

STURBRIDGE VILLAGER

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Thursday-Friday, November 21-22, 2024

Charlton Fire Chief to retire

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON — The Town of Charlton is launching a search for a new Fire Chief with the announcement that current Chief Ed Knopf will retire as of Dec. 23 of this year.

Knopf made the decision official during the Board of Selectmen's Nov. 12 meeting where he said it's time for new leadership to take over the department.

"It's been 23 years, I think it's time for somebody else to take the baton," said Knopf. "There's enough personal reasons and professional reasons we don't need to get into in any great depth. I just felt that the department is in a good place right now, so I think it's a good time to step aside."

Selectmen were complimentary in their assessment of Knopf's leadership with many indicating disappointment for his impending departure but heavy gratitude for his many years of service and his successful efforts to grow the department. While the announcement was a rather quick affair, it took

longer for the Board of Selectmen to decide on a succession plan debating between several approaches included a multi-tiered plan to advertise the job for internal candidates before seeking outside applicants and using an assessment center; a third-party process that conducts testing to determine the proper candidate for a job using both internal and external applicants. Selectman David Singer recommended they approach the hire by seeking internal applicants first and then, if they can't find a worthy or qualified candidate, opening applications to outside parties forgoing the use of an assessment center.

"We always talk about how much we believe in our departments, police, fire, first responders. I still believe that, and I believe we have a lot of qualified members of these departments, so I'd like to keep it in-house. I'd like to see us post for the opportunity so interested candidates can apply," said Singer.

Knopf admitted he did not agree with Singer's proposal. Although
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Courtesy - Charlton Fire Department

Charlton Fire Chief Ed Knopf has announced his impending retirement effective Dec. 23.

Housing costs a focus of concern at forum

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — A couple dozen people brought their concerns to the town's second housing plan forum last Tuesday Nov. 12 at the Senior Center.

It started pretty quickly, even during the formal presentation, when Councilor George Chenier said "People want to stay in Southbridge, especially the older people who have been here their whole lives." But they have been seeing big rent hikes on top of other costs. At his complex, Lebanon Hill Apartments (formerly TAG), there's "no help" for them, he said. Although residents have called various state agencies, many aren't "eligible [for new housing] because the wait list is years and years away," he said.

Chenier argued the town needs the plan

to include funding for those people who want to stay.

"When your affordable housing goes to unaffordable, your 10 percent never comes," he said. Later, he added, "You're going to be creating homelessness."

That 10 percent is a reference to the state's official goal — all towns are supposed to aim to have at least 10 percent of their housing stock "affordable" by state standards. That does not necessarily mean actually inexpensive; just that the housing is subsidized in a way that renters are only paying a maximum of 30 percent of their own income toward housing costs.

Presenter Emily Graubitz of the Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission said that cost should include all housing expenses, including utilities, insurance and the like.

At this point, Southbridge's "affordable" total is slightly under half of the goal, despite the fact it "has a much higher rate of renters than much of central Mass." She noted 56 percent of the town's units are rented, 60 percent of the homes are multi-families, and its average rent is \$1679 a

Turn To HOUSING page 5

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — One thing Southbridge residents hear often is how historic our downtown is.

The town is aiming to take advantage of that, as members of the Historical Society have been working for some

time to create a couple of self-guided walking tours.

The project's largely being spearheaded by Steve Brady, who summarized where things stand at a Society meeting last week. They're organizing two loops: the Center Village Loop, which is essentially a

back-and-forth along Main Street, with a spur down Elm; and the Church Loop, which is Hamilton, Crane, Marcy and Main, named after the fact most of the town's churches are on it. The former is longer, at about two miles; the latter's about one mile.

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Police, fire investigate seven-alarm Union Street blaze



Gus Steeves

This pile is all that remained of the house at 11-13 Union St. on Friday. Its neighbor, 7-9 Union, was under plastic sheeting next door.

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — In the middle of the night early Wednesday morning, residents of 7-9 and 11-13 Union St. woke to the wailing of fire alarms, and found their

homes on fire.

The resulting blaze derailed some school bus routes that morning as the emergency went to seven alarms, calling in crews from as far away as Uxbridge and parts of Connecticut.

Fortunately, none of the roughly 30 people living in the apartments were hurt.

Police Chief Shane Woodson said the landlord, a John Mansor, "is taking care of assistance" for

Turn To FIRE page 5

Early deadlines for Thanksgiving

The offices of the Sturbridge Villager will be closed Thursday, Nov. 28 in observance of Thanksgiving.

To ensure that our Nov. 29 edition arrives in subscribers' mail boxes on schedule despite the holiday, the submission deadline for any press releases and letters to the Editor intended for publication that week has been moved up to Sunday, Nov. 24 at 4 p.m. Submissions can be e-mailed to Editor Brendan Berube at news@stonebridgepress.news.

The staff of the Villager thanks our readers for their cooperation with this scheduling change, and wishes one and all a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday.

Craft fair brings holiday spirit to Tantasqua

STURBRIDGE — Thousands of guests from throughout the area got an early start on their holiday shopping at Tantasqua Regional High School.

The annual TRHS craft fair featured dozens of vendors filling the gymnasium and cafeteria. Student volunteers are thanked for their efforts in helping the Nov. 9 event run smoothly.

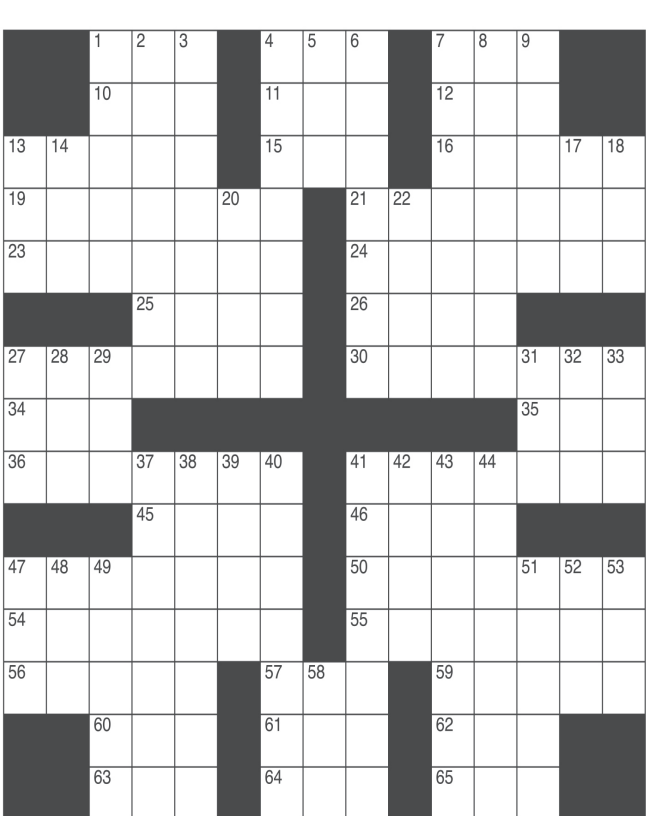
The National Honor Society ran a pie sale at the event, while SkillsUSA and culinary students offered a food cart. Meanwhile, the school's Cornerstone Café was once again open for service.

Students are also thanked for helping vendors load and unload their products.



Photos by Kevin Flanders

(Right) Vendors and student volunteers enjoy the annual holiday fair at Tantasqua Regional High School.



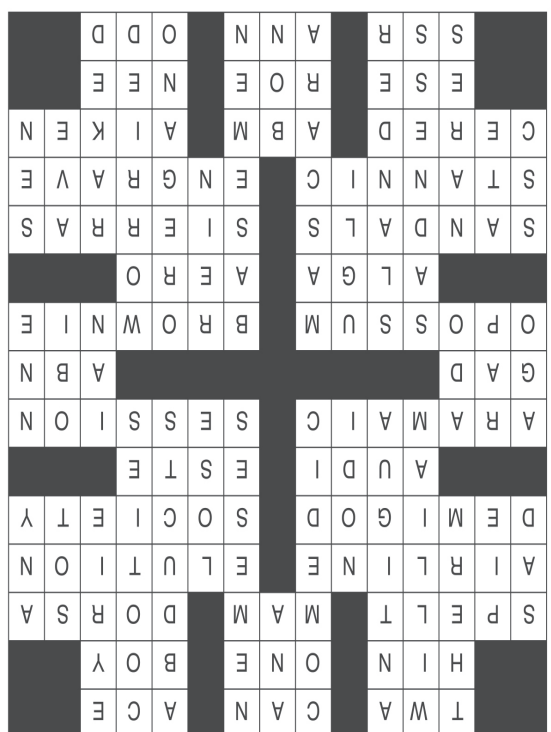
CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Defunct airline
- 4. Beverage container
- 7. A team's best pitcher
- 10. Unit of liquid capacity
- 11. It comes before two
- 12. Male child
- 13. Type of wheat
- 15. One's mother
- 16. Upper side of an organism
- 19. United is one
- 21. Extraction process
- 23. A being with lesser divine status
- 24. People living together in a community
- 25. Luxury automaker
- 26. This (Spanish)
- 27. Semitic language
- 30. Period for a defined purpose
- 34. Wander aimlessly in search of pleasure
- 35. Up in the air (abbr.)
- 36. American marsupial
- 41. Decadent dessert
- 45. Aquatic plant
- 46. About aviation
- 47. Summer footwear
- 50. Rugged mountain ranges
- 54. With tin
- 55. Cut on the surface of a hard object
- 56. Wrapped in cloth
- 57. Defensive nuclear weapon
- 59. "American Idol" contestant Clay
- 60. Midway between east and southeast
- 61. Court decision "___ v. Wade"
- 62. Born of
- 63. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 64. Actress ___-Margaret
- 65. Not even

