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Thursday-Friday, January 29-30, 2026

Friends of Sturbridge Trails holds annual meeting, presents awards



Courtesy

Brandon Goodwin looks on as Founders award recipient Lynne Petersen makes a few remarks knowing David Barnicle, Founder of FrOST and her family's appreciation in receiving this award

STURBRIDGE — The Friends of Sturbridge Trails (FrOST) held its annual meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 20 at the Publick House. This is the 14th anniversary of FrOST and was graciously hosted by the Publick House which provided meeting space and refreshments including a special cake made expressly for our volunteers.

FrOST Treasurer, Brandon Goodwin presented an update on the accomplish-

ments of the Trail Committee as well as the events and programs held and supported by FrOST in 2025. Of note, the trail committee recorded more than 68,000 visitors to the town trail system, and volunteers amassed over 924 hours in trail maintenance and 1,110 hours in trail construction. With a special focus on the main Fiske Hill trail loop and Seven Ridges trail on the Leadmine property. After the routine business meeting, longevity awards



Courtesy

Left to right, Tom Chamberland presents five-year Longevity Acorns to Ray Richards and Bob Barnes. Both men have volunteered for five years, each participating in over 5 events or volunteer days each year.

(a Frosted Acorn) were presented by FrOST Past Chair Tom Chamberland to Ray Richards and Bob Barnes for their 5-year volunteer record and a five-year and 10-year award was presented to Bob Lauritsen.

The special award for the evening is the presentation of the David Barnicle Founders Award. This year presented to Lynne Petersen and Family for their strong support of the Grand Trunk Trail. The Petersen Family,

in honor of their Dad and husband, Christian, made a financial donation to Brimfield in support of the construction of a bridge over the Quinebaug River, making a key connection of that trail to Sturbridge, and in Sturbridge purchased a 9 acre piece of property that formerly had a section of the original Grand Trunk Rail Bed, donating an easement the Town so that section of the trail could be constructed. In Addition, they



Courtesy

Left to right, Tom Chamberland presents a five-year and 10-year Longevity Acorns to Bob Lauritsen. Bob has volunteered for over 10 years, participating in more than five events or volunteer days each year for more than 10 years.

also donated an easement to the town to construct a 10-car parking lot to support that section of the trail. This parking lot has become the second busiest trail head in the Sturbridge Trail system. In Lynne's acceptance remarks she mentioned how none of this would have been possible without the vision of Charles Hayes, the lead proponent in constructing the Grand Trunk rail line, who passed with the sinking of the Titanic.

The Friends of Sturbridge Trails is a nonprofit group consisting of area residents who are focused on assisting the trail committee and hosting events of the Sturbridge Trail system. More information on FrOST and becoming a member, along with the Sturbridge Trail systems can be found at www.treksturbridge.org Or email FrOST at treksturbridge@gmail.com. You can also follow FrOST on Face book: Friends of Sturbridge Trails.

Southbridge Water Department undertakes free chlorine conversion

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Town of Southbridge Water Department will temporarily be converting from the use of Monochloramines as a secondary disinfectant to free chlorine disinfection. This process is called free chlorine conversion. Southbridge had utilized free chlorine for many decades, and in the fall of 2011 a change was made to begin using monochloramines.

This change was made to improve water quality, and to better allow the water system to remain in compliance with State and Federal drinking water standards. This maintenance procedure will simply be reverting the water system to the same operational methods and chemistry as were utilized for decades up to the fall of 2011.

Water utilities such as Southbridge that are using monochloramine disinfection will from time to time use free-chlorine conversions in conjunction with hydrant flushing when needed, as a routine maintenance procedure.

Performing a free chlorine conversion of the potable water distribution system as well as hydrant flushing help to maintain the integrity of the finished water supplied to our customers. This process is performed to maintain high water quality. Free chlorine also reduces the potential for coliform or other types of bacteria in the system. During the free-chlorine conversion, the water disinfection process will be changed from chloramines to free chlorine, which is a stronger and faster-acting disinfectant.

We will be conducting the Free Chlorine during the cold weather seasons to reduce chlorine odor for our water system customers. We expect to conduct the free-chlorine conversion beginning on Jan. 27, and continue for approximately eight to 10 weeks, afterwards that standard disinfection chemicals will be reintroduced to the system.

- Possible noticeable effects: During this temporary change, customers may notice a stronger than normal chlorine odor or taste. This is considered normal for water systems the utilize free chlorine on a full time basis.

- Is the water safe to drink? Yes, water is safe to drink during the free chlorine conversion, and boiling is not necessary. Customers may notice a change in the taste and smell. This is normal and expected while using free chlorine. Customers using tap water for kidney dialysis should properly monitor for complete neutralization of disinfectant residual and should contact their doctor for more information. Customers using water for aquariums should monitor the chlorine residuals.

- Why is a free chlorine conversion necessary? The Town of Southbridge routinely collects samples and monitors water quality. Over time, minerals and metals naturally present in water sources can increase and attach to pipes then release with changes in pressure, resulting in discoloration, odor, or affected taste. Other processes, such as nitrification and the growth of biofilm, can also occur in water distribution pipes. Biofilm growth can cause a reduction in the effectiveness of residual disinfectants over time. This biofilm is nonpathogenic and is of no health concern. They simply cause the water quality to degrade and increase the difficulty of having stable chlorine residual in the water system. The free-chlorine conversion will help cleanse the lines and reduce the occurrence of nitrification and biofilm.

Customers with any questions can call the Southbridge Water Department at 508-764-3207, ext. 1.

Cards & Collectibles Show in Charlton Feb. 7

CHARLTON — Our Goal at Dynamic Card Collectors was to bring a show to Central Massachusetts that truly had the entire family in mind. By designing a show with a truly unique variety of vendors, we feel we succeeded in bringing a unique family friendly event close to home.

Just minutes from Worcester — the second-largest city in New England — don't miss out on Central Massachusetts' biggest quarterly

Cards and Collectibles Show! Now with nearly 90 tables featuring Sports Cards & Memorabilia, Trading Card Games like Pokémon and One Piece, Anime Collectibles, Funkos, and so much more, this event is a must-attend! You'll find some of the top vendors in the state, exciting door prizes, and food and beverages available for purchase. It's an event you won't want to miss! The cost to enter is \$5 at the door, kids 12 and

under are free.

