read a statement released by the DA's Office. "Parents had the opportunity to meet with teachers, and visitors heard from students who spoke to how attending the school has changed their life in positive ways. Thank you to Principal John Diorio for having us."

Volunteers bring holiday spirit to North Brookfield



Courtesy
North Brookfield volunteers, residents, and leaders came together to celebrate the holiday season with several activities.

NORTH BROOKFIELD — Volunteers with the North Brookfield Decorate Our Town Committee took part in several activities to help get residents into the spirit of the season.

On Nov. 30, volunteers gathered at the Town House to start decorating the town center. Wreaths and sprays were hung on the windows and doors of buildings on Main Street, and the Town Park was adorned with lights, wooden soldiers, a sleigh, and a Santa decoration, among several others.

On Dec. 1, Santa visited North Brookfield to greet local youngsters. Additionally, a tree lighting ceremony wowed guests of all ages, followed by Christmas caroling at the Congregational Church.

Several celebratory events also took place at the library, including a program enabling kids to write letters to Santa.

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OBITUARIES

Barry Gerald Higgins, 91



Barry Gerald Higgins, 91, of Naples, Florida and West Brookfield, MA passed away Monday, December 2, 2024. He was born on August 2, 1933, in Brookline, MA to Gerald and Catherine (née Walsh) Higgins. He leaves behind his beloved, devoted wife of 36 years, Karen Higgins of Naples, FL and West Brookfield, MA. He leaves behind his brother Brian and sister in-law Jane of West Brookfield, MA, his three children, Sherry Britton of Harpswell, ME, Holly Rhodes and her husband Andy of Milford, CT, Barry Higgins Jr. and his wife Cori of Naples, FL and their families and his children’s mother, Denyse Higgins of Milford, CT.

He, also, leaves behind his three stepdaughters, Heather Dumais and her husband Robert of Charlton, MA, Michelle Horne and her husband Kevin of Southold, NY, Sarah Chase and her fiancé Jeff Jarmulowicz of Spencer, MA, his nieces Devon Smith and her

husband Mason of Yardly, PA, Brenda Garacci of Lafayette, LA, Belinda Murphy of Pelham, NH and all of their families, and his nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren whom he cherished.

Barry graduated from Natick (MA) High School in 1951, Harvard in 1955, was an officer in the Marines, and held various marketing positions in IBM for almost 30 years. He had a gift for connecting with people and providing unwavering support to those in his life. He was a class act!

In lieu of flowers, he would appreciate donations to the Wounded Warrior Project. Veterans Charity - Non Profit Organization for Veterans | Wounded Warrior Project

There will be a family burial service in West Brookfield, MA at a date yet to be determined.

Fuller Funeral Home-Pine Ridge, Naples, is entrusted with final care.



Helena E. Cardinale, 91



N O R T H B R O O K F I E L D - Helena E. Cardinale, 91, passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday, November 26, 2024. She leaves 2 daughters Patricia “Patti” Cardinale and Tina Lindberg & her husband Eric; many grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren; nephews, nieces and cousins. She was predeceased by her husband Joseph “Joe” Cardinale; a son Robert Cardinale; a sister Barbara and a brother Joseph. She will also be

sadly missed by her dear friend Jan Madsen and special niece Denny M. She was born in North Brookfield and has been a lifelong resident. Helen was a member of St. John the Baptist Church. She enjoyed cooking, playing scrabble and her family. A memorial Mass will be held on Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 11:00AM in St. John the Baptist Church 131 Blaine Ave East Brookfield. Arrangements are under the care of Pillsbury Funeral Home 44 Gilbert St North Brookfield. Please omit flowers. Donations may be made in her name to a charity of one’s choice.

Pillsbury Funeral Home, Brookfield, MA

Richard S. Budney, 76



North Brookfield – Richard S. Budney, 76, of North Brookfield, died on Sunday, December 1, 2024, at home with his family by his side after a brief illness.

He was predeceased by the love of his life Sandy Budney, who passed away in 2018. He leaves his children, Laurie DeMaio and her husband, Tony of North Brookfield, Kimberly Budney of Leicester, Richard Budney and his wife, Jessie of Spencer; Tracey Simpson and her husband, Thomas of Spencer; Sherry Rodgers of California, and his sister, Sandy Laft of Saugus. He also leaves 14 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

Richard worked as an alarm technician for ADT Alarm Services prior to his retirement.

His faith was very close to him. He was

a devoted longtime member of Saint Joseph’s parish in North Brookfield and was a 4th Degree Knight with the Knights of Columbus. He was also a member of the Leicester Rod and Gun Club and the White Eagle Polish Club in Worcester. He was a devoted fan of all Boston sports teams, especially the Boston Bruins.