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Heat unit
- 2. ___ Faulkner, American writer
- 3. Guatemalan town
- 4. Of funny things
- 5. Actress ___ de Armas
- 6. Agents of one's downfall
- 7. Takes forcibly
- 8. Body lice
- 9. Large nest of a bird of prey
- 13. Unhappy
- 14. Popular holiday dessert
- 17. Habitual drunkard
- 18. Used of a number or amount not specified
- 20. Complications
- 22. Fail to win
- 27. Before the present
- 28. Musical genre
- 29. Flurry
- 31. 007's creator
- 32. Indiana Pacer Toppin
- 33. Midway between north and northeast
- 37. Feeling
- 38. Damage another's reputation
- 39. Mottled citrus fruit
- 40. Beauty product
- 41. They man first, second and third
- 42. Harness
- 43. Herb
- 44. Expressed concern
- 47. Mississippi scientific area (abbr.)
- 48. Consumed
- 49. Nostrils
- 51. Gathered fallen leaves
- 52. Express good wishes
- 53. Monetary unit of Brunei
- 58. Japanese Buddhist festival

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DA partners with Autism Resource Center to expand adaptive swim class offerings for neurodivergent children

WORCESTER — Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr. recently partnered with the Autism Resource Center to help expand adaptive swim program offerings to more families of neurodivergent children across Worcester County.

The classes include basic swim skills, as well as water safety training. They also include a home safety workshop for parents/caregivers to provide information and resources to protect against elopement.

“We know that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder are 160 times more likely to drown than their peers without adequate water safety instruction,” said Early. “We want to prevent such tragedies. These swim classes will help children be safe, help give parents some peace of mind, and also allow children to have fun in an environment adapted to their needs.”

The Autism Resource Center first began setting up the Adaptive Swim Program last year with the support of the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism.

“The Swim and Safety Program is truly about prevention and accessibility. Our goal is to provide swim lessons to as many children and young adults with au-



Courtesy
 (Left) From left: Lainie Petrou from the Worcester County District Attorney's Office, Logi Nathan from the British Swim School of Blackstone Valley, Julie LeBeau of the Autism Resource Center, Janine LaPrade, swim instructor at Worcester Fitness, Kristen Cariglia, Director of the Autism Resource Center, Kelly Sampson of the Worcester JCC, Eileen Shea from the Worcester County District Attorney's Office, and Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.

tism as possible,” said Kristen Cariglia, Director of the Autism Resource Center. “By training more Water Safety Instructors across our region to increase the number of adaptive lessons and funding for participants, children are able to participate in these potentially lifesaving lessons in close to home. We are beyond thrilled to be partnering with the Worcester County District Attorney's office. With their support, we are able to make these lessons accessible to double the number of children and train more swim instructors to provide them.”

Through the funding provided by the District Attorney's Office, the program

has been training additional instructors and expanding to new locations across Worcester County. Classes are currently offered at Worcester Fitness, the Worcester JCC, British Swim School of Milford and Orchard Hill Athletic Club in Lancaster. There are plans to add additional classes soon.

“Providing water safety skills to the community is at the forefront of preventing drowning incidents,” said Janine LaPrade, the adaptive swim class instructor at Worcester Fitness. “Many times, accessibility is a substantial roadblock to acquiring these survival techniques. The partnership created by the District Attorney's

office, the Autism Resource center, and swim academy sites of Worcester County will increase the number of trained instructors, the number of sites providing lessons, as well as an increase in families served all in hopes of reducing the tragic accidents that can occur, especially within this population.”

The District Attorney's office provided \$10,000 to help cover the cost of swimming fees and additional staff training needed to expand the adaptive swim program. The prevention program money was funded through the office's Drug Forfeiture Community Reinvestment Program, which uses money seized from drug crimes

to provide funds for

community initiatives in Worcester County as a crime prevention and intervention tool.

These swim classes are open to the entire community and registration

is free. Contact the Autism Resource Center at www.autism-resourcecentral.org/swim for additional information and registration.

Holiday Bazaar

Saturday, December 7, 2024
 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

St Joseph's Church Hall
 10 H Putnam Rd Ext., Charlton, Mass

We are actively seeking crafters and vendors for this event.
 Call Joyce at 774-262-0820 for a registration form or information.



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<https://adopt.mareinc.org/waiting-child-profiles#gallery/child/7779>

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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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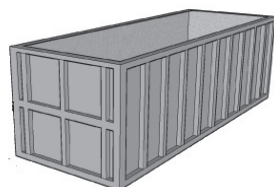


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Federated Church announces 2024 Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

STURBRIDGE — The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale will host this year's annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service on Tuesday, Nov. 26 at 7 p.m. All members of the community, regardless of faith, are invited to attend this special service, according to Federated Church Pastor Rev. David Cote.

This year's participating churches include Holy Trinity Church, Southbridge; Elm Street Congregational

Church UCC, Southbridge; Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Sturbridge; First United Methodist Church, Southbridge; and St. Anne/St. Patrick Catholic Church, Fiskdale. Together, they will join in a collaborative service to give thanks for the blessings of the past year and to encourage a sense of community through shared worship.

According to Rev. David Cote, pastor of the Federated Church, "The Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service gives

us a chance to reflect on the blessings we share and to celebrate the unity that ties us all together. This service is a great example of how faith can go beyond individual churches, bringing us together as one grateful and grace-filled community."

For more information about the event, please visit the church Web site at sturfed.org or contact the church office at (774) 304-1021 or via email at churchoffice@sturfed.org.

Hazelwood Markets presents Christmas at Crane Street: A Holiday Artisan and Craft Market

SOUTHBRIDGE — Katherine Oakes and Christina Cirillo-Schmidt of Hazelwood Markets, in partnership with 12 Crane Street, will present a two-day Christmas-themed artisan and craft market at 12 Crane St. in Southbridge on Saturday, Nov. 30 and Sunday, Dec. 1 from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. with entertainment in the Dark Horse Tavern from 7-10 p.m.

The market will feature local and regional artists and craftspeople selling their wares on the upper and lower floors of the historic 12 Crane St. building. The market will host blacksmiths, jewelry makers, stained glass artists, painters, potters, fiber artists and more. Pub food and drink will also be available on site at the Dark Horse Tavern, and

Moon Magick Café will serve specialty coffee drinks.

Saturday evening entertainment in the Tavern includes singer/songwriter Seamus McMullen, storytelling from author Robert Oakes and holiday music from singer/songwriter Dan Blakeslee. Children will enjoy shadow puppet performances from Jim Napolitano (Nappy) and a kids' crafting table and scavenger hunt. On Saturday evening at 5 p.m., the town of Southbridge will be celebrating its tree lighting and a holiday parade for all to enjoy.

Admission is \$5 per person, free for children 12 and under, and the event will be held rain or shine.

QCC's Community Impact Award goes to ACE volunteer

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College has announced Ayman Abdelgadir as the recipient of its most recent Community Impact Awards. Abdelgadir received the award in response to his work with African Community Education (ACE), an organization that aims to empower African refugee and immigrant youth through educational, leadership and cultural programming.

Abdelgadir has been volunteering with ACE since 2009, becoming the volunteer and mentoring coordinator in 2019. His role includes recruiting volunteers and mentors for ACE's programs to assist with academic support, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and career development. He is also the head coach of the

ACE youth soccer team.

"I take pride in working with all newcomers to the community and helping them flourish to their full potential. It brings me tremendous joy to see both the youth and adults continuously reach new milestones and build a successful future," said Abdelgadir.

The Community Impact Award is a project developed by QCC's Director of Community Engagement Sean Harris in 2023. An award is given out during each athletic season to highlight individuals and/or organizations in Central Massachusetts who do impactful work with young people from underserved communities.

"I garnered feedback from our student-athletes and Ayman's name came up repeatedly from his work with the

ACE soccer team. Not only that, but also his reputation precedes him in local community organizations. Everyone has high regard for Ayman," Harris said.

Abdelgadir was born in Sudan and raised in Worcester, receiving two graduate degrees from Clark University. He appreciated QCC's recognition of community development organizations and praised progress made by the many groups in the city.

"I share this award with every staff member at ACE and the other organizations in Worcester that are doing phenomenal work. In this field, we don't compete with each other; we work together," said Abdelgadir.

Southbridge Garden Club announces annual Holiday Greens Sale

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Garden Club will hold its annual Holiday Greens Sale at the Ruth Well Center for the Arts at 111 Main St. (Route 131) in Southbridge on Friday, Dec. 6, from noon to 5 pm, and on Saturday, Dec. 7, from 9 a.m. to noon.

The sale will feature a variety of handcrafted items, including decorative wreaths, holiday centerpieces, door swags, and assorted decorations and greens. All items contain different

types of live, fresh greens.

The Southbridge Garden Club's mission is to share an interest in horticulture and to expand our knowledge of gardening for our mutual benefit and that of our local communities. The Club is a non-profit organization and proceeds from the Greens Sale support a variety of programs and scholarships.

For more information, please contact Sandra Gibson-Quigley at 508-347-



7956 or 508-864-6319, sgibquig@gmail.com or Sally Anderson at 508-207-6882, sally.h.anderson@outlook.com.