The excitement kicks off Feb. 7 at 10 a.m. at St. Joseph's Church, located at 10 H Putnam Rd. Ext., Charlton, and runs until 4 p.m. Each event will feature fantastic door prizes for both Sports and TCG enthusiasts! Door prize tickets will be drawn at 3 p.m., and winners do not need to be present to claim their prizes!

A big thank you to our amazing sponsors—Best Flippin' Card Show, Mana

Springs TCG, and the volunteers from Charlton City UMC—for making this event possible, as well as for providing delicious breakfast and lunch options!

Look for signs guiding you to the event, which is in the lower level of the church around the back. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out. Tickets can be purchased at the door, and we accept cash, credit cards, and Venmo. We can't wait to see you at the show!

Legacy meets legacy

Fuller Collision Group acquires Steve's Collision Center

STURBRIDGE — Fuller Collision Group, a family-owned and operated collision repair company with 112 years of service to Central Massachusetts, is proud to announce the acquisition of Steve's Collision Center, a long-standing Sturbridge automotive repair business.

Steve's Collision Center has been owned and operated by Brenda Lecaie for the last 10 years, earning a strong reputation for quality craftsmanship, honesty, and personalized service. As SHE prepares to pursue other passions, Lecaie has chosen to entrust the future of the shop to Fuller Collision Group — ensuring the business remains locally owned and continues serving the Sturbridge community with the same care and integrity customers have come to expect.

"Life has a way of reminding us how precious time is, and this feels like the right moment for me to pause, reflect, and do something a little different," Lecaie states in a personal letter to her customers. "I wanted to make sure Steve's Collision Center stayed in good hands — with people who value their employees, their cus-



tomers, and the community. Fuller Collision Group shares those values, and I'm confident the shop's legacy will continue."

Founded in 1914, Fuller Collision Group is now in its fourth generation of family leadership and has built its reputation on long-term relationships, advanced repair standards, and a people-first approach to business. The Sturbridge location will mark the company's third collision repair facility, expanding

its footprint while maintaining its commitment to local ownership and personalized service.

"We're honored to carry on the legacy that Brenda and Steve's Collision Center have built," said Josh Fuller, CEO of Fuller Collision Group. "This acquisition isn't about changing what works — it's about preserving a trusted local business while providing additional resources, technology, and long-term stability for employees and

customers alike."

Customers of Steve's Collision Center can expect continuity in service, with plans to retain existing staff and gradually introduce Fuller's systems, training, and certifications over time.

The Sturbridge location will operate under Fuller Collision Group while honoring the history and reputation Steve's Collision Center has established within the community.

Gateway Players to hold fundraising performance of “Godspell”

SOUTHBRIDGE — Gateway Players Theatre is excited to announce special fundraising performances of the beloved musical “Godspell” in support of Elm Street Congregational Church. This collaborative event promises an uplifting evening filled with inspiring music, energetic performances, and a shared spirit of community.

Gateway Players Theatre has called Elm Street Church home since 2017 when our long-time home; The Barn at the Ruth Wells Art Center was discovered to be structurally unsound. We are so appreciative of the church and their support that we feel the need to give back. All proceeds from these performances will go directly toward supporting the Roof Capital Campaign held in 2025. By attending, you’ll not only enjoy a night of fantastic entertainment but also contribute to important improvements to this historic church.

Performance dates are March 20 & 21 at 7:30 p.m. and March 22 at 2 p.m. The performances will be held at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St. in Southbridge. Entrance

is on Park Street (around the corner). Book by John Michael Tebelak, Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, Conceived and Originally Directed by John Michael Tebelak, Based on The Gospel According to St. Matthew. “Godspell” is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). Directed by Lynn Boucher, Produced by Lou-Ellen Corkum and the Musical Director is Chris Rubenacker.

Tickets are \$20 for adults, and \$17 for Seniors and Youth. Tickets may be reserved by calling Gateway at 508-764-4531. Online credit card ticket sales are available at <https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/gateway-players/godspell>

The cast includes: “Jesus” - Alex Gardner, “John the Baptist/Judas” - Mark Lammert

Ensemble: Billy Bolster, David Yutzler, Davyn Walsh, Deb Hollett, Erin Simpson, Hannah Bilis

Heather Crabbe, Kirsten Smaltz, and Robyn De Gennaro.

“Godspell” was the first major musical theatre offering from three-time

Grammy and Academy Award winner, Stephen Schwartz (“Wicked,” “Pippin,” “Children of Eden”), and it took the world by storm. Led by the international hit, "Day by Day," “Godspell” features a parade of beloved songs, including "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," "Learn Your Lessons Well," "All for the Best," "All Good Gifts," "Turn Back, O Man" and "By My Side."

A small group of people help Jesus Christ tell different parables by using a wide variety of games, storytelling techniques, and hefty doses of comic timing. An eclectic blend of songs, ranging in style from pop to vaudeville, is employed as the story of Jesus' life dances across the stage. Dissolving hauntingly into the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, Jesus' messages of kindness, tolerance, and love come vibrantly to life.

Boasting a score with chart topping songs, a book by a visionary playwright (John-Michael Tebelak) and a feature film, “Godspell” is a sensation that continues to touch audiences.

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

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

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

The President's List recognizes a select group of students reaching the highest level of academic standing. To be placed on the President's List, stu-

dents must maintain a GPA of at least a 3.75 and receive grades of C or better.

Among those recognized are:

- Courtney Haire of Brimfield - Dean's List and President's List
- Grace Grybowski of Strubridge - Dean's List
- isabella Paniss of Southbridge — Dean’s List
- Angel Opoku of Charlton — Dean’s List

Congratulations to all our students on their hard work and academic success! The University of Hartford blends

raw passion with emerging talent, offering intentional preparation across six career-focused schools and colleges so every student can thrive. Located on a 350-acre campus neighboring Connecticut's capital city-and positioned midway between New York City and Boston-the University is home to approximately 4,300 undergraduate and 1,700 graduate students from 42 states and 53 countries. Here, students are guided to discover their place, their people, and their purpose.