A Funeral Mass for Richard was held on Friday, December 6, 2024, at 11:15am in Saint Joseph’s Church, 296 North Main Street in North Brookfield. A calling hour was held in the Varnum Funeral Home, 43 East Main Street in West Brookfield from 9:30 to 10:30am prior to going to the church in procession for mass. Burial was in the Walnut Grove Cemetery following mass. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital, P.O. Box 1000, Department 142, Memphis, TN 38148 or online at st.jude.org

An online tribute book is available at varnumfuneralhome.com

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Star of Bethlehem

For over two thousand years, the Star of Bethlehem has captivated imaginations and sparked debates among scholars, astronomers, and theologians.

Mentioned in the Book of Matthew, this star guided the Three Kings—wise men from the East—to the birthplace of Jesus. But what was this mysterious star? Was it a supernatural event, a naturally occurring astronomical alignment, or something else entirely? To this day, the Star of Bethlehem remains a radiant enigma in the story of Christmas.

The Magi, often depicted in nativity scenes as three kings, were likely not kings at all but astrologers or priests from regions such as Persia, Babylon, or possibly even as far as China.

They were united by their study of the heavens, seeking divine messages in celestial move-

ments. Guided by the mysterious star, they may have traveled along ancient trade routes, such as parts of the Silk Road, on a journey that could have spanned thousands of miles to their ultimate destination, Bethlehem.

They saw the star as a sign of someone destined for greatness. Their gifts—gold for a king, frankincense, incense used in worship, and myrrh, an embalming spice foreshadowing death—reflected what they believed the star was telling them about this person.

But what exactly was this star that inspired such a journey?

Some believe the star was a miraculous sign, a divine light placed in the sky by God to announce the birth of Jesus. This interpretation aligns with the biblical account but leaves no room for scientific explanation. To those with faith, the

star’s miraculous nature may be the ultimate answer—a symbol of heaven’s intervention in earthly affairs.

Others suggest the star could have been a comet, viewed as an omen in ancient times. A comet’s bright and fleeting nature would have made it a striking and memorable sign in the night sky.

Could the Star of Bethlehem have been an exploding star—a supernova? A supernova creates a sudden, brilliant light in the sky that can last for weeks or months. While ancient Chinese and Babylonian astronomers meticulously documented celestial events, there are no surviving records of a supernova occurring during the timeframe of Jesus’ birth.

One of the most widely accepted theories is that the Star of Bethlehem

was a rare alignment of planets. In 7 BC, Jupiter and Saturn came together in three conjunctions within Pisces’s constellation. This phenomenon would have created a strikingly bright light in the sky.

Jupiter, often associated with kingship, and Saturn, symbolizing protection, aligned in Pisces—a constellation some ancient astrologers connected to significant events for the Jewish people. Possibly interpreted as heralding the birth of an extraordinary leader or figure of great importance.

The “Great Conjunction” of Jupiter and Saturn occurs every 20 years, but the rare triple conjunction in Pisces around 7 BC has not happened in the same way since. To ancient astron-

omers, such alignments were seen as divine messages. This unique conjunction in Pisces might have been linked to significant astrological meaning.

While these theories offer intriguing possibilities, none fully explain the Star of Bethlehem.

If the star was a natural phenomenon, why didn’t other cultures widely record it? And how did it appear to “stop” over Bethlehem? These unanswered questions continue to shroud the star in mystery.

The Magi’s connection between the star and the birth of a king raises intriguing questions. Did they draw conclusions from ancient Hebrew texts, astrological insights alone, or a combination?

Their reliance on astrology raises the question: could their journey suggest hidden truths found within the ancient

study of Astrology and their influence on earthly events? Their interpretation suggests a deep understanding of celestial symbolism and its potential to foretell significant events.

Whatever its true nature, the Star of Bethlehem remains a symbol of hope and mystery, reflecting humanity’s timeless quest for meaning in the cosmos.

Whether a miraculous light or celestial alignment, it represents the pursuit of truth and the willingness to follow where it leads.

As we look to the winter sky this Christmas, we can imagine the Magi doing the same over 2,000 years ago, marveling at the unknown. The Star of Bethlehem, still inspiring awe, invites us to journey—not across deserts, but toward our sense of wonder.

LEGALS

(SEAL)
THE COMMONWEALTH
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LAND COURT
DEPARTMENT OF THE TRIAL
COURT
Docket Number: 24 SM 004179
ORDER OF NOTICE
To:
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and to all persons entitled to the benefit of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. c. 50 §3901 (et seq):
JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A.
claiming to have an interest in a Mortgage covering real property in Spencer, numbered 94 Clark Road, given by Paul T. Burke to JPMorgan Chase Bank, NA, dated March 23, 2007, and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 40973, Page 223, as modified by a certain modification agreement dated January 1, 2018, and recorded with said Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 58283, Page 157, 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 January 13, 2025, or you may lose the opportunity to challenge the foreclosure on the ground of non-compliance with the Act.
Witness, Gordon H. Piper, Chief Justice of this Court on December 2, 2024.
Attest:
Deborah J. Patterson
Recorder
26861
December 13, 2024