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CHURCH LISTINGS

- **Central Baptist Church**
256 Main St., Southbridge, MA 01550
Tel 508/764-6365; Worship 10:00 A.M.
- **Charlton Federated Church**, 64 Main St., 508-248-5550, Sunday worship 10:30 a.m. Summer worship is 9:30 a.m.
www.charltonfedchurch.org
- **Charlton Baptist Church**, 50 Hammond Hill Road, 248-4488, www.charltonbaptist.org, Sunday worship 10 a.m.
- **Charlton City United Methodist**, 74 Stafford St. 248-7379, web site: CharltonCityUMC.org
Sunday worship and Children's church 10am
- **St. Anne St. Patrick Church**, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (508) 347-7338
www.stannestpatparish.com
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- **St. Joseph's Church**, 10 H. Putnam Ext, 248-7862, www.stjosephscharlton.com, Saturday Vigil Mass 4:30 p.m., Sunday Mass 8 a.m., Sunday Family Mass 10 a.m., Sunday LifeTEEN Mass 5 p.m., Weekday Mass Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8:30 a.m.
- **Wayside Church**, 6 Haggerty Road, 248-5144
- **Assemblies of God Southern New England District Headquarters**, Route 20, 248-3771, snedag.org, Office hours Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- **Living Word Church of Charlton**, 10 Main Street - Grange building 1st Floor, Charlton, MA 01507, Pastor Craig Bellisario, (508) 233-8349
Sunday Service 10:00am.
www.livingwordcharlton.com
info@livingwordcharlton.com
- **New Life Fellowship A/G, SNED Chapel**, 307 Sturbridge Road, Rt. 20, Charlton, MA, Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.
- **Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale** - 8 Maple St. Sturbridge, 774-304-1021
www.sturfed.org
Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m.
- **Bethlehem Lutheran Church**- 345 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA 01566
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Web: www.bethlehemsturbridge.org
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Pastor Dan Purtell
- **Holland Congregation Church** "Where the Bible is preached."
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Hollandchurch.org
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Pastor Dan Maketansky
- **Holy Trinity Episcopal Church**
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Pastor Dan Purtell

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HOLLAND
\$200,000, 488 Mashapaug Rd, Roscolli, Annie R, to Porter, Andrew.

SOUTHBRIDGE
None

STURBRIDGE
None



Chief

continued from page 1

Knopf has submitted a letter of recommendation for Deputy Chief Scott Corio to succeed him, he felt that utilizing an assessment center would allow Charlton to ensure the very best candidate is chosen for the job. He also felt that Deputy Chief Corio would shine as a worthy candidate regardless.

"I believe that the town does itself a disservice if it doesn't spread the search far and wide. If (Deputy Chief Corio) is truly the best candidate that I think he will be, he will rise to the top, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't do your due diligence in looking for qualified candidates and that doesn't mean they have to be internal or external," said Knopf. Charlton Fire Captain

Travis McDonald, who is President of the Permanent Firefighters Union, supported using an assessment center while also expressing his belief that Corio would be a standout regardless of the hiring process.

"I'm speaking on behalf of most of my membership here when I say that I truly believe an assessment center is the correct avenue. That leaves the most trans-

parency in the process," McDonald said. "It's very common across the Commonwealth and it's probably the most common way to appoint deputy fire chief and fire chief positions and it's starting to trickle down into the mid-level management as well. As far as the internal versus external debate, I want to say that I appreciate all of the sentiments that have been echoed

about giving the opportunity to our internal people, but our feeling is our internal people are going to rise to the top anyways."

Selectmen decided to embrace Singer's recommendation in a 3-2 decision setting a seven-day application period for internal candidates and the required number of qualified candidates at two. If enough qualified internal candidates ap-

ply for the job they will be interviewed and if no candidate is chosen at that time the application will be open to external candidates. Selectmen confirmed any external hiring process will not use an assessment center. Selectmen also solidified the job description for the position choosing to make no changes prior to the application process.

Housing

continued from page 1

month, while 18 percent are in poverty ("one of the highest I've seen in the region," she said).

Regarding currently "affordable" units, she listed 176 as being "in perpetuity" (mostly at the High Rise), 168 that expire in 2030 at Brookside Terrace, and an uncertain number among the town's various group homes. There are also a few in the 5-15 Case Street building.

One participating woman noted that Newton lawyers

recently bought 140 local units and increased the rent by \$1,000 a month. "Now you need two families to live in one apartment to afford the rent," she said.

Chenier agreed, saying hedge funds have been spending millions to buy properties and hike rents. "We encourage free enterprise in this country, but we also make a monster with it," he said.

As the forum's two groups (one in Spanish, one, English) went into their "breakout sessions" to throw ideas around, a lot of the same themes surfaced.

For positive aspects of town, many cited the library, diversity, history, walkability, and interfaith/intergroup connections. For negatives, they cited the schools, lack of jobs, departing businesses, discrimination, poor communication from town government, and the need for more effort to get people involved.

For key housing priorities, they cited more "little units where they feel like they're living in a home," places for young adults and people with low income, addressing "predatory developers who target communi-

ties like ours," and building neighborhoods to have easy access to local groceries and other small businesses.

For key needs, they argued for rental assistance and/or rent control, public transit, clearer information regarding services like heat assistance and tax exemptions, grants to help local people buy and renovate mixed-use property, providing things for youth to do, and bylaws that promote self-sufficiency.

The Nov. 12 forums are intended to be the last public forums of the housing plan process, although the

survey (which includes opportunities to comment) is still available on the town's Civil Space page (<https://southbridge.civilspace.io/en/projects/housing-production-plan>). From here, the project shifts to one-on-one stakeholder interviews, then writing the final report, which gets submitted to the state. Sometime next spring, Glaubitz will present it to the Planning Board and Town Council for approval.

Gus Steeves can be reached at gus.steeves2@gmail.com.

Fire

continued from page 1

the displaced people. "Some have chosen to be relocated, and the landlord is covering their expenses," while some have found their own housing, he said.

Fire Chief Paul Normandin said the residents were lucky that the previous owner had sold it last spring or early summer. At that time, the department inspected the houses and found they had "two month old [smoke] detectors and brand new batteries."

"A year down the road, and we'd be having a very different conversation," Normandin added. "They'd have been ripped off the walls."

Soon after the fire, a neighbor gave the police video footage of a "person of interest" who had been hanging around the property around the time the fire began. Woodson said "we've identified them and the investigation is ongoing," so the police will not

yet name that person. He noted Southbridge is working with the state police and fire marshal's office, didn't know how long the case might take, and said the cause is still "undetermined" at this point.

According to the WCVB.com Web site, 80-100 firefighters helped fight the blaze, which started about 3:25 a.m. in 7-9 Union and spread to 11-13 Union. It was under control by about 6:15 a.m.

By Friday afternoon, the buildings had both been substantially demolished, with a crane and a couple workers still on the fenced scene between two large piles of debris. Woodson said the town ordered that to happen "due to the instability of both properties. They weren't safe, and there are lots of kids in that area."

That same day, the Community Center hosted a "symposium" for the displaced people. State agencies and non-profits brought clothing, food, pet food

and various other needs, plus information about various state and regional emergency services.

Normandin described the event as "a huge resource gift" for the displaced residents.

Coincidentally, a two-alarm fire hit a nearby Cross Street house over the weekend. Normandin said the department very quickly determined that one was caused by "improper disposal of smoking materials" and had "no connection whatsoever" to the Union Street fire.

"On social media, everybody's scared to death there's an arsonist going around," he said, but added that is not true.

Gus Steeves can be reached at gus.steeves2@gmail.com.

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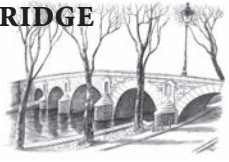
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PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER

BRENDAN BERUBE
EDITOR

Save Main Street: Shop local and keep our towns alive

In a world dominated by two-day shipping and digital convenience, it's easy to forget the personality of our communities, the small businesses that line our Main Streets. These aren't just shops; they're the heartbeats of our towns, and the places where neighbors gather. They are the framework of New England's charm, the pillars of local economies, and the custodians of our town's character. Without them, what remains?

The reality is stark: every time we opt for an online order instead of visiting a local shop, we make a choice about the future of our communities. Small businesses are facing a relentless uphill battle, competing not only with giant corporations but also with the shifting habits of modern consumers. And when these businesses close, they take more than their storefronts with them—they take jobs, vibrancy, and a sense of belonging.

Shopping locally isn't just about buying goods; it's about investing in the people around us. That cup of coffee from the corner café supports a family. That thrift store find funds local charities. That gift shop purchase puts money back into the local economy, where it's reinvested to improve schools, roads, and public services. Your dollar goes further when spent locally because it stays local.

But this requires a conscious effort. Yes, online shopping is convenient, but at what cost? Do we really want to trade ease for a future of shuttered windows and hollowed-out Main Streets? Do we want our children to grow up in communities where "downtown" is a relic of the past?

We have a choice. This holiday season and beyond, let's make an intentional effort to visit our local bookstores, bakeries, and boutiques. Explore the unique treasures of thrift shops. Say yes to the farmer's market, the family-owned hardware store, and the independent art gallery. These businesses are run by our neighbors—people who support our schools, sponsor our Little League teams, and show up when we need them most.

If we don't invest in them, who will? Let's work together to keep our towns alive, vibrant, and full of opportunity. Let's shop local—not because it's trendy, but because it's essential.