Area residents named to dean’s list at Quinnipiac University

HAMDEN, Conn. — Ashley Wojcicki of Charlton and Tristan Hughes of Wales were named to the dean's list for the Fall 2025 semester at Quinnipiac University:

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

About Quinnipiac University

Quinnipiac is a private, coeducational institution located 90 minutes north of New York City and two hours from Boston. The university enrolls 9,700 students in more than 100 degree programs through its Schools of Business, Communications, Education, Computing and Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Medicine, Nursing and the College of Arts & Sciences. Quinnipiac is ranked 51st in The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse "2026 Best Colleges in the U.S." and is also recognized by U.S. News &

World Report and The Princeton Review's "The Best 391 Colleges." The university is expanding innovative programs for both traditional and adult learners and developing dynamic corporate partnerships. Quinnipiac recently completed a significant capital expansion on its main campus, including a state-of-the-art new School of Business and an interdisciplinary science and innovation hub. For more information, please visit qu.edu. Connect with Quinnipiac on Facebook and Instagram and follow Quinnipiac on X @QuinnipiacU.

Nomination papers available for Southbridge election

SOUTHBRIDGE — The annual town election will be held in Southbridge on Tuesday, June 9, and nomination papers will be available to persons who wish to run for local office beginning Jan. 21.

The offices needing to be filled are:

Nomination papers require 43 signatures for all town-wide offices. Nomination papers must be returned to the Town Clerk’s office for certification of signatures by Tuesday, April 21 at 5 p.m. For more information regarding

the town election obtain nomination papers, call (508) 764-5408. or how to the Office of the

REAL ESTATE

Charlton \$865,000, 38 Stephens Park Rd, Williamson, Donald S, to Dinnocenzo, Richard, and Hook-Dinnocenzo, Linda. \$648,000, 71 Bay Path Rd, Tariz, Zahoor A, and Tariz, Firdous, to Kuznetsov, Peter, and Hopkins, Audrey. \$590,000, 27 W Applewood Dr, Sarsfield Ft, and Sarsfield, Paul M, to Schroeder, Jeffrey, and Schroeder, Chelsea. \$500,000, 7 Ponnakin Hill Rd, Grady, Joan M, to Besaw, Matthew, and Peltier, Nicole. \$300,000, Leland Dr, Baker Ft, and Baker Jr, Leland H, to Bancroft, John E, and Bancroft, Barbara. \$205,000, 16 Old Spencer Rd, Mahoney Dennis M Est, and Mahoney, Marc D, to Sneade, John J.

Nguyen, Cao. \$525,000, 757 Main St, Ltc Capital LLC, to Milestone Southbridge Hld. \$450,000, 28 Servant Way, Richards, Andrew J, to Lopez, Carmen N. \$443,750, 292 Cournoyer Blvd, Bonica, Kady A, to Beshai, Zackariah, and Beshai, Anna. \$427,500, 717 Tipton Rock Rd, Ciprari, Marcia L, to Charbonneau, Sabrina M, and Charbonneau, Joshua D. \$360,000, 38 Meadowbrook Rd, Mellor, Bruce E, and Mellor, Ann L, to Gour, William. \$300,000, 39 Elm St, 7ventures LLC, to Southbridge Town Of. \$273,000, 421 Charlton St, Scharff, Jordan L, and Scharff, Cassinda, to Bishop, Joseph W.

STURBRIDGE \$425,000, 1 Leslie Ln, Guardiani Rt, and Guardiani, Joan E, to Mcfadden, David J.

VILLAGER ALMANAC

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Charlton Middle School..... (508) 248-1423
Shepherd Hill Regional High School (508) 943-6700
Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School (508) 248-5971 or (508) 987-0326

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STURBRIDGE 508-347-6463
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BRIMFIELD: 413-245-3451
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WALES: 413-245-9808
Weekdays 8:30 – 12:30 and 2:00 – 4:30 and Sat. 9:00 – 12:00

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.fed-church.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.stannespaparth.org
Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 pm, Sunday 8 am, 10 am, 12 noon, Youth Mass (September to May) 5 pm. Daily Mass Mon - Thurs 7:30 and 10 am, Fri and Sat 7:30 am

• **Elm Street Congregational Church**, 61 Elm Street, Southbridge, Ma 01550
Phone: 508-764-8085 • Sunday service 10:00 am
Pastor Kathryn Light

• **Faith Baptist Church**, 515 Dennison Drive, Southbridge
Phone number 508-764-6132,
Worship Service: Sunday 10:00 a.m.

• **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
Phone 508-347-7297
Web: www.bethlehemsturbridge.org
Services - Sunday 9:00 am
Pastor Dan Purtell

• **Holland Congregation Church** “Where the Bible is preached.”
11 Sturbridge Road, Holland, 413-245-9926
Hollandchurch.org
Sunday Service @ 10:00 am
Pastor Dan Maketansky

• **Holy Trinity Episcopal Church**
446 Hamilton St., Southbridge, MA 01550
Phone: 508-765-9559
Web: www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org
Sunday Service 11:00 am
Pastor Dan Purtell

• **St. John Paul II Parish**
279 Hamilton St., Southbridge
Rev. Carlos Ardila, Pastor
Weekend services Saturday 4 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and noon
Weekday masses 8:30 & 8:45 a.m., St. Mary’s Church (508) 765-3701

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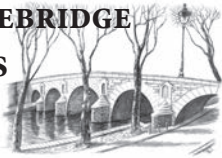
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Courage theme of Faith in Film Series at Charlton Federated Church

CHARLTON — Courage is the theme of the latest Faith in Film series at the Federated Church of Charlton (FCC). On the third Friday of each month at 6:30 p.m. the public is invited to view and discuss movies at no charge. Each showing includes free refreshments and a handout with pertinent and interesting information, key concepts and discussion questions about each film.

The Faith in Film Series this winter and spring includes the following:

Feb. 20 — “Selma” (2014) — This historical drama depicts the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches and the courage of the black clergy, including the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the heart of that struggle. Directed by Ava DuVernay and written by Paul Webb, the film was nominated for two Academy Awards and four Golden Globe Awards.

March 20 — “Mrs. Miniver” (1942) — This film portrays the courage of ordinary people as it tells the story of one English woman’s struggle to protect her family during World War II. Directed by William Wyler and starring Greer Garson, Walter Pigeon and Theresa Wright, the film was a critical and a commercial success, becoming the highest-grossing film of 1942 and winning six Academy Awards.

In 2006, the film was ranked number 40 on the American Film Institute’s list of most inspirational movies and was placed on the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress in 2009.