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE’S SALE
OF REAL ESTATE
By virtue of and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Shane A. Bayer to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Inland Bank and Trust, dated April 27, 2018 and recorded in the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds in Book 58736, Page 343, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder, by assignment from: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Inland Bank and Trust, its successors and assigns to JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association, recorded on August 8, 2022, in Book No. 68036, at Page 240 JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association to NewRez LLC f/k/a New Penn Financial, LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing, recorded on October 12, 2022, in Book No. 68338, at Page 163 for breach of the conditions of said

mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing, the same will be sold at Public Auction at 1:00 PM on January 3, 2025, on the mortgaged premises located at 4 Lambs Grove, Spencer, Worcester County, Massachusetts, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage,
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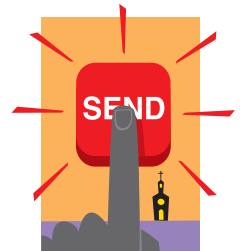
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December 27, 2024

Leicester schools invite community to winter concerts

LEICESTER — The Leicester Public Schools Music Department invites guests to check out performances featuring multiple schools this month. Winter concerts will be held on several nights in December. Elementary school students will perform throughout the day on Dec. 11, while high school students will perform on Dec. 12 at 6 p.m. Middle school students will hold a concert on Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. All performances will be held at the Leicester Middle School Fine Arts Center (174 Paxton St.).



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Double Word Puzzle

Unscramble the words to reveal the sentence.

KEAB

21

ISTF

3

RLUFO

54

HCSP

67

7416123

36151

Answer: Preheat the oven

Answer: Rolled cookies

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



1768: The first edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica is published.

1901: The first Nobel Prize ceremony is held in Stockholm on the fifth anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.

2021: Deadly tornadoes affect the United States.

NEW WORD

FOLD

gently mix one ingredient into a batter

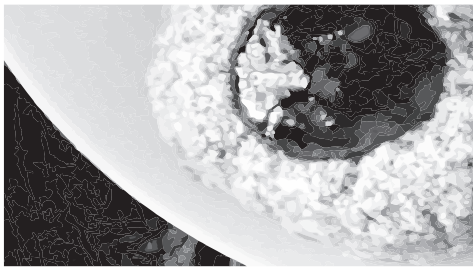
How they say that in...

- English: Flour
- Spanish: Harina
- Italian: Farina
- French: Farine
- German: Mehl

Did You Know?

Food historians trace gingerbread back to the ancient Egyptians, who used it for ceremonial purposes. The ancient Greeks came up with the first gingerbread recipe.

Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Jelly thumbprint cookie

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to games and puzzles. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 25 = A)

A. 16 5 25 22 16 13

Clue: Possibility

B. 21 24 23 6 6

Clue: Prowess

C. 11 13 22 1 25 6

Clue: Using the mind

D. 25 16 4 23 1 10

Clue: Keeness of thought, vision or hearing

Answers: A. chance B. skill C. mental D. acuity

SUDOKU

		5		9		4	1	
	7			4	1	5		3
		4	3		2	8	6	7
			2	6		3	7	8
					7	6		
7	4		9					1
9	6				8	7		
		3					2	
2			6	3				

Level: Beginner

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

4	8	1	9	3	6	7	5	2
6	2	9	5	7	1	3	8	4
5	3	7	8	2	4	1	6	9
1	5	2	3	8	9	6	4	7
9	4	6	7	5	1	3	2	8
8	7	3	4	6	2	9	1	5
7	6	2	5	3	8	4	1	9
3	9	8	2	1	6	5	4	7
2	4	1	9	3	7	8	6	5

ANSWER:

POLICE REPORTS

Leicester

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27
8:33 a.m.: neighbor dispute (Boyd Street), spoken to; 10:47 a.m.: erratic operator (Main Street), resolved; 11:00 a.m.: summons service (Beech Street), unable to serve; 12:04 p.m.: mv stop (Huntoon Memorial Highway), name and address redacted from police log, willfully obstructing an emergency vehicle, obstructing an emergency vehicle, unlicensed operation, criminal application issued; 12:28 p.m.: ambulance (Huntoon Memorial Highway), transported; 1:43 p.m.: animal complaint (South Main Street), referred; 2:48 p.m.: assist citizen (Charles Street); 3:40 p.m.: ambulance (McCarthy Avenue), transported; 6:43 p.m.: restraining order service (Main Street), served; 6:48 p.m.: welfare check (Main Street), spoken to.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28
12:23 a.m.: suspicious mv (Pleasant Street), verbal warning; 1:16 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 2:18 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), written warning; 2:26 a.m.: mv stop (Pleasant Street), verbal warning; 2:54 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), verbal warning; 2:29 p.m.: erratic operator (Main Street), gone on arrival; 6:14 p.m.: restraining order service (South Main Street), served; 11:27 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), citation issued.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29
12:14 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), written warning; 3:39 a.m.: ambulance (Pleasant Street), transported; 6:53 a.m.: suspicious person (Main Street), gone on arrival; 8:34 a.m.: commercial alarm (Main Street), false alarm; 8:58 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 9:10 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 9:27 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), name and address redacted from police log, op w/suspended license/subsequent offense, number plate violation to conceal ID, uninsured mv, criminal application issued; 10:12 a.m.: ambulance (Main Street), transported; 11:26 a.m.: mv stop (South Main Street), spoken to; 11:40 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 12:00 p.m.: mv stop (South Main Street), verbal warning; 12:20 p.m.: mv stop (Olney Street), Randy Jordan, 41, 28 Second Island Road, Webster, op w/suspended license/subsequent offense, unregistered mv, arrest; 1:27 p.m.: accident (Main Street), transported to hospital; 3:00 p.m.: suspicious person (Market Street), resolved; 3:17 p.m.: keep the peace (Hankey Street), peace restored; 5:07 p.m.: lobby service (South Main Street), report taken; 8:56 p.m.: assist other PD (Washinton Street, Auburn), services rendered; 8:58 p.m.: suspicious person (Soojians Drive), services rendered; 10:39 p.m.: welfare check (West Street), assisted; 10:49 p.m.: erratic operator (River Street), referred; 11:38 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), written warning.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30
12:07 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 2:42 a.m.: mv stop (South Main Street), written warning; 5:44 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), written warning; 8:04 a.m.: hit/run accident (South Main Street), report taken; 8:41 a.m.: mv stop (Soojians Drive), verbal warning; 8:50 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 10:20 a.m.: mv stop (McNeil Highway), verbal warning; 10:28 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), citation issued; 10:34 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 10:46 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 10:47 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), name and address redacted from police log, op w/suspended license, no inspection sticker, report taken; 11:37 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 11:48 a.m.: investigation (Main Street), report taken; 12:42 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 12:53 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 1:14 p.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), written warning; 1:19 p.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), name and address redacted from police log, unlicensed operation, number plate violation; name and address redacted from police log, unlicensed operation/permit, criminal applications issued; 1:43 p.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), name and address redacted from police log, uninsured mv/2 counts, unlicensed operation, number plate violation to conceal ID, unregistered mv, criminal application issued; 2:04 p.m.: investigation (Marshall Street), report taken;

2:26 p.m.: mv stop (Huntoon Memorial Highway), verbal warning; 3:32 p.m.: property found (South Main Street), resolved; 4:08 p.m.: residential alarm (Leela Lane), false alarm; 4:32 p.m.: investigation (Main Street), report taken; 9:01 p.m.: suspicious mv (Pine Street), resolved; 10:01 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), written warning; 11:05 p.m.: welfare check (Rawson Street), resolved.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1
12:50 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), verbal warning; 1:10 a.m.: abandoned 911 call (Harding Street), resolved; 2:42 a.m.: mv stop (Soojians Drive), written warning; 5:51 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), written warning; 6:23 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 9:54 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), name and address redacted from police log, unlicensed operation, op w/suspended registration, uninsured mv, criminal applications issued; 10:54 a.m.: suspicious mv (Auburn Street), unable to locate; 11:15 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), spoken to; 11:36 mv stop (South Main Street), verbal warning; 11:51 a.m.: mv stop (Soojians Drive), name and address redacted from police log, unlicensed operation, criminal application issued; 12:37 p.m.: accident (Pleasant Street), report taken; 1:43 p.m.: accident (Charlton Street), mv towed; 4:29 p.m.: abandoned 911 call (Stafford Street), services rendered; 5:23 p.m.: accident (River Street), report taken.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2
12:24 a.m.: assist other PD (Main Street), services rendered; 12:27 a.m.: abandoned 911 call (Auburn Street), report taken; 1:16 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), written warning; 1:23 a.m.: suspicious mv (Main Street), resolved; 4:19 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), citation issued; 5:23 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 8:49 a.m.: investigation (Folsom Street), report taken; 9:00 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), citation issued; 9:24 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 9:48 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 10:52 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), citation issued; 11:06 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), spoken to; 11:10 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), spoken to; 11:23 a.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), violations not noted on police log, criminal application issued; 11:35 a.m.: assist citizen (Willow Hill Road); 12:59 p.m.: mv stop (South Main Street), verbal warning; 1:02 p.m.: ambulance (Stafford Street), transported; 2:32 p.m.: ambulance (Main Street, Spencer), transported; 2:36 p.m.: ambulance (Rawson Street), transported; 4:56 p.m.: disabled mv (Main Street), assisted; 6:00 p.m.: investigation (Main Street), report taken; 9:40 p.m.: ambulance (Huntoon Memorial Highway), transported; 9:54 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), spoken to; 11:43 p.m.: abandoned 911 call (Ferncroft Road), resolved.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3
3:20 a.m.: parking complaint (Main Street), written warning; 3:24 a.m.: suspicious person (Mayflower Road), services rendered; 6:46 a.m.: ambulance (West Main Street, Spencer), transported; 9:03 a.m.: mv stop (River Street), citation issued; 9:29 a.m.: mv stop (Pleasant Street), spoken to; 9:40 a.m.: mv stop (Pleasant), written warning; 9:46 a.m.: mv stop (River Street), verbal warning; 10:16 a.m.: mv stop (Rawson Street), verbal warning; 10:27 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 10:34 a.m.: mv stop (Paxton Street), verbal warning; 10:39 a.m.: mv stop (Pleasant Street), Wilfredo Reyes, 52, 4 Park Avenue, #1A, Worcester, straight warrant, arrest; 12:03 p.m.: mv stop (Huntoon Memorial Highway), verbal warning; 1:01 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 1:17 p.m.: mv stop (Stafford Street), verbal warning; 1:46 p.m.: mv stop (Huntoon Memorial Highway), verbal warning; 2:22 p.m.: assist citizen (South Main Street); 3:27 p.m.: accident (South Main Street), report taken; 4:23 p.m.: disabled mv (Huntoon Memorial Highway), resolved; 4:29 p.m.: accident (Pleasant Street), report taken; 5:07 p.m.: suspicious person (Waite Street), resolved; 10:49 p.m.: ambulance (Main Street), transported; 10:58 p.m.: ambulance (Whittemore Street), transported.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5
1:54 a.m.: mv stop (Pleasant Street), verbal warning; 2:04 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), written warning; 3:56 a.m.: mv stop (Main Street), verbal warning; 5:09 a.m.: mv stop (Pleasant Street), written warning; 8:55 a.m.:

investigation (South Main Street), report taken; 12:29 p.m.: mutual aid (Lovell Street, Worcester), transported to hospital; 1:47 p.m.: investigation (Huntoon Memorial Highway), report taken; 3:09 p.m.: ambulance (Huntoon Memorial Highway), transported; 5:36 p.m.: disturbance (Bunker Hill Road), investigated; 7:41 p.m.: family problem (Salminen Drive), report taken; 11:51 p.m.: ambulance (Auburn Street), transported.

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Spencer

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27
2:15 a.m.: medical/general (Main Street); 2:54-3:12 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 6:55 a.m.: medical/general (Main Street); 7:55 a.m.: fraud (Brooks Pond Road), report taken; 9:04 a.m.: animal complaint (Old Farm Road), rep. abandoned cat; 9:22 a.m.: medical/general (Charlton Road); 10:59 a.m.: medical/general (Linden Street); 11:12 a.m.: restraining order service (West Main Street); 11:29 a.m.: suspicious persons (Main Street), investigated; 12:25 p.m.: mv lockout (West Main Street), assisted; 12:42 p.m.: animal complaint (Woodside Road), rep. loose/aggressive dog; 1:03 p.m.: fire alarm (South Spencer Road), referred; 1:43 p.m.: medical/general (Greenville Street); 2:07 p.m.: medical/general (Church Street); 2:34 p.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), poss. title fraud; 3:51 p.m.: medical/general (North Spencer Road); 4:03 p.m.: medical/general (Howe Village); 4:41 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), Roland E. Delage, 56, 6 Marble Road, Spencer, OUI liquor, negligent operation, speeding, arrest; 4:45 p.m.: suspicious person (Ash Street), investigated; 4:52 p.m.: mv stop (Main Street), Patrick Peter O'Donoghue, 21, 34 Mayflower Circle, Holden, OUI liquor, negligent operation, marked lanes violation, arrest; 5:10 p.m.: animal complaint (West Main Street), rep. dog found; 7:55 p.m.: DPW call (Westland Drive), rep. lane obstruction; 9:07 p.m.: officer wanted (Meadow Roads), mv blocked in; 10:49 p.m.: 911 call (Pearl Street), hang-up; (total daily mv stops – 4).

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28
12:27 a.m.: 911 call (Ashview Drive), accidental; 12:47-1:39 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 1:05 a.m.: suspicious mv (Maple Street), investigated; 9:33 a.m.: vandalism (Greenville Street), report taken; 9:55 a.m.: abandoned 911 call (West Main Street), no contact; 11:50 a.m.: abandoned 911 call (West Main Street), resolved; 11:50 a.m.: suspicious persons (Main Street), services rendered; 11:54 a.m.: fire alarm (Howe Village), referred; 2:15 p.m.: medical/general (Northwest Road); 6:29 p.m.: 911 call (West Main Street), no contact; 8:19 p.m.: medical/general (Main Street); 11:00 p.m.: disturbance (Mechanic Street), noise complaint; (total daily mv stops – 1).