Our communities depend on it. Let's not let convenience rob us of connection. Together, we can ensure that our Main Streets remain places we're proud to call home.

Letter submission policy

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

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

OPINION

An Ecumenical Thanksgiving – finding common ground

"If the only prayer you ever said was "thank you," that would be enough."
— Meister Eckhart

Was 1621 the first ecumenical Thanksgiving service in North America? A time when Spiritual people and Christians shared a meal and faith practices, giving thanks together, even if in different languages and different ways?

Consider two cultures, two peoples from vastly different experiences and faiths, who for that three day feast in 1621 found common ground – they celebrated a harvest at a time when both Wampanoags and Pilgrims experienced the deaths of so many of their people, when a brutal winter took its toll, and where people tried to bridge a large divide in cultures to coexist.

Through great hospitality and some common assistance across groups, both made it to 1621 better than they were in 1620, and celebrated their abundance, and survival. Two vastly different cultures, they found common ground. Perhaps not the Hallmark image of the first Thanksgiving, but worthy of being remembered and passed down generation to generation.

It would have been easy for the Wampanoags and Pilgrims to treat each as "the other," but they found a way to work together at those early moments.

Sadly today we face the threat of treating people different from us as "the other," for a variety of reasons – political, religious, you name it, sometimes it seems humans make an art form out of differentiating between people.

Yet we also have a great way of making people feel at home when we head our higher angels.

BEYOND THE PEWS

BY DR. RB MCFEE

CHARLTON CITY UMC

Yet great hospitality – that is our calling, our charge as people of faith. Making all feel welcome is the message Christ taught again and again. Using the person or people designated "the other," He tried to reveal a common goodness and show us what it is like to be a Good Samaritan, a grateful leper (the Samaritan), and a person worth hearing the ultimate Good News – the woman at the well (a Samaritan). There was no "other" in Jesus.

Is that ethos still alive and well in our midst today?

Recently I spoke with Rev. John Lucy, pastor of the Charlton City Unite Methodist Church (CCUMC), as we reflected upon those questions, Thanksgiving, the economy and its impact on vulnerable people, the election, and building a sense of community.

During that time we talked about the upcoming Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service to be held at CCUMC.

Pastor John noted this was an annual event, with each participating church taking turns on hosting.

He went on to say "This is an important Thanksgiving to demonstrate God's love to all people, regardless of faith tradition. To reveal what Jesus would have said - there is no Democrat or Republican, Green or Independent, rich or poor, no cultural divide or other divide that matters more than a common humanity and heart, as part of God's Kingdom. And that's what people who attend the November 24th Ecumenical Thanksgiving service should feel – a shared community in Christ, a sense of Christ's love, hospitality and welcome."

We agreed that people of faith need to share, to live as God's beloved children – coexisting with a sense of

Turn to **THANKSGIVING** page 11

Dream of holidays

As the holiday season heats up and the smell of roasted turkey and pumpkin pie fills the air, it's easy to get caught up in the magic of the season—and just as easy to let your dreams slip into the background.

Between family gatherings, festive celebrations, and endless to-do lists, the holidays can feel like both a time of joy and a reminder of what you haven't yet achieved. But what if this season could be the spark to reignite your fire for your dreams?

The holidays are distracting. There's shopping to do, meals to prepare, and social media posts showing everyone else's highlight reels. That can leave you comparing your progress to others and wondering if you've fallen behind. But here's the thing—the holidays aren't about competing; they're about connection, reflection, and renewal. And that goes for your dreams, too.

Think about the power of this time of year. Latch onto the holiday spirit, express gratitude, reflect on where you've been, and just as importantly, set your sights on where you're headed.

What about that book you're writing, the

POSITIVELY SPEAKING

TOBY MOORE

weight you're losing, or the business you started that hasn't quite taken off yet? Now is not the time to hold back. Wake up a little earlier, stay up a little later—don't let your dreams take a holiday break only to resurface as New Year's resolutions. Keep the fire burning!

Let the warmth of the season fuel your ambitions. Let the love and laughter of family remind you why you're chasing your dreams in the first place. Let the joy of giving inspire you to give your all in pursuit of your goals.

Even history's greatest dreamers didn't take the holidays off when their vision was on the line. In the winter of 1879, Thomas Edison worked tirelessly at his lab in Menlo Park, perfecting the electric light bulb. His assistants reported working through snowstorms and late into the night by lamplight. The breakthrough came on New Year's Eve when his bulb successfully

burned for over 13 hours, proving it was commercially viable.

Edison later said, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." His dedication reminds us that even in the season of comfort, a little extra effort can lead to monumental breakthroughs.

Of course, no one wants to become a workaholic. Ebenezer Scrooge learned the hard way that all work and no play leads to misery, though his ghostly intervention came at Christmastime. Thanksgiving reminds us of balance. Gratitude is as much about appreciating where you are as it is about striving for more.

Here are a few ways to stay motivated while savoring the season:

1. Reflect: Take a moment to look back—not to beat yourself up, but to celebrate the progress you've made. Even small steps matter.
2. Write down your dreams: Grab a notebook and jot down your biggest aspirations. Putting them on paper makes them more real.
3. Visualize success: As you sip on cider or watch the leaves fall, close your eyes and imagine

Turn to **HOLIDAYS** page 13

Social Security COLA can sweeten your finances



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR NIELSEN

If you're receiving Social Security benefits, you will see some bigger checks in 2025. How can you best take advantage of this increase?

First, here's some background: Each year, the Social Security Administration adjusts payments based on the rate of inflation. In 2025, this cost-of-living adjustment, or COLA, will be 2.5 percent. While this figure is lower than the 3.2 percent bump for 2024, and significantly lower than the 8.7 percent increase in 2023, when inflation was much higher, it's still close to the 20-year average of 2.6 percent.

The actual dollar amount increase you'll see will depend, of course, on the size of your regular Social Security payments. In any case, though, you may find that the bigger checks can help you in these areas:

Withdrawals from investment portfolio — Once you retire, you'll likely have to start tapping into your traditional IRA, 401(k) and other investment accounts. Naturally, your goal is to avoid taking out so much in your early retirement years that you risk running low on money later. A higher Social Security payment may allow you to keep withdrawing the same amount, or possibly even lower your taxable withdrawals. This is especially important when the inevitable market downturns occur — as much as possible, you'll want to avoid withdrawing money, which essentially means selling taxable investments, when the market is down.

Cash reserves — It's generally a good idea for retirees to keep up to 12 months' worth of portfolio withdrawals in cash, so the money is readily available when you need it, along with another three to six months of spending kept in an emergency fund. Having these reserves available can help you avoid dipping into your long-term taxable investments to pay for short-term needs, such as a major car repair or a needed home improvement.

Debt reduction — If the higher Social Security payments allow you to improve your cash flow, you might be able to pay down some debts, especially those that carry a high interest rate. And lowering your debts, just like building your cash reserves, can help protect you from increasing your withdrawals from your retirement accounts.

In addition to implementing the new COLA, the Social Security Administration is also raising the earnings limit for those reaching their full retirement age, which, for most people, will be between 66 and 67. If you are under your full retirement age for all of 2025, Social Security will deduct \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you earn above the new limit of \$23,400, up from \$22,320 in 2024. If you reach your full retirement age in 2025, Social Security will deduct \$1 in benefits for every \$3 you earn above \$62,160, up from \$59,520 in 2024. Starting with the month you reach your full retirement age, you can earn as much as you want without having your benefits reduced. At that point, Social Security will also recalculate your benefit amounts to give you credit for the months you received reduced benefits due to your excess earnings.

And here's one final COLA-related change: For 2025, the Social Security tax limit will rise to \$176,100, up from \$168,600 in 2024.

It's not all that often when a source of your guaranteed income goes up. So, start thinking now about how you can use these COLA changes to improve your financial situation in 2025.

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 trevornielson@edwardjones.com.

Turkey Tips

Thanksgiving is arguably the most anticipated annual holiday, and the highlight of an annual Thanksgiving celebration is



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THE
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KAREN
TRAINOR

the fabulous feast, with a turkey served up as the crowning centerpiece of the both the table and the holiday. A large, golden brown bird, roasted to perfection and surrounded by a medley of delicious accompaniments has no culinary competition at the dining table.

With so much at stake (and so much to go wrong), it's no wonder we're obsessed about turning out a feast on par with the roasted beauties we recall from our childhoods. Thus, this week's column offers a guide to preparing a Thanksgiving turkey along with some fun facts about the holiday bird.

Happy Thanksgiving!

**

Many a novice cook has been intimidated by the mere thought of preparing a turkey for dinner, nonetheless for a Thanksgiving feast. The good news is turkeys are not difficult to cook, and all it takes is a little advance preparation to ensure a turkey success:

**

Not sure how big a bird to cook? A general rule of thumb is to allow one pound of uncooked turkey per person from an 8 to 12 pound turkey. Larger birds have a larger proportion of meat to bones, so three quarters of a pound per person should serve well when purchasing heavier birds.