April 17 — “Finding Nemo” (2003) — Created by Pixar Animation Studios for Walt Disney Pictures, this animated movie depicts an epic search for a kidnapped son by his father, both are clownfish and they are aided by a dizzy, forgetful regal blue tang fish named Dory. Featuring the voices of Albert Brooks, Ellen DeGeneres, Alexander Gould, Willem Dafoe, and Geoffrey Rush it was directed by Andrew Stanton, who co-wrote it with Bob Peterson, and David Reynolds.

May 15 — “The General” (1926) — This silent comedy featuring Buster Keaton who also co-directed it with Clyde Brickman is based upon an actual locomotive chase that took place during the Civil War. While the film was not a commercial success when it was first released, it is now recognized as one of the greatest films ever made.

June 19 — “Drums Along the Mohawk” (1939) — This is the first color film directed by John Ford. It tells the story of the fight for American Independence along the Mohawk River in upstate New York. Based on a very popular novel of the same name, it stars Henry Fonda, Colette Colbert, John Carradine, and Oscar-winner Edna May Oliver.

This film will be a perfect way for us to celebrate our nation’s 250th anniversary a few weeks later.

“While all different in tone, each of these films explore what it means to be courageous and how that attribute displays itself in actions,” said James David Moran, curator of the Faith in Film Series.

He further commented, “This program explores the concept of faith in all its forms from believing in God, religion, institutions, intellectual concepts, and people. Our aim is to share important works of cinema, engage in a lively conversation, and have fun.”

Faith in Film screenings take place in the Fellowship Hall of the Church at 64 Main St. in Charlton. For further information please call the Church at 508-248-5550 or email Pastor Shannan Hudgins at pastor@fed-church.org.

About the FCC The Federated Church of Charlton is a federation of the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association in Christian worship together. The Church descends from several churches active in the Charlton community over the centuries starting in 1761. Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. The church also has an active Sunday School and youth program.

Students named to Champlain College Dean’s List

BURLINGTON, Vt. — The following students have been named to the Champlain College Dean’s List for achieving a grade point average of 3.5 or higher in the Fall 2025 semester.

Layne Holcomb of Wales
Griffin Smith of Fiskdale

Founded in 1878, Champlain College is a small, not-for-profit, private college in Burlington, Vermont, with additional campuses in Montreal, Canada, and Dublin, Ireland. Champlain offers a residential undergraduate experience from its beautiful campus overlooking Lake Champlain. Additionally, Champlain College Online provides an expansive portfolio of online degrees and certificates, reaching students across all 50 states and U.S. territories, while fostering strategic partnerships with forward-thinking workforce organizations.

The College is known for its distinctive and innovative approach to career-focused education and its Upside-Down Curriculum, which helps students be ready for work, ready for life, and ready to make a difference.

Champlain is ranked as one of the "Best Colleges" by U.S. News & World Report for 2025, and was named one of the "Best 390 Colleges" by The Princeton Review for 2025, including among its "Best Northeastern colleges." For more information, visit www.champlain.edu.

Dog licenses now on sale in Southbridge

SOUTHBRIDGE — Dog licenses are now on sale for the Town of Southbridge for the year 2026.

A one-year license for a non-altered dog is \$20. If the dog is spayed or neutered, the price is \$10 for a one-year license. A certificate of spaying or neutering must be shown for first-time licenses. A current rabies vaccination certificate must be presented when licensing dogs.

Dogs may be licensed through the mail if all the paperwork is in order. For more information, call the office of the Town Clerk at (508) 764-5408. The deadline to license your dog without any late fees is April 30.

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Friday’s Child



Gabriel, who prefers to be called Gabe, is a kind, fun-loving young boy with a delightful sense of humor and a vivid imagination. He has a natural curiosity and an engaging personality that draws people in right away.

Gabe enjoys building and creating with Legos, blocks, and Magna-Tiles, but what he truly loves most is playing with his Matchbox cars and trucks. He also enjoys spending time on his tablet, playing video games, watching TV, and exploring the outdoors. His interests reflect both his creativity and his energetic spirit.

Gabe often shines as a leader among his peers. He is confident, friendly, and eager to connect with others, happily striking up conversations and asking thoughtful, endless questions. His enthusiasm, openness, and playful nature make him a joy to be around and easy to engage with.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/21183284104>

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

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

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PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER
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EDITOR

OPINION

Local business owners:

Don't overlook retirement plans

When Main Streets still matter

It is easy to talk about community in abstract terms. It is harder to notice it in the small, ordinary places where it actually lives.

In towns like those that we call home, community still shows up on Main Street. It appears in the early-morning lights of a storefront opening on a cold day, in the familiar nod between neighbors crossing paths on the sidewalk, and in the quiet conversations that happen without ceremony in places people return to week after week.

Main streets in small towns are not just commercial corridors. They are shared living rooms. They hold memories across generations. Buildings change hands, signs are replaced, and businesses evolve, but the streets themselves remain steady, anchoring towns through decades of social and economic change.

In recent years, it has become common to speak of online shopping as inevitable and local retail as something fragile or nostalgic. Convenience and price matter, and no one pretends otherwise. But what often goes unspoken is what disappears when everything moves elsewhere. When a storefront goes dark, a town loses more than a business. It loses a meeting place. It loses a casual exchange of news. It loses a layer of human connection that cannot be replicated by a delivery box on a porch.

Local businesses exist because they serve real needs, but they also do something less visible. They sponsor youth teams. They donate gift cards to school fundraisers. They quietly help neighbors in moments that never make it into print. These gestures are not part of a marketing strategy. They are part of living in a town where people recognize one another and care about what happens next door.

Main streets also shape how a town feels about itself. A row of occupied storefronts signals investment and stability. It tells residents that their town is worth showing up for. That sense of pride feeds civic life, from volunteer boards to school events to neighborhood conversations that build trust over time.

None of this means resisting change. Towns that endure are the ones that adapt. Many local businesses now blend old-fashioned service with modern tools, offering online ordering, flexible hours, and new uses for familiar spaces. Adaptation does not erase character. When done thoughtfully, it strengthens it.

Winter can make towns feel quieter, especially after the holidays pass and routines settle in. But quiet does not mean empty. Lights are still on. Doors are still opening. People are still choosing, day by day, where to spend their time and attention.

Those choices matter more than they often seem. Where we meet a friend. Where we buy a gift. Where we decide to linger instead of rushing on. Main streets survive not because of slogans or campaigns, but because people continue to use them, value them, and recognize their role in the life of a community.