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29
12:09 a.m.: commercial alarm (Meadow Road), services rendered; 2:21-2:28 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 9:02 a.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), spoken to; 10:25 a.m.: lost/found (Main Street), rep. cell phone stolen; 10:28 a.m.: extortion/blackmail (Valley View Drive), report taken; 12:43 p.m.: medical/general (Howe Village); 2:17 p.m.: officer wanted (Wall Street), re: former neighbor; 2:21 p.m.: medical/general (Northwest Road); 4:37 p.m.: medical/general (Maple Street); 6:18 p.m.: residential alarm (Water Street), services rendered; 7:02 p.m.: commercial alarm (Mechanic Street), services rendered; 9:03 p.m.: animal complaint (Main Street), dead dog in road; 9:16 p.m.: suspicious mv (Howe Road), investigated; 10:00 p.m.: officer wanted (Summit Street), spoken to; 10:14 p.m.: disturbance (Chestnut Street), unwanted party; 10:56 p.m.: mv complaint (Shady Drive), erratic operator; 11:47 p.m.: medical/general (Pauls Drive); (total daily mv stops – 1).

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30
12:02-2:37 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 12:56 a.m.: medical/general (Valley Street); 10:51 a.m.: officer wanted (Clark Street), c/o neighbor creating road hazard; 11:02 a.m.: accident (Main Street), report taken; 11:26 a.m.: officer wanted (Elm Street), rep. cat taken; 11:41 a.m.: juvenile matter (Woodside Road), re: earlier incident; 1:10 p.m.: medical/general (Marble Road); 1:12 p.m.: lost/found (Main

Street), rings found; 1:51 p.m.: officer wanted (Clark Road), re: ex-gf; 2:25 p.m.: fraud (Elm Street), report taken; 5:42 p.m.: medical/general (Brown Street); 7:58 p.m.: mutual aid (West Main Street), East Brookfield PD bolo/hit & run; 10:23 p.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), spoken to; 10:54 p.m.: disturbance (Mechanic Street), unwanted party; 11:14 p.m.: officer wanted (Duggan Street), spoken to; (total daily mv stops – 2).

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1
12:37-1:12 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 1:12 a.m.: fire alarm (Gauthier Road), referred; 10:02 a.m.: officer wanted (Paxton Road), spoken to; 10:30 a.m.: officer wanted (Howe Village), spoken to; 11:07 a.m.: juvenile matter (Elm Street), services rendered; 12:15 p.m.: animal complaint (Paxton Road), rep. dead bobcat; 12:19 p.m.: officer wanted (Brooks Pond Road), wants mv moved; 2:47 p.m.: officer wanted (Pleasant Street), req. welfare check; 4:33 p.m.: medical/general (Lincoln Street); 6:03 p.m.: mutual aid (West Main Street), Oxford PD bolo/re: officer safety; 6:13 p.m.: 911 call (Ashview Drive), resolved; 6:57 p.m.: medical/general (Treadwell Drive); 7:10 p.m.: officer wanted (Mechanic Street), req. welfare check; 7:57 p.m.: mv repossessed (Pleasant Street), info rec'd; 8:00 p.m.: officer wanted (Lincoln Street), req. escort/retrieve pkg. from neighbor; 9:16 p.m.: mutual aid (West Main Streett), Charlton PD bolo/welfare check; (total daily mv stops – 2).

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2
12:27 a.m.: medical/general (Cherry Street); 1:09-1:31 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 1:54 a.m.: medical/general (Howe Village); 7:20 a.m.: LTC issued (West Main Street), assisted; 7:23 a.m.: medical/general (Mechanic Street); 7:42 a.m.: elderly matter (Pearl Street), req. welfare check; 9:33 a.m.: fire alarm (Main Street), referred; 11:33 a.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), called re: ex; 1:11 p.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), spoken to; 1:34 p.m.: medical/general (Wall Street); 2:28 p.m.: mutual aid (Mechanic Street), RMV immediate threat service; 2:29 p.m.: fire/woods/grass (Paxton Road), illegal burn; 2:29 p.m.: medical/general (Main Street); 2:48 p.m.: officer wanted (Dufault Road), req. welfare check; 3:01 p.m.: restraining order service (Elm Street); 3:17 p.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), rep. harassment; 3:41 p.m.: restraining order service (Clark Road); 3:53 p.m.: fire alarm (Main Street), referred; 4:09 p.m.: medical/general (Bixby Road); 5:04 p.m.: fraud (West Main Street), report taken; 5:52 p.m.: restraining order service (Highland Street); 7:02 p.m.: 911 call (West Main Street), no contact; 8:14 p.m.: medical/general (Mechanic Street); 9:27 p.m.: medical/general (Howe Village); (total daily mv stops – 2).