**

Like all protein foods, should be thawed in the refrigerator, never at room temperature. When foods are thawed at room temperature, surface bacteria can rapidly multiply to dangerous levels at temperatures of 40 degrees F and above. The National Turkey Federation offers the following guidelines to properly defrosting frozen turkeys: For safety and superior quality, leave turkey in the original packaging and place in a shallow pan. Thaw, in the refrigerator, using the simple formula: whole turkeys thaw at a rate of 4 to 5 pounds per 24 hours. Example: A 15-pound frozen bird will take 3 to 4 full days to thaw in the refrigerator. To speed thawing, keep turkey in the original tightly sealed bag and place in a clean and sanitized sink or pan. Submerge in cold water and change the cold water every 30 minutes. The turkey will take about 30 minutes per pound to thaw. Refrigerate (at 40 degrees F or below) or cook the turkey when it is thawed. Do not refreeze uncooked, defrosted turkey.

**

Stuffing is a delicious requisite for most Thanksgiving meals, but it's important not to stuff a turkey until just before it is placed

in the oven for roasting. If preparing the stuffing ahead-of-time, wet and dry ingredients should be refrigerated separately and combined right before stuffing the turkey. The turkey should be stuffed loosely, with about three quarters of a cup of stuffing per pound of turkey. It's also important to test the internal temperature of the stuffing as well as the turkey. The internal temperature in the center of the stuffing should register 160 to 165 degrees F.

**

Many a Thanksgiving meal has been delayed due to underestimating the time it takes to cook a turkey. Since turkey is low in fat and high in protein, the meat is sensitive to extreme heat and prolonged cooking. Loosely place an aluminum foil tent over the turkey breast during the first 1 to 1½ hours of roasting, then remove to allow the turkey to brown. A turkey should be cooked just until it is done. The best way to determine the level of doneness is with a food thermometer. Even if you subscribe to the "20 minute per pound rule" you should also use a thermometer to ensure the bird is fully cooked. For whole turkey, place the food thermometer in the deepest part of the thigh, but not touching the bone. The internal temperature of the turkey should measure 180 degrees F in the thigh and 170 degrees F in the breast. Juices should run clear and the drumsticks should be soft and move easily at the joint.

**

*Brine is a popular prep to ensure juicy meat and crisp skin, but it can be a hassle. Try this super easy method that makes brining a breeze.

Note: Add some herbs and spices, it also infuses the turkey with additional flavor.

Choose a bucket or container large enough to cover the bird with brine. To each gallon of fresh, cool water, add one cup of Kosher salt and one half cup of white or brown sugar. Pour the mixture over the turkey and refrigerate for at least 12 hours. If you want to flavor your turkey, add spices such as black peppercorns, dried thyme, garlic cloves or bay leaves to the brine.

When the brining process is complete, rinse the bird well and pat dry. If you want a crispy skin, allow the turkey to air dry overnight in the refrigerator. Stuff and roast the turkey as usual.

Another secret to delicious turkey is a simple spice rub, which adds not only incredible flavor to the bird, but a rich color as well.

Note: If using dried spices, half the amount required.

Mix together in a small bowl, three tablespoons each: chopped fresh rosemary, chopped fresh

thyme, and chopped fresh tarragon; one tablespoon ground black pepper; two teaspoons salt.

Pat turkey dry with paper towels and place on rack set in a roasting pan. Tie legs together loosely to hold shape of turkey. Brush turkey with a little olive oil. Rub herb mix all over turkey. Roast as usual.

**

Did you know?

*The average price of a whole turkey is expected to increase by just 8% in 2024, jumping from \$27.9 in 2023 to \$30.15

*Half of all whole turkeys sold in the United States are consumed on Thanksgiving

*A frozen turkey keeps up to a year, but usually loses some flavor, according to the folks at Butterball.

*Even a "pre basted bird" can benefit from hand basting. Basting gives your bird color, crisps the skin and helps hold in juices. Rub the bird with a few tablespoons of softened butter and pour two cups of turkey broth, chicken broth or water into your roasting pan. Baste every half hour or so. And be sure to baste quickly, because the oven temperature will reduce every time you open the oven door.

*Some seasoned chef's recommend rubbing the inside of the turkey with a cut lemon before stuffing.

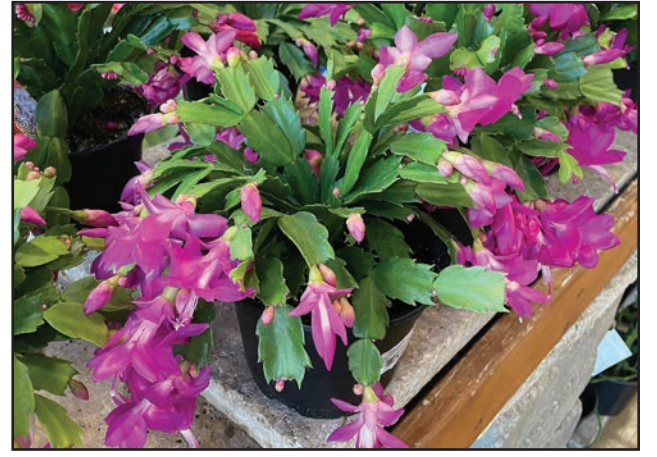
*A turkey will carve more easily if you let it sit for 20 minutes to allow juices to set.

*According to the Center of Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the Thanksgiving turkey can be safely eaten for just four days after cooking.

**

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 (or whenever I receive enough tips for a column) will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renowned 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.



Melinda Myers

The Thanksgiving cactus has toothed or jagged segments and typically blooms earlier than the Christmas cactus.

Holiday cacti add weeks of color and enjoyment

Add weeks of colorful flowers and decades of enjoyment to your indoor plant collection with holiday cacti.



GROW them in an organic well-drained potting mix for best results. Water

Dress one up with a decorative basket, container, or foil wrap and give it to a favorite gardener or holiday hostess. You'll find a variety for sale at your local garden center or florist.

The plant sold as a Christmas cactus may in fact be a Thanksgiving cactus. The true Christmas cactus blooms later and has small segments with rounded edges. The Thanksgiving cactus, though often sold as the Christmas cactus, has toothed or jagged segments and typically blooms earlier. To add to the confusion, there are hybrids of the two that bloom in between these.

Fortunately, their growing requirements and care are essentially the same so the plants will do fine no matter the name on the label. Keep your flowering holiday cactus in a cool bright location to extend its bloom time for as long as four to eight weeks. Avoid hot and cold air drafts, moisture stress, and other environmental changes to reduce the risk of bud and flower drop.

These holiday cacti are epiphytes that naturally grow on trees in the rainforests of Brazil. They all prefer bright indirect light, high humidity, and thorough watering when the top few inches of soil begin to dry. Don't overwater, but don't let the soil dry completely. Water a bit more often when the plant is in bloom.

ter thoroughly and pour off any excess water that collects in the saucer to avoid root rot. Reduce maintenance and improve the growing conditions with the help of gravel trays. Place a layer of pebbles, decorative stones, or marbles in the saucer or bottom of the foil wrap or basket. The pot will be elevated above any excess water collecting in the pebbles. As this water evaporates it increases the humidity around the plant.

Fertilize with a dilute solution of flowering houseplant fertilizer once it finishes blooming and throughout spring and summer as needed. Grow your cactus in a north-facing window or back from an east- or west-facing window where it receives bright indirect light throughout the year. Too much sun turns the leaf segments dark red.

Don't be anxious to move these plants to a bigger container. They prefer to be somewhat pot-bound and can remain in the same pot for years.

Encourage a new flush of flowers with cooler night temperatures around 55 to 60 degrees and slightly drier soil. An uninterrupted dark period will also help promote flowering.

Next fall, start the dark treatment in early October to get holiday flowers. Cover the plants or move them to a location free of artificial light, indoors or outside, each night for 14 hours and provide bright, indirect sunlight each day. Any interruption in the dark period from outdoor, street, or reading lights can delay or prevent flowering.

Make this the year you add holiday cacti to your indoor plant collection and consider purchasing a few for friends and family. These easy-care flowering beauties will brighten indoor holiday décor and everyone's mood.

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.

Auction news



ANTIQUES,
COLLECTIBLES
& ESTATES

WAYNE TUISKULA

There's been lots of auction news since my last update. Beginning with an item from the 16th century, a pair of Ming Dynasty jars sold well above their estimate at auction recently. The "fish jars" were made during the reign of the Jiajing Emperor, from 1522-1566," according to CNN. They were made with advancements in ceramics design and depict golden

carps along with lotus and other plants. The jars were in a home in Wiesbaden, Germany, but were moved after the start of World War II and placed in a secure location. The jars far exceeded the £1 million (\$1.3 million USD) estimate selling for £9.6 million (\$12.5 million USD).

Some rare presidential memorabilia including artifacts from two of America's greatest presidents will hit the auction block later this month. A lock of George Washington's hair inside a locket is one of the pieces being offered. The locket was given to a family friend of Washington's and was documented as it passed down through the generations. It's estimated to sell for \$30,000 to \$40,000.

Another important artifact was recently discovered in a Florida museum, according to the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The museum manager found an old dusty shadowbox containing an American flag. The flag is dated April 14, 1865, the day after Abraham Lincoln's assassination. It was draped over Lincoln's coffin as his body traveled 1,654 miles to be buried in Springfield, Ohio. The flag was signed by New York physician Lewis Applegate, who went to school with one of the pallbearers. It's believed Applegate's school friend gave the flag to him. After Applegate signed the border, other owners followed suit which provided a documentation of ownership over the years. It has an auction estimate of \$800,000 to \$1.2 million.