Paying attention to that is not sentimental. It is practical. And in towns like ours, it is one of the simplest ways to help keep community visible, familiar, and real.

If you're a local business owner, you're juggling many priorities: growing revenue, managing expenses, supporting your team and planning for your own future. What if one tool could help with all these goals?

A workplace retirement plan might be that solution and can, directly or indirectly, offer benefits that extend beyond simple savings.

Double the tax advantages. Starting a retirement plan can deliver immediate tax advantages. For the business, employer contributions are tax-deductible. And as a participant in your company plan, your pretax salary deferrals are excluded from income taxes; your investments within the plan are tax-deferred until distributed. Many plans now offer Roth options that allow tax-free withdrawals in retirement.

Local businesses may also qualify for federal tax credits that help offset startup costs, employee education expenses and plan administration fees. Additional credits may be available for auto-enrollment features and employer contributions made during the plan's first five years.

A competitive edge in hiring. In today's labor market, offering a retirement plan can differentiate your business from competitors and help improve employee retention.

Many plans also provide access to financial education tools and resources,



helping your employees make informed decisions about saving, investing, and planning for retirement. This support can lead to greater employee satisfaction and productivity, contributing to a positive work environment for your business.

More flexible than state-sponsored options. If you live in a state requiring an employee retirement program, you might be considering a state-sponsored plan. While these programs can provide a starting point, they typically offer fewer investment options, lower contribution limits and limited design flexibility.

Establishing your own workplace retirement plan lets you customize features for your business needs to control administrative costs, set contribution limits and offer employees a wide range of investment options. This added control in plan design can lead to better outcomes for your business and your employees.

Reducing a hidden risk in your own retirement planning. Business owners often have as much as 80 percent of their net worth tied up in their businesses, according to the Exit Planning Institute. While that demonstrates commitment to success, it also creates

significant financial risk to the owner.

Relying solely on a future business sale to fund your retirement can be precarious. Market shifts, timing challenges or limited buyer interest could derail those plans. By building personal assets through your employer-sponsored retirement plan, you can gain financial flexibility and reduce the risk of having your retirement lifestyle depend entirely on one event.

Getting started. With various retirement plan options available, determining which one fits your business best can feel overwhelming.

A qualified financial advisor can help you navigate these decisions, explaining the trade-offs between different plan types and identifying which option best suits your unique situation. They can also help you understand eligibility requirements and ensure the plan you choose aligns with your business goals and personal financial objectives.

Starting a workplace retirement plan represents an investment in your future, your employees, and the long-term success of your business.

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

Lanterns Along Main Street

LANTERNS ALONG MAIN STREET By CHARLES

There is a certain sound that tells you winter is finally losing its grip: the slow, steady drip from the edge of a roof. It is not dramatic. It does not announce itself loudly. But once you hear it, you know something important is happening.

Around here, late winter has its own personality. The snowbanks shrink one cautious inch at a time. Mud season starts knocking on the door. The sun hangs around a little longer in the evenings, giving us just enough light to feel hopeful without quite letting us relax yet. It is an in-between season, and I have come to appreciate it more as the years go by.

When I was younger, I wanted winter gone the moment it arrived. I counted down the days until spring with the impatience of someone waiting for a bus that never seems to come. Now, I find myself paying closer attention to the small signs of change. A patch of grass reappearing along the edge of the driveway. A bird returning to the feeder that I have not seen in months. The first time I leave the house without my heaviest coat and realize, halfway down the steps, that I do not actually need it.

These small moments do not make the weather report, but they shape our

moods more than we realize. They remind us that no season lasts forever. Not the cold ones, and not the easy ones either.

Living in small Massachusetts towns, we are used to adapting. We shovel, salt, scrape, and repeat. Then, without much ceremony, we switch gears. Out come the rakes and the garden gloves. The snow brush gets tossed in the back of the closet, and the lawn chairs quietly reappear on porches. We do this every year, almost automatically, yet it always feels a little new.

There is something comforting about that rhythm. It gives structure to time. It teaches patience. It also teaches humility, because no matter how many winters we survive, the next one still has the final say.

My wife likes to open the windows on the first mild day, even when the air is still a little sharp. She says the house needs to "remember what fresh air feels like." I usually grumble about the cold breeze, but I secretly enjoy it. It smells like change. It sounds like the start of something better.

We talk a lot about big goals and fresh starts this time of year. But I think the real reset happens quietly. It happens when we take that first walk without worrying about ice. When we linger outside a little longer after work. When we notice ourselves breathing easier, not just because the air is warmer, but because the season is shifting in our favor.

Late winter teaches a useful lesson. You do not need everything to be perfect to move forward. You just need enough light to see the next step.

So if you find yourself listening to that drip from the roof or watching the snow retreat from the corners of your yard, take a moment to appreciate it. It is not just water falling to the ground. It is time moving on, slowly and steadily, the way it always has.

And that steady movement, even when it is subtle, is often exactly what we need most.

Got Space?

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Contact Mikaela Today

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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.

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WINTER TODDLER TIME - Tuesdays at 10:45am

A play-based story time where toddlers will work on valuable skills with their caregivers and socialize with kids their own age. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL. Through February 24.

WINTER BABY TIME - Wednesdays at 10:45

Join Ms. Meredith for songs, rhymes, fingerplays and stories. For children 2 years and younger with an adult caregiver. Sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL. Through February 25.

FRIDAY WINTER STORY TIME - Fridays at 10:45

Stories, songs, rhymes and a craft. Designed for children ages 3-5 years old but open to kids of all ages with an adult caregiver. Through February 20.

WEEKLY TECH HELP - Wednesdays from 5:00pm to 7:00pm

Free hands-on tech assistance! Bring your own device or use our available computers. We can assist with: Printing, E-mailing, Microsoft Office Suite, Google Suite, word processing, digitizing photos and scanning documents, setting up eBooks and audio books through Libby onto your tablet or smartphone, device setup and updates, basic smartphone and tablet use, accessing library databases and resources, and more. Need help with something else? Just ask! Please note: This is BASIC tech assistance. We cannot repair broken devices, recover lost passwords, or enter your private information (such as a bank number) online. Please have your passwords ready.