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3
12:56-2:31 a.m.: buildings checked, secure; 5:45 a.m.: medical/general (Ledge Avenue); 6:15 a.m.: commercial alarm (Chestnut Street), services rendered; 6:34 a.m.: accident (West Main Street), report taken; 8:00 a.m.: mutual aid (West Main Street), assist Leicester PD/investigation; 9:05 a.m.: medical/general (Howe Village); 9:11 a.m.: fraud (West Main Street), report taken; 9:33 a.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), surrendering ex-bf's firearms; 10:05 a.m.: medical/general (Gold Nugget Road); 11:22 a.m.: illegal dumping (R. Jones Road), trash bag on roadside; 11:47 a.m.: medical/general (Treadwell Drive); 12:22 p.m.: mv complaint (West Main Street), erratic operator; 12:36 p.m.: fire alarm (Rustic Lane), referred; 12:43 p.m.: officer wanted (West Main Street), spoken to; 12:52 p.m.: officer wanted (Pearl Street), req. welfare check; 12:55 p.m.: officer wanted (Main Street), req. property check; 1:08 p.m.: mv theft (West Main Street), report taken; 1:44 p.m.: suspicious mv (Marble Road), investigated; 2:32 p.m.: intelligence/drugs (West Main Street), info taken; 2:35 p.m.: suspicious mv (Pearl Street), spoken to; 3:01 p.m.: accident (West Main Street), report taken; 3:02 p.m.: restraining order service (West Main Street); 3:47 p.m.: accident (Main Street), report taken; 4:17 p.m.: officer wanted (Chickering Road), req. welfare check; 11:16 p.m.: mv complaint (Maple Street), erratic operator; 11:40 p.m.: suspicious persons (West Main Street), investigated; (total daily mv stops – 0).

ALL WE KNOW IS LOCAL ~ StonebridgePress.com



CHRISTMAS

continued from page A1

ities. These included horse and carriage rides; ice carving demonstrations; cocoa with the Boy Scouts; and walks with Frosty.

Several food trucks provided tasty treats, in

addition to volunteers offering refreshments and entertainment at town departments and local churches.

The event culminated with a tree lighting on the Town Common, surrounded by a field of winter white.

Later, a concert band delivered favor-

ite Christmas songs for guests. Additionally, the WB Rescue Squad hosted a toy collection program.

This year's White Christmas program was dedicated to Bill Jankins. Community leaders thank him for decades of service to multiple groups and organizations, including the Volunteer

Rescue Squad, Quaboag Historical Society, the Rotary Club, the Lake Wickaboag Boat Club, the School Committee, and Little League baseball.

"Bill is 100 percent West Brookfield," read a statement featured in the event guide booklet. "Whether it's having breakfast with his

buddies, chatting with friends as he makes his daily run to get the mail, or visiting with others as he sits on his porch, Bill truly loves the town of West Brookfield and its history, but most of all, he loves its people."

Special thanks are offered to members of the White Christmas in West

Brookfield Committee for their hard work in putting the program together.

"Additional thanks to Jimmy Rust for making sure our beautiful tree always shines brightly," the promotional statement read.



The Bell and Hudson Insurance Agency team welcomes guests.



Special performances took place throughout the day.

PAINTING

continued from page A1

The program also left a lasting impact on LMS students, who were mesmerized by Surette's artistic abilities and inspired by his powerful message of perseverance and self-belief.

"Leicester Middle School continues to be dedicated to fostering our core values and empowerment in its students, and the Be Somebody performance was a perfect example of how art can inspire positive change

and encourage students to strive for greatness," read a statement released by the LMS leadership team. "The school community will forever carry Rob Surette's inspiring words."

Following the presentation at LMS, Surette was scheduled to deliver another performance for the district's elementary school students.

Surette has performed at thousands of venues throughout his career, helping to inspire the next generation of creators.

STUFF

continued from page A1

area locations to enable convenient donations of new, unwrapped gifts for children of all ages.

"This year's Stuff the Bus was amazing," said Melody Miller, a regional manager for AA Transportation. "Thank you to all that donated. It is so heartwarming to see how many people came out to support this toy drive."

In Spencer, AA Transportation officials once again teamed up with Klem's, the Spencer Fire Department, the Spencer Police Department, and the David Prouty High School Band to collect toys for families in need within the community.

The Spencer program also featured surprise visits from Santa

Claus and Sparky the Fire Dog.

"Thank you to Klem's, Spencer Fire, Spencer Police, and the David Prouty High School Band. Thank you for weathering the cold with us to collect toys for those in need," Miller said.

Additionally, the Spencer Police Union donated approximately \$250 worth of toys to help kick off the event.

In North Brookfield, AA Transportation partnered with the police department and Hannaford Supermarket. Community generosity went a long way toward making the holidays unforgettable for local families.

"In North Brookfield, we had a great turnout. I am sure that a lot of children will be very happy this year," Miller said. "Thank you to the North

Brookfield Police and Hannaford."

In Leicester, AA Transportation teamed up with Walmart and the Leicester Police, Firefighters and Teachers Association. The collections bus, along with Leicester fire trucks, were parked in front of the Walmart Supercenter.