Moving to an item from more recent times, a collection of "Star Trek" memorabilia from the popular 1960s television show had many items selling past their estimates and even saw an auction record broken. A vintage red velour duty uniform worn by Nichelle Nichols when she played Nyota Uhura had an estimate of \$3,000 and sold for \$114,300, according to mylanews.com. Captain Kirk's yellow velour tunic and Starfleet



Command Bridge trousers worn by actor William Shatner in the first season sold for \$455,000, well above the \$65,000 estimate. A communicator and phaser used by William Shatner as Captain Kirk were considered "lost." The original owner "was a veteran of Hollywood's prop industry," according to ArtNet. Don Hillenbrand, a long-time collector and researcher compared the items to those that appear in early episodes and to a documentary book on the series. The effort paid off when the phaser, estimated at \$100,000, boldly went where no man has gone before, setting an auction record for a "Star Trek" prop at \$910,000.

We are currently cataloging for an online antiques auction in a Beacon Hill Boston estate and a large Civil War collection from a local estate. We are accepting consignments of all types for future auctions. Please visit our Web site, <https://centralmassauctions.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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Historical

continued from page 1

The goal, he said, is to “describe all the buildings and what [they’re] all about.” that information will be in three kiosks of brochures, small plaques on each building that have QR codes to a website, signs that are “in view of the next post, so nobody can get lost,” and in-the-sidewalk trail markers. Over time, Brady added, these walks will tie into the Rail Trail and spark local businesses where visitors can get lunch and more.

To Jim O'Brien, the best part is “the history of each building. It's pretty cool what we've come up with, and we've hit each building” on both routes. By scanning the QR codes, “you can go as deep as you want to know” on a Web site that's free to use, he added later.

He also noted that from the corner of Marcy and Main you can see five churches at once.

Brady said the project's historic information is coming from various sources. The most basic of them are the National Registry forms for more than 100 properties townwide; those date to 1979, with some updated in a 1984 study. Some of the buildings no longer exist (for example, the old police station), some aren't in the registry, and some registry listings aren't in this area of town.

He also cited documents from previous walking tours, two detailed Southbridge News reports on the Globe and Center Village posted to the library's Web site, material written by Society founder Arthur Casaubon, and Quinebaug Historical Society leaflets book from the early 20th century.

The tours' Web site is tied to the town's site. There, the curious can find “a little bit of detail on each one” of the listed buildings. As an example, Brady called up the Hartwell Building at the Main/Hamilton corner, which was a pharmacy until the 1980s. More recently, people will recall it being vacant for a while, then housing a church briefly, and now it's home to a property management firm. He also cited today's Elm Street fire station, which was previously the site of Freeman's Tavern, the place where early residents met to draft the documents creating the town in 1816.

the project has so far been funded by a Mass Office of Travel and Tourism grant, with match funding from the Society. At this point, Brady said, they're looking at the cost and durability of various kinds of sidewalk trail markers and seeking funds for signage.

“It seems like it's been a long time,” O'Brien said. “But it's been fun.”

After they spoke, Society President Ray Petrelli talked a bit about his hobby of bottle collecting.

“As a kid, I lucked out. The first bottles I found were in my own backyard,” he recalled.

That whetted an appetite for something he's still doing decades later. As a youth, he found it was often safer to bike to potential dig sites. While parked cars often attracted unwanted attention, a bike could be laid in the bushes for as long as he was there.

Most of these bottles, inkwells and the like come from countless backyard dumps; he noted most households had one decades ago, before the town started collecting trash. In some cases, though, bottles can be found in unusual places, such as under floorboards, in walls, and, quite often, in old privies. One of his favorite sites was behind the Main Street building (now gone) that once housed the police station and a courthouse

“For every antique bottle I find, I probably dig up 50 broken ones,” he said. “... Where do I go digging? Anywhere I won't get arrested.”

Petrelli noted many of them in early days held substances that would be probably illegal today. There were no agencies certifying medicines in those days, so people sold such things as “Dr J Moore's Essence of Life” and “Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup,” both of which “were filled with heroin.” In other cases, many “drugs” were basically just booze with various herbs and flavors. Petrelli said “People who didn't drink because they were very, very religious would have their 'medicine.’”

He showed a couple bottles that looked very similar to the unpracticed eye. But he pointed out the often subtle differences that enable experienced collectors to date them and estimate their value. Many are “pictorials,” in that the glass has some sort of fairly common image, but some are “historicals” that document a specific person or event. The latter are much more valuable.

For example, he showed a post Civil War “pictorial” bottle he said was worth about \$200, then held up one of the “historicals” (a one pint whiskey flask from about 1825) valued at around \$3000. His oldest predates the Revolution; it's a black-glass liquor bottle “so thick you could whack somebody on the head and kill them, but not crack the bottle.”

“The people who collect these are fanatics,” Petrelli noted.

Most of his display focused on inkwells, because they're far easier to transport. But the glass is largely the same. He noted “the sand you used would affect the color,” as would impurities and exposure to chemicals. The latter, such as those from privies, can discolor glass and “opalize” it; some people term such glass “sick” and discard it, but the discoloration can be removed.

Gus Steeves can be reached at gus.steeves2@gmail.com.



Ray Petrelli points out a detail of one of his bottles.

Gus Steeves

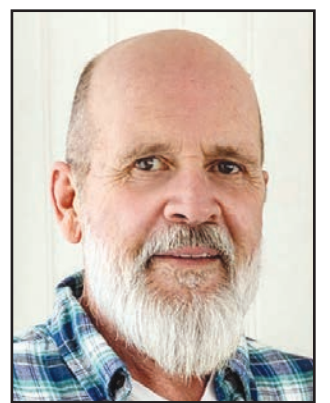
OBITUARIES

Rodney P. Fountain, 60

OXFORD – Rodney P. Fountain, 60, of Federal Hill Road, passed away on Friday, November 15, 2024, at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester. He leaves behind his beloved daughter, Dominique T. Fountain of Brookfield, and her mother, Jennifer DeFilippo of Ludlow; his cherished grandson, Nicholas M. Gianakis of Brookfield; two sisters, Judith Bryniarski and Melissa V. Christian, both of Dudley; and many nieces and nephews. Rodney was predeceased by three brothers, Joseph P. Fountain Jr., Dennis A. Fountain, and Mark A. Fountain; and a sister, Cynthia L. Marable.

Born and raised in Oxford, Rodney was the son of the late Joseph P. and Shirley R. (Beauregard) Fountain. A lifelong resident of the community, he worked for Gaftek Corporation in New Hampshire for five years and was a skilled heavy equipment operator for many years.

Rodney was known for his love of



pool, earning the reputation of a “pool shark” among friends. He enjoyed fishing, mowing the lawn, and taking leisurely drives around town. A hard-working man with a big heart, Rodney especially cherished time spent with his daughter and grandson.

A celebration of his life will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to UMass Memorial Health, c/o Cancer Research, One Biotech, Suite 301, 365 Plantation St., Worcester, MA 01605.

Paradis-Givner Funeral Home in Oxford is directing the arrangements.

Sally A. Gallagher Mueller, 81

WALES, Mass. – Sally A. Gallagher Mueller, 81, of Wales, Mass., passed away Monday, November 11, 2024. Born in Stafford Springs, Conn. on September 9, 1943, daughter of Rayford R. Gallagher Sr and Grayce M. Robinson, she graduated high school from Springfield Technical, attended Springfield Technical Community College, and received a master's degree from Westfield State University.

She was passionate about her work and served the State of Massachusetts for over three decades, primarily in the Department of Developmental Services. During Sally's accomplished career, she was notably awarded 2004 Advocate of the Year while serving as Area Director. The recognition highlighted her hands-on approach, advocacy, and planning that helped individuals, agencies, and families receive crucial funding to receive or provide quality service. Sally always placed the welfare of individuals above bureaucracy, funding shortfalls, and issues that at times seemed insurmountable. Her dedicated work helped numerous handicapped adults in achieving their goals and dreams that many thought were insurmountable. Sally was a selfless woman and cared deeply for her family.

She raised three boys and rarely missed a moment of her grandchildren's lives. She encouraged time spent exploring outdoors, emphasized education, and always had a good book to share. She is regarded by many as a pillar of support and guidance. Sally



enjoyed traveling and creating new memories and traditions. Whether retelling her travels abroad to Europe over high tea, organizing Gallagher family reunions, or packing up the car to travel with or to her family, she was always eager to share life with those she loved. Sally spent many happy years of her life living on Lake George in Wales, Mass.

She enjoyed spending days on her porch waving to neighbors and watching, at times nervously, her sons and grandchildren speed by on boats, water skies, and jet-skis. She was an avid animal lover and was kept in good company with her well-loved cats throughout her life.

Sally's memory is cherished and survived by her sister Suzanne Gallagher of St. Johnsbury, VT, two sons, Jeffery Mueller, and his wife, Maureen, of Gilbertville, Mass., Joel Mueller and his wife, Hilary, of Fort Myers, Fla.; five grandchildren, Ivey Ann, Mabel Elizabeth, Rayford Joel, and Emily Gallagher; Erica Stanton, and great-granddaughter Angelina Leone. She was predeceased by her brother, Rayford Gallagher Jr., and son, Eric Mueller.

Family will receive friends beginning at 4 p.m. prior to a memorial service held in Sally's honor from 5 to 6 p.m. on November 21, 2024, at Sansoucy Funeral Home, 40 Marcy Street, Southbridge, Mass. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Sally's memory to the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Inc. PO Box 269, Wales, MA 01081.