Tuesday, February 3 - VIRTUAL - 1:45pm to 2:45pm

UNSUNG HEROES OF CIVIL RIGHTS WITH BILL THIERFLEDER

Have you heard of Nannie Helen Burroughs, Pauli Murray, Ella Baker, or Claudette Colvin? These individuals were just as important in fueling the civil rights movement as were the legendary historical figures we learned about in school. This is a virtual program and registration is required.

Wednesday, February 4 - 5:30pm to 7:30pm

COLOR ME CALM

Slow down, settle in, and color. Drop by the library for a friendly, low-key coloring session. We'll provide a wide variety of coloring pages and plenty of supplies. Come explore a creative activity that has been shown to support mindfulness and reduce everyday stress. This program is suitable for teens and adults.

Saturday, February 7 - 11:00am to 12:00pm
LET'S MEET... A FIREFIGHTER
David G. Martell and Stephen Joyce,

Sturbridge's Deputy Fire Chief and SAFE Educator respectively, are coming to visit and talk about what it's like to work as a firefighter. Children will have the chance to ask questions, learn about fire safety, and make a craft. Registration is required.

Saturday, February 7 - 1:00pm to 2:00pm
LANDSCAPING & GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Discover how you can support local wildlife by adopting wildlife-friendly gardening practices in your home, business, and community. Registration is required. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sturbridge Cultural Council.

Monday, February 9 - 3:30pm to 4:30pm
FAMILY CRAFT TIME: PAPER QUILLING FOR KIDS

Kids are invited to try their hand at paper quilling! We'll make a lovely heart card perfect for gifting or displaying. For ages 7-12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.

Tuesday, February 10 at 1:00pm
AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP

This month's book is "An Unfinished Love Story" by Doris Keams Goodwin.

Thursday, February 12 - At the Publick House - 6:30pm to 8:30pm

THE NEW MENOPAUSE: DISCUSSION
Kelly Tull, WHNP-BC, CSC of the Venus Collective-Women's Health & Intimacy, will be leading a discussion featuring topics from the book "The New Menopause: Navigating Your Path Through Hormonal Change with Purpose, Power & Facts" by Mary Clare Haver, MD. You do NOT have to read the book in order to participate! Registration is required.

Saturday, February 14 - 10:30am to 11:30am

BOOK SIGNING WITH WALTER HERSEE - TO DEFEND ALL THAT IS DEAR

Sturbridge resident, Walter Hersee, will discuss and read from his new book: To Defend All That Is Dear: The Soldiers Who Served Sturbridge, Massachusetts in the War for Independence 1775-1783. Books will be available for purchase at the event.

Tuesday, February 17 - 3:30pm to 4:30pm
KIDS CONCERT WITH MUSIC AT THE BLISSFUL

Families are invited to come sing and dance along with Evan Haller from Music at the Blissful! This fun and highly engaging concert is perfect for children ages 2-8. Registration is required and children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver.

Wednesday, February 18 - 2:00pm to 4:00pm

CLAY GNOMES WITH RICK HAMELIN

Kids ages 6-12 will work with white clay, transforming it into whimsical gnomes using coils, pads, stamps and incising techniques

for a perfect tactile texture. They will then paint their gnomes with an array of non-toxic acrylic colors, ensuring a vibrant finish. Registration is required and children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver.

Wednesday, February 18 at 6:30pm
ARMCHAIR TRAVELERS BOOK GROUP

This month's book is "Absolution" by Alice McDermott.

Thursday, February 19 - 3:30pm to 4:30pm
MUMBET'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

"Mumbet's Declaration of Independence" by Gretchen Woelfle will be read by a costumed OSV educator. Listen to the story of Elizabeth Freeman who fought for and won her freedom in Massachusetts and then create an art piece about what freedom means to you. Registration is required and children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver.

Thursday, February 19 - 6:30pm to 7:30pm
FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM: BOOK DISCUSSION

A discussion, led by Christine Onodi-Engola, of the books "Up From Slavery" by Booker T. Washington, "12 Years a Slave" by Solomon Northup, and "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" by Harriet Jacobs.

Friday, February 20 - 10:30am to 12:00pm
MANTRA INSECT SHADOW BOXES WITH POP-UP ART SCHOOL

Pop-Up Art School will teach kids ages 8 to 14 about the French muralist Mantra. Kids will then draw/paint their own realistic or imaginative insects and mount them in a paper shadow box. Registration is required and children must be accompanied by a caregiver. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sturbridge Cultural Council.

Saturday, February 21 - at the fire station - 11:00am to 12:00pm

DISCOVER THE FIRE STATION: A BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOUR

Families are invited to the Sturbridge Fire Department for a behind-the-scenes tour! We'll meet at the front entrance of the fire station at 11am; please arrive on time. Registration is required. This tour is designed for kids ages 3-12 and their adult caregiver.

Monday, February 23 - 3:30pm to 4:30pm
FAMILY CRAFT TIME - PAPER SQUISHIES

Kids, ages 5 to 12, and their caregivers are invited to make their own squishy paper friends! Squishies can be decorations or fun toys. Making squishies is super fun and easy, and a great way to keep kids entertained.

Monday, February 23 - 6:00pm to 8:00pm
PUZZLE RACE & PIZZA

8 teams of 2 to 6 people (ages 12+) will be given the same 500 piece puzzle to finish in the allotted 1.5 hours. The first team to complete the puzzle wins! Pizza will be available

starting at 6pm, and the Puzzle Race starts promptly at 6:30pm! One registration per team is required.

Monday, February 23 - VIRTUAL - 7:00pm to 8:00pm

(HOW TO AVOID) "DEATH IN THE NATIONAL PARKS WITH AUTHOR RANDI MINETOR.

Randi, author of eight books, in the non-fiction "Death in the National Parks" series, explores the fatal mistakes people make when they venture into unfamiliar wilderness. Collected here are some of the most gripping accounts in park history and new stories about people losing the battle with natural forces or perishing from their own folly. This is a virtual program and registration is required.

Tuesday, February 24 at 6:30pm
WORLD BUILDING BOOK GROUP

This month's book is "The Adventures of Amina Al-Safari" by S.S. Chakraborty.

Tuesday, February 24 - VIRTUAL - 7:00pm to 8:00pm

MATRIX PLANTING FOR HOME GARDENERS WITH DEBORAH CHUD

Matrix planting is naturalistic gardening in its purest form. This presentation provides a starting point. This is a virtual program and registration is required.

Thursday, February 26 - 6:00pm to 7:00pm
LEGO CLUB

Come build with Legos. Suitable for kids ages 5 to 12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.