"In Leicester at Walmart, we stuffed the bus. Thank you to Walmart, Leicester Police, Firefighters and Teachers Association," Miller said.

Added Leicester Police Chief Kenneth Antanavica, "Stuff the Bus is a great program which mainly involves the bus company and drivers who know families with school-age children that might need a little help. It is a tremendous program that the fire department union

members helped with last weekend."

AA Transportation officials thank all local volunteers, organizations, departments, businesses, and residents who supported this year's campaign. With the challenges of the post-pandemic economy, area residents have relied heavily on the generosity of community members.

Several toy donations were also made in advance of the event at the North Brookfield Police Department, the Leicester Police Department, and the Spencer Police Department.

Additionally, donations were dropped off with AA Transportation school bus drivers to maximize the number of toys received.

MISSING

continued from page A1

form allows for responders to be aware of those needs during responses.

"This is just another way to keep our residents safe," Antanavica said.

The program is especially important during the winter months, when

every second counts to help locate missing persons and get them out of the cold, officials said.

For more information about the program, please contact the Leicester Police Department. Informational statements on the program are also posted to the town Web site.

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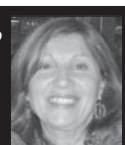
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Reidy and Houatchanthara in Boston.

BOSTON — Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy 2021 graduates Khamphan Houatchanthara, LPN, of Southbridge and Meghan Reidy, LPN, of Auburn recently attended “The Short Staffed Tour” of John Dela Cruz, a.k.a. Nurse John to his legion of fans. The event was held at the Boch Center-Shubert Theatre in Boston.

The first-ever live tour event marked “Nurse John’s transition from the digital space to stage and represented a major milestone in his career” (<https://nursejohnn-shows.com/>). Nurse John has taken the digital world by storm with his hilarious and relatable commentary on the healthcare industry and is known for his “ability to turn the everyday struggles of the diligent short-staffed, underpaid,

and undervalued health-care professionals into comedic gold.” Humor in nursing acts as an ice breaker, stress reliever, and a way to bond with peers. A shared sentiment by nurses, “there are times on the job when if you didn’t laugh, you would cry.” Much like nursing, there is both an art and a science in incorporating humor in healthcare. According to Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor, author, and noted psychiatrist, “Humor, more than anything else in the human makeup, affords an aloofness and ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds.” There are benefits in the use of humor in healthcare in general and nursing in particular.

Houatchanthara and Reidy are among Nurse John’s 12 million followers globally. Both

were among the Boston audience who enjoyed Nurse John’s content which felt like “conversations with a work bestie.” His humor was raw and authentic. He “trauma dumped,” cried, screamed, and laughed together with his audience. Such was the experience that healthcare audiences “feel seen.” The feeling of relatability and relief was shared by both Houatchanthara and Reidy. Reidy has forged a close friendship with Houatchanthara as a nursing student, especially because their 10-month education and training was difficult and happened during COVID. They had natural rapport and mutual understanding. Houatchanthara became a nurse following her sister, Maxine Houatchanthara Khounthy.

Becoming an LPN did

Bay Path LPNs and humor in nursing

not change the career trajectory for Reidy. She was a lifeguard at the YWCA in Worcester from 2014 to 2016, and during the summers of 2014-2019 at the Camp Woodhaven in West Boylston, monitoring the safety of swimmers, supervising swimmers to make sure they are swimming within safety protocols, checking the safety of all equipment on deck/pool area, and maintaining the pool area including checking pool chemical/ph levels to maintain safety to all. She had always wanted to help people, and with her commitment to nursing, she is able to do just so.

QCC’s campus resource dog Siggy sworn in as officer



WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College held a graduation yesterday, but not for students. The ceremony was for Siggy, QCC’s first community resource dog. Siggy recently finished months of training to be sworn in as an official community resource dog and K-9 officer with the college’s police department. His role at QCC is to provide support and de-escalation during times of stress or crisis.

“QCC was one of the first community colleges in the state to obtain a community resource dog and many are now following suit,” said QCC President Dr. Luis G. Pedraja. “The students, faculty and staff have been overjoyed to have Siggy’s presence on campus.”

Community Resource Officer and Siggy’s handler, Nick Yacuzzi, has spent countless hours in training with Siggy noting that the training process was rigorous but effective. Siggy’s training was completed at Golden Opportunities for Independence (GoFi), which trains dogs for a variety of settings such as schools and healthcare facilities. Siggy’s final certification was the Public Access Test, which evaluates the dog’s performance in crowded public areas such as a grocery store or a large event. The test requires the dog to remain calm and obey commands during the entire experience.

“These dogs are exposed to many different situations and taught to show control and affection to anyone they encounter,” Officer Yacuzzi said, adding, “I cannot count the number of times when walking around with Siggy on campus that students have stopped to pet him and said, ‘I needed this.’”

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