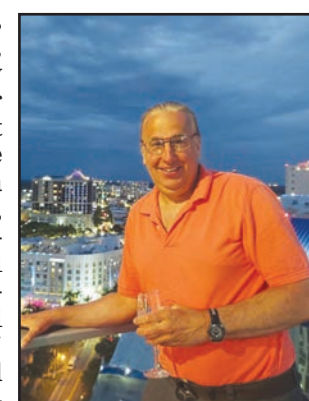
Kevin MacConnell, 66

Kevin MacConnell, 66, of Sturbridge, MA, passed away suddenly on Thursday, November 7, 2024, at Saint Vincent Hospital in Worcester. He leaves his wife Patricia and their son, Jameson, of Sturbridge, his mother Marilyn MacConnell of Sturbridge, his brother David MacConnell and his wife Trisha of Marlborough, CT, and several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brother, Mark D. MacConnell, and father, James H. MacConnell.

Kevin was born on October 19, 1958, in Des Plaines, IL the second son of the late James MacConnell, and Marilyn MacConnell. The family moved from IL to Sturbridge, MA in 1970. He enjoyed being in the woods, riding dirt bikes and raising various farm animals at his grandmother's farm in Brimfield. He played varsity soccer while at Tantasqua Regional High School and his love of playing and coaching soccer continued into adulthood, when he even played semi-professional soccer for a team based in Worcester. After graduating high school, he attended UMass-Amherst where he earned a degree in Education.

Kevin followed in his father's footsteps after graduating from college, becoming an entrepreneur and real estate investor/developer. Kevin's love of history influenced his business endeavors and included the rehabilitation of older buildings in Sturbridge including the development and operation of the Commonwealth Inn, the Sturbridge Country Inn and the historic Blackington Building.

Over the years he was active in the Sturbridge community, including



assisting his father with founding the Tantasqua Regional Youth (TRY) Soccer where he also coached, was a member of the Sturbridge Parks and Recreation Committee where he was the creative and organizational force that established Concerts on the Common, was co-creator and member of the Sturbridge Tourism Association, and member of the Betterment Committee. He was also

a long-standing member of many national hospitality organizations.

Kevin was passionate about travel and adventure his entire life having been all over the USA, the Caribbean, parts of Europe, and Mexico, where he also studied International Relations. He enjoyed many trips to Washington D.C. and Gettysburg, PA because of their historical relevance, but ultimately his favorite destinations involved a nice beach with soft sand and warm water.

Kevin was a devoted husband, father, brother and friend.

A Celebration of Life service will be held on Saturday, November 23, 2024, at 1PM in the Sturbridge Federated Church, Rt 131 and Maple St. Sturbridge.

In lieu of flowers the family recommends that a donation be made in Kevin's name to the Kevin J. MacConnell Memorial Fund at Southbridge Credit Union which will go to assist local youth activities.

Belanger-Bullard Funeral Home, 51 Marcy St. Southbridge is directing arrangements.

An online guestbook and a video tribute are available at www.BelangerFuneralHome.com

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Thanksgiving

continued from page 6

hospitality as best as flawed people can.

Pastor John affirmed we can still be an ecumenical people trying to focus on a sense of common ground through our faith, and to share a sense of community.

Having grown up in an ecumenical family, I've seen firsthand how focusing on what we have in common has

always been a blessing, and significantly better than focusing on the differences.

In that spirit of common ground, and to share a sense of community, Sunday, November 24th at 7 PM three churches – three communities of believers, three people of different faith traditions Charlton Federated Church, Saint Joseph's Catholic Church of Charlton, and Charlton

City United Methodist Church are celebrating an ecumenical Thanksgiving service.

Focusing on what unites us – and offering a welcoming spirit of love and hospitality – all are welcome. All, repeat all who are people of faith and goodwill, or seeking answers about faith, or looking for a community of believers, all are welcome to the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service, 7 – 8

p.m., hosted at Charlton City UMC, located at 74 Stafford St., Charlton.

Thanksgiving 2024...what do we need to make it special again and how do we find our spirit of gratitude again?

Perhaps the Ecumenical Feast, the first Ecumenical Thanksgiving can remind us...

As people of faith it is our responsibility, our privilege to give

thanks for our blessings and to be a blessing to others, through hospitality, kindness, tolerance; to provide a sanctuary for those facing the storms of life, and help make lighter the load of those among us, so that gratitude and grace can emerge this Thanksgiving.

Perhaps it starts with community. Perhaps it starts with faith. Perhaps it starts with looking at who

we've been helped by, or who we can help. Perhaps it starts with "thank you."

"If the only prayer you ever said was "thank you," that would be enough." — Meister Eckhart

Editor's note: The photo that accompanied last week's column by Dr. McFee was of a different individual. The Villager deeply regrets this unintentional error.



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Gus Steeves



Gus Steeves



Gus Steeves

One of the teams works on their board.

A closeup of one of the boards of round 4.

Yolanda Alvarado, standing at left, calculates a team's score at the end of a round.

Word play for a cause

SOUTHBRIDGE — The game Scrabble is practically tailored for an organization aimed at literacy.

Last week, it did more than that, as a couple dozen people played it at the Wellsworth Hotel as a fundraiser for Literacy Volunteers of South Central Mass.

“It’s really fun and definitely fitting for this organization,” Literacy Volunteers Director Emily Farrell said, who also noted “the turnout was way more than we expected.”

she noted Literacy Volunteers expected four teams and got seven. Some of them were

long-time regulars of the group (tutors and staff), others had no prior association with it, she said.

The game wasn’t traditional Scrabble, where people play against each other with seven tiles, making words on their own. Instead, everyone at the table used all of the letters to come up with

words collectively. They had four rounds: Touch a Corner, Mass Towns, Authors, and High-point Word. Although they had a starter word in the center, many teams built their high-point word first, then found ways to link it to the center.

The winning team, The Buccaneers, took

that round by a large margin with “quintessentials,” which used every square along one edge. If you play Scrabble, you know that features three triple word and two double letter score squares, meaning the whole word scored nine times. (That wouldn’t be possible in

by-the-rules Scrabble.) In total, they won the tournament with 2,014 points.

Farrell said the idea came from the organization’s fundraising committee, who spoke to two other Literacy Volunteer groups for ideas on how to run it.

November birthday celebrants and acts of kindness at Bay Path

CHARLTON — Donita Bytyqi of Grafton and Flory Muleka of Worcester, both members of the Practical Nursing (PN) Class of 2025 at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy celebrated their November birthdays through the acts of kindness of the rest of the PN Class of 2025 as coordinated by Nadeige Octavius, also of Worcester.

Octavius recognized that some practical nursing students struggle to find the balance not just of work-life but in their nursing journey, work-life-school balance. The struggle to check in mentally, physically, and emotionally be fully balanced while juggling home, work, and school is real. By celebrating birthdays and engaging in acts of celebration, the idea is to lessen the struggle. Octavius gladly stepped up to help celebrate her peers. Her acts of kindness do not go unnoticed. According to research, “spreading kindness not only helps others feel better about themselves -- it can also boost the giver’s health and happiness!”

November 13th is World Kindness Day and the PN Class of 2025 shared simple ways they connected through kindness, even the smallest acts can create a ripple effect strengthening our connections to one another. Practicing kindness gives the PN Class of 2025, faculty, staff, and alumni of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy a powerful way to connect to each other, themselves, and their values.

“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness,”

wrote Seneca.

Kindness is powerful, and it shapes lives in ways that one may not easily realize. Kindness is sharing in someone else’s humanity. Kindness is choosing to act with care, even when it is difficult to. Sometimes, choosing kindness is a small, quiet choice. But kindness leaves an indelible mark.

Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director is grateful for the members of the PN Class of 2025 for sharing their kind gestures.

“Our student nurses continue to make the world a better place,” she said. “Our faculty and staff not only produce competent and prudent nurses they are kind-hearted nurses. All acts of kindness, big and small, change the world, and kindness given to others is also a gift to oneself.”

Here, members of the PN Class of 2025 share their acts of kindness. Kindness that they do every single day, even in the smallest ways.

“An act of kindness I did over the weekend, at work I was on a two on one, and I tidied up both patients’ room, so they had a clean room to wake up to!” said Katelyn Smith

“Sharing an act of kindness from Donita. Last week she bought our clinical group dinner on Wednesday (pizza and soda) when she did not have to! It was exceedingly kind of her and very much appreciated,” Johanna Marrero shared.

“I would like to call out not just one

act of kindness done to me, but multiple acts of kindness this person has done. Nadeige has the greatest heart and always makes sure I am good. When we first started school, she would always cook for her four children and always made sure to bring some for me and Britney, even though she did not know Britney, she just knew she was my friend. Last week, my washer machine broke, so I had my laundry bucket in my car. Nadeige saw it when we were at school, so she took it without telling me and washed my clothes and called me the next day to go to her house and pick it up. This time last year was when we met at work. Just a few days before my birthday. She found out through other co-workers that it was my birthday, so she threw a surprise birthday party for me with a cake and a big basket filled with a bunch of gifts. She will do anything to see people happy. Nadeige goes out of her way to help everyone she can. Just in 2 months in this school, more than half of the class can say she has done something to help them out with whatever it may be. I am more than blessed to have such a kind soul in my life, and I hope one day I will be able to do anything and everything in return for her,” said Donita Bytyqi.