Thursday, February 26 - at the Publick House - 7:00pm to 8:30pm

EXPLORING MASSACHUSETTS PROPERTY RECORDS

This presentation introduces everyday researchers to the fascinating world of Massachusetts land records. Whether you're exploring genealogy or local history, land records can help piece together the past in a way few other sources can. This program is presented in collaboration with the Historical Society. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sturbridge Cultural Council.

Saturday, February 28 from 10:30am to 4:30pm & Sunday, March 1 - 12:30pm to 4:00pm

FRIENDS OF THE JHPL MINI-GOLF FUNDRAISER

Get ready to showcase your skills by joining the fun at the Friends of the JHPL's indoor mini golf course! \$5 per person. \$20 max per family. Children 10 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Support the library by playing mini golf!

All programs are sponsored by the Friends of the JHPL unless otherwise indicated.

To register for programs or for more information go to sturbridgelibrary.org.



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FREE LOCAL DELIVERY!

EcoTarium hosts Second Annual Free Community Day, bringing USA Luge Team to Worcester

WORCESTER — The EcoTarium welcomed more than 1,100 excited visitors on Saturday, January 24, 2026, for a Free Admission Community Day, made possible through the generous support of Norton I Saint-Gobain. Families and guests of all ages took advantage of a full day of hands-on science, nature exploration, and a special luge experience with the USA Luge Team, making it a highlight of the weekend.

“The luge is a high-speed physics lesson on gravity, acceleration, and aerodynamics”, said EcoTarium President and CEO Noreen Smith. “With the help of the USA Olympic Luge Team and Norton I Saint-Gobain, visitors were able to experience the excitement of the sport and meet some of the athletes who inspire us all.”

“Partnerships like ours with Norton I Saint-Gobain help us expand how young people see science, technology, engineering, and math,” said Katie Chappell, Deputy Director of Museum Operations at the EcoTarium. “Working together with the USA Luge team allows us to highlight the many ways STEM connects to real-world experiences like winter sports and the Olympics, while also introducing youth and families to career paths they may not have previously considered.”



“We’re incredibly excited to sponsor the Norton Luge Challenge with our partners at the EcoTarium and the USA Luge team. This event captures the creativity, teamwork, and engineering spirit behind winter sports, and it’s a fun way to share our enthusiasm as we look ahead to the upcoming Winter Games,” said Melanie Bonsu, Community Relations Manager, Saint-Gobain Abrasives.

The Norton Luge Challenge gave visitors the opportunity to try out

the sport of luge under the expert guidance of the USA Luge Team international medalists and coaches. Participants used easy-to-manuever plastic sleds in a safe, slope-side setting. Helmets were provided to ensure a fun and safe experience for all. Adding to the high-energy atmosphere, the USA Luge DJ kept the excitement going with upbeat music throughout the event.

During the Free Admission Day sponsored by Norton I Saint-

Gobain, visitors also enjoyed full access to the museum’s interactive science exhibits, educational programming, and planetarium shows, making for an unforgettable day of learning about science, nature, and outer space.

About The EcoTarium
The EcoTarium is New England’s leading museum of science and nature, an indoor-outdoor experience dedicated to inspiring a passion for science and nature in visitors of all ages.

Founded in 1825 as one of the oldest natural history museums in the country, the EcoTarium has been a leader in informal science and nature education for 200 years. Highlights of the 45-acre Worcester campus include the science center with three floors of interactive exhibits; Alden Planetarium; Science Discovery programs; extensive outdoor nature trails, wildlife zoo, and habitats; a seasonal railroad with the Worcester Railers Explorer Express Train;

and an extensive outdoor play exhibit, Nature Explore®. The EcoTarium is located at 222 Harrington Way, Worcester, MA 01604. Parking is free, and Museum admission tickets may be purchased online. The EcoTarium is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

About Saint-Gobain Abrasives
Saint-Gobain Abrasives offers powerful, precise, user-friendly solutions, which enable customers to cut, shape and finish all materials in the most complex and challenging applications. By working closely with end-users and grinding expert partners, Saint-Gobain Abrasives designs and provides customized solutions to secure the best option for performance, cost and safety. Leveraging its global manufacturing presence, Saint-Gobain Abrasives serves its customers locally through its structured sales operations in over 27 countries, employing over 10,000 people.

About USA Luge
Founded in 1979, USA Luge is the national governing body for the Olympic sport of luge in the United States. USA Luge recruits, develops, and supports athletes in their pursuit of competitive excellence while promoting the sport nationwide. To learn more, visit usaluge.org

Annual Eagle Scout Recognition Dinner celebrates achievements of young leaders



Heart of New England, Scouting America Class of 2025 Eagle Scouts.

WORCESTER — Heart of New England Council, Scouting America proudly hosted the Annual Eagle Scout Recognition Dinner at the Hogan Campus Center at Holy Cross College. This prestigious event honored the remarkable achievements of the newest class of Eagle Scouts, the highest rank attainable.

The evening was filled with inspiring stories of dedication, leadership, and community service. Distinguished guests, including local dignitaries, community leaders, and proud family members, gathered to celebrate the hard work and commitment of these exceptional young individuals.

What it means to be an Eagle Scout is a significant milestone that represents years of dedication, perseverance, and personal growth. To earn this rank, a Scout must demonstrate proficiency in various skills, complete a series of merit badges, and lead a community service project that benefits their local area. The journey to Eagle Scout fosters leadership, responsibility, and a strong sense of community.

Eagle Scouts are recognized for their ability to set and achieve goals, their commitment to ethical and moral values, and their readiness to take on

challenges. This rank is not only a testament to their past achievements but also a foundation for future success in their personal and professional lives.

Among the local Scouts who attended this year’s ceremony were:

Troop 53, Auburn
Trevor Brooks, Patrick Finan, Ryan Minor

Troop 101, Auburn
Ames Alvarado

Troop 1, Groton
James Esten, Timothy Yafrate

Troop 3, Groton
Arthur Johnson, George woODS

Troop 106, Grafton
Caden Cacciapouti, Austin McCormick

Troop 107, Grafton
Bennett Bredford, Raghav Dave, Jackson Margwarth, Jeremy Soma Reddy

Troop 7219, Grafton
Morgan Gervais, Kathryn Shultz

Troop 118, West Brookfield
Ayden Mulcahy, Stephen Lanne, Logan Rodrigues

Troop 131, Sutton
Benjamin Furno

Troop 243, Sutton
Nathanael Furno, Austin Gaska

Troop 161, Sturbridge
Christopher Hendrick, Robert Powell, Jonah Scherer

Troop 7163, Sturbridge
Shannon Finan, Isabella McGrady, Addison Oxman, Alison Regan

Troop 238, East Brookfield
Noah Clark

Troop 273, Dudley
Riley Lepage, Charles Rollins III

Troop 316, Douglas
Justin Dooner

Troop 338, Charlton
Daniel Harris, Zackery Kelleher, Adam Rydlak

About Heart of New England Council, Scouting America
Heart of New England Council is a 501(c)(3) organization that serves about 4,000 boys and girls in more than 60 communities in central Massachusetts. We provide the nation’s foremost program that teaches young people character, leadership, and citizenship through fun and exciting adventures for the entire family. We foster a culture of diversity and inclusion that makes it enriching to participate, volunteer and work in the Scouting program. Visit www.hnescouting.org for more information.

Courtesy

Saint Joseph School seventh graders win MLK poetry honors at Worcester State University

WEBSTER — Two Saint Joseph School seventh graders were recognized as winners in Worcester State University’s 32nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Poetry Contest, centered on this year’s theme: “Voices of the Future: Bold Roots, Brave Leaders.”

Abby Rubin (daughter of Mark and Agnes Rubin of Webster) and James Miranda (son of Thiago and Alyssa Miranda of Douglas) were selected as two of only 25 winners from hundreds of entries submitted by students in Grades 7–12 from Worcester Public Schools and schools in the Diocese of Worcester.

The poetry contest invited students to reflect on Dr. King’s enduring legacy of equality, justice, and nonviolence, asking how young people will use their voices to continue his dream. Entries were reviewed by the MLK Jr. Poetry Committee, a panel of educators, university students, and community members. Judging criteria included creativity, originality, style, and connection to the theme.

Saint Joseph School’s Grades 6–8 Language Arts teacher, Mrs. Karen Lefebvre, encouraged students to participate. In mid-December, the school was notified that Abby’s winning poem, “Dr. King’s Words,” and James’ winning poem, “Equality for All,” were selected.

James writes, “We show his dream matters by speaking up, even when our voices shake a little.”

Abby emphasizes peaceful courage, writing, “He taught us how to use love not violence, to show how you will fight with words not fists.”

Rubin and Miranda and their parents attended the award ceremony with Saint Joseph School Principal Mrs. Beth Boudreau and Mrs. Lefebvre on Saturday, Jan. 17 at Worcester State University, where each student received a certificate from Congressman James McGovern and a \$50 Amazon gift card.

“Abby and James captured Dr. King’s message in a way that feels both hopeful and urgent,” said Boudreau. “Their words reflect what we encourage every day at Saint Joseph School: to live with faith, treat others with respect, and take responsibility for making the world more just.”

Saint Joseph School congratulates both students on the honor and applauds the many student participants who used poetry to share their voices and leadership.

Courtesy

(Right) Saint Joseph School seventh grade students Abby Rubin and James Miranda proudly display their winner certificates after being honored in Worcester State University’s 32nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Poetry Contest on Jan. 17.



Bay Path nurse and educator honored at UMass Chan Medical School’s 38th Annual MLK Jr. Tribute

WORCESTER — UMass Chan Medical School held its 38th annual tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 26, celebrating the intersection of healthcare, service, and social justice. The virtual ceremony was highlighted by the recognition of Elizabeth Mirekuua Lartey, an alumna and dedicated Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy educator, and UMass Chan doctoral student, as a recipient of the 2026 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Student Service Recognition Award.

Lartey, a resident of Worcester and a second-year Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student at the Tan Chingfen Graduate School of Nursing, was selected from a record-breaking pool of nominees. The award recognizes students whose community-focused projects and clinical dedication significantly advance health equity and justice in the Worcester area.

“Elizabeth’s work truly stood out for its dedication, impact, and commitment to health equity,” the Service Subcommittee noted during the selection process. “Her efforts honor the enduring legacy of Dr. King by advancing justice through service to others.”

A career rooted in community and care

Lartey’s recognition comes as she balances a rigorous academic load with a deep commitment to the nursing profession. She currently serves as a Med/Surg Charge Nurse at UMass Memorial Medical Center and has been a vital mentor to the next generation of healthcare workers when she worked as an Adjunct Faculty member at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy. With a professional history spanning long-term care at Life Care Center of Auburn to specimen analysis at Quest Diagnostics, Lartey has consistently focused on patient education and therapeutic communication. Her current academic work, where she maintains a 3.83 GPA, focuses on the Family Nurse Practitioner specialization to further serve the diverse needs of Massachusetts families.

Ceremony highlights

The event featured a keynote address by Jennifer Bradford, MD, assistant professor of family medicine and community health, who spoke on the importance of mission-aligned impact. Following the keynote, Dean Terence R. Flotte presented the service awards,



Elizabeth Mirkuaa

emphasizing the school’s commitment to Dr. King’s vision of a “Beloved Community.”

The annual tribute remains a cornerstone of the UMass Chan calendar, reinforcing the institution’s mission to prioritize underserved populations and foster a culture of inclusive excellence

in medicine.

About UMass Chan Medical School

UMass Chan Medical School is the state’s first and only public medical school, consistently ranked as a top-tier institution for primary care education and a global leader in biomedical research.

Local student earns Dean’s List recognition at Norwich University

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

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

About Norwich University

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



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Arbor Day Foundation tips hat to The Overlook

CHARLTON — The Arbor Day Foundation recently named The Overlook in Charlton a 2025 Tree Campus for its dedication to enhancing community well-being through tree education, investment and community engagement. The Overlook is a continuing care retirement community.

The Arbor Day Foundation (ADF) is a global nonprofit with a mission to inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate trees. Its network of more than a million supporters and partners has helped the organization plant more than 500 million trees in forests and communities across more than 60 countries since 1972. The Tree Campus program recognizes schools, universities, and healthcare facilities that utilize trees to improve their communities.

Springfield College recognizes Dean’s List students for Fall Semester

SPRINGFIELD — Springfield College Recognizes Dean's List Students for the 2025 Fall Semester.

Springfield College has named Madison Haffty from Fiskdale to the dean's list for academic excellence