“Last year, during the month of December, I met a young woman with three small children in my local grocery store. As I shopped, I watched as this young woman kept counting how much she was spending and explaining to her chil-

dren this week we cannot buy some of the items her children had brought to the cart. Being in this same situation many years ago, I stayed behind her picking up the items that this young woman kept putting back on the shelves because she could not afford them, along with some essentials that I thought could help. I quickly used the self-checkout and waited for the family to go to their car. As she was loading the small number of groceries she could afford into a car, I walked over with my cart and said, ‘Let me help you.’ When I began giving her bags from my cart, she explained that those were not hers, I said ‘Yes they are, I’ve been in your shoes, and I want to help,’” said Bobbiejo Smith.

“I would like to share how Abigail white and Nadeige supported me when my car was repossessed. What they did really brought me to tears because we all are students and struggling financially but they choose to sacrifice to help me out. I am grateful and pray God bless them. Adelaide also picked me up, advised, and prayed for me. In the morning, she called to make sure I was okay,” recalled Miriam Botuo.

LEGALS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
Docket No. W011P2173GD

NOTICE AND ORDER:
Petition for Resignation or Petition for Removal of Guardianship of a Minor

In the interests of
Isabella V Lamica of Southbridge, MA, MA Minor

NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Hearing Date/Time: A hearing on a Petition to Resign as Guardian of a Minor or Petition for Removal of Guardian of a Minor by **Wendy S. McFarland** on October 31, 2024 will be held **12/06/2024 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing**

Located **Worcester Probate and Family Court, 225 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608**

Response to Petition: You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. Counsel for the Minor: The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. Presence of the Minor at Hearing: A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor’s best interests.

THIS IS A LEGAL NOTICE: An important court proceeding that may affect your rights has been scheduled. If you do not understand this notice or other court papers, please contact an attorney for legal advice.
Date: November 5, 2024

Stephanie K. Fattman
Register of Probate

November 21, 2024

Holidays

continued from page 6

ine achieving your goals. What does it look like? How will it feel?

4. Share your passion: Talk about your dreams with family and friends who support you. Their encouragement can spark new ideas or give you a much-needed boost.

5. Set a small goal before the New Year: Don’t wait for January 1 to start fresh. Take one small, actionable step toward your goal now.

The holidays are the perfect reminder that life combines work and play, effort and joy, dreaming and doing. As you prepare your Thanksgiving plans—whether it’s organizing a

menu, tidying up the house, or coordinating with loved ones—take a moment to prepare for your goals.

Just like a well-thought-out meal comes together with care and attention, your dreams need thoughtful planning and action to thrive. Let the spirit of the season inspire you to dream bigger and work harder.

Gratitude and ambition

go hand in hand. Some might argue that being happy with what you have might stifle your drive to achieve more. But think of an athlete who cherishes every victory while relentlessly training for the next one.

Here’s to chasing your dreams as fiercely as you chase seconds on pumpkin pie!

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CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

WINTER STORY-TIMES - Tuesdays and Fridays at 10:45am. Join us for stories, songs, rhymes and a craft. All children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver. No registration required. There will be no story times on December 20, 24, 27 and 31.

STORY TIME WITH SANTA - Saturday, December 7 at 11:00am.

Come and listen as Santa Claus reads his story "If Mice Pulled the Sleigh". Stay for a quick craft with Mrs. Claus and a photo opportunity with Santa. Copies of his book "If Mice Pulled the Sleigh" will be available for purchase. For children of all ages with an adult caregiver. Space is limited and registration is required.

LEGO CLUB - Thursday, December 19 at 6:00pm. Love Legos? Come build with us. For ages 6 to 12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.

COMEDY MAGIC

SHOW with Ed Popielarczyk - Friday, December 27 at 11:00am. Magician, Balloon Twister, and Flea Circus. For children ages 3+ with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.

MOOMAW 4 KIDS - STORYSONGS - Monday, December 30 at 11:00am. For children of all ages with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.

TEEN & ADULT PROGRAMS

VIRTUAL - MORE HOLIDAY ROMANCE BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS WITH BOOK-LIST REVIEWER JOHN

CHARLES - Monday, December 2 at 7:00pm.

IN-PERSON - AFTER-NOON BOOK GROUP - Tuesday, December 10 at 1:00pm. This month's book is "Wait Till Next Year" by Doris Kearns Goodwin.

IN-PERSON - PLANTS OF THE QUR'AN WITH CHRISTEL WHALEN, PH.D. - Thursday, December 12 at 6:30pm. Approximately 22 plants are specifically named in the Qur'an with most of them having either a culinary or medicinal value. In this program we will examine a handful

of key plants, from garlic to pomegranate. Registration is required.

VIRTUAL: Q&A WITH AUTHOR KRISTIE FREDERICK DAUGHERTY: "INVISIBLE STRINGS: 113 POETS RESPOND TO THE SONGS OF TAYLOR SWIFT." Thursday, December 12 at 7:00pm. Swifties will experience the profundity and nuance of Swift's lyrics through this anthology of brand-new poems inspired by Taylor Swift songs! For poetry lovers, this one-of-a-kind anthology is an unparalleled collection of new work from today's most lauded

and revered poets.

IN-PERSON - WORLD BUILDING BOOK GROUP - Tuesday, December 17 at 6:30pm. This month's book is "The Ocean at the End of the Lane" by Neil Gaiman.

IN-PERSON - ARM-CHAIR TRAVELERS BOOK GROUP - Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30pm. This month's book is "Fresh Water for Flowers" by Valerie Perin.

For more information, contact the Joshua Hyde Public Library at 508-347-2512.

Charlton Public Library issues call for artists

CHARLTON — Charlton Public Library is seeking artwork of local artists for the 2025 monthly exhibits in our front lobby. We can exhibit up to eight pieces. The exhibit space is approximately six feet by six feet. Works must have a wire across the back to accommodate our hanging hardware.

If you wish to be considered for the 2025 exhibit season, please call the Library at 508-248-0452 or email perryb@cwmmars.org.

Charlton Public Library is located at 40 Main St. in Charlton.

Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Director attends Equity Leadership Conference



Courtesy

Center with black top hat is Brother Jonathan Neitz with the many Master Masons from the 24th Masonic District and the state to honor this "Worthy" brother's last official visit.

Masons honor service of District Deputy Grand Master

BY BRO. JIMMY FALZONE
QUINEBAUG MASONIC LODGE

UXBRIDGE — On Thursday, Nov. 14, the District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) of the 24th Masonic District, Brother Jonathan Neitz, had his last official meeting at the Solomon Temple Masonic Lodge in Uxbridge Ma. Master Mason from throughout the 24th Masonic District and the state traveled to Uxbridge to thank him for his service. Many delegates traveled from the Grand Masonic Lodge of Boston were also in attendance to honor and thank this "Worthy of a Man."

The DDGM held this position for two years. A new DDGM is then elected from the Grand Masonic Lodge located in Boston. Brother Jonathan Neitz was responsible for seven lodges in his 24th Masonic District which included the towns of Auburn, Charlton, Douglas, Oxford, Southbridge, Webster, and Uxbridge Masonic Lodges. There are hundreds of Brethren that he gets to meet and know very well. In the past two years, he has traveled many miles to other Masonic Lodges throughout the state of Massachusetts to meet other Master Masons in other Districts. Usually at these last official visits of his term, the Lodge holding this meeting is filled with Master Masons from other lodges from other districts who want to show their respect and gratitude for his service.

Simply put, Master Masons witnessed the rise of a "Worthy of A Man." As Master Masons we had the opportunity to witness and experience first-hand the results of "cause and effect" or simply put the ripple theory. As we go about our day-to-day life, we sometimes forget the small and large gestures we experience with others. The very simplest of things could mean the world to someone, especially during this time of year. As Master Masons we always strive to make that "ripple" extend far beyond our pond. The light of Masonry shined bright in him as he traveled to other Masonic Lodges throughout the state, with the simplest of a handshake, well wishes, determination and participation in all the lodges endeavors.

This is what Freemasonry is all about. The comradery and friendships you build as a Master Mason will last the rest of your life. If you would like additional information about what we are all about go to www.massfreemasonry.org and read about Freemasonry. You can also find a Masonic Lodge located near you.

MARLBORO — The 2024 Fall Partners in Equity Leadership Conference was held at the Courtyard by Marriott Boston Marlborough. In attendance as guest, was Filipino American and Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Director Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN of Athol, formerly of Dudley and Douglas.

The keynote presentation by Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson was on deepening cultures of relevance and Strong Tier 1 instruction. Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson led a dynamic session to support leaders in gaining skills in understanding key roadmaps, best practices, and strategies to deepen Strong Tier 1 instruction through academic and behavioral strategies. Conference participants had a chance to learn roadmaps around enacting belonging, tools for leaders and teachers in monitoring increased relevance, and engage in break-out sessions to process learning.

Dr. Bolandrina's attendance was

made memorable by the participation of her children Lilly and Max Bolandrina who performed with the Iskvelahang Pilipino (www.ipbahay.org) Dance Performance Group. The Bolandrina children are graduates of the Philippine cultural school in Boston. It was through the invitation of Alpha Sanford, MEd, CAGS, Director of Special Education and Student Services, Randolph Public Schools that Iskvelahang Pilipino came to share traditional dances from the Philippines. The Iskvelahang Pilipino Dance Performance Group performed four traditional dances, Sakuting, Pandango sa Wasiwas, Binasuan, and Tinikling, all from Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines.

Photo shows Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy Director Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN and fellow Filipino American Irene Cala of DESE during a break at the conference.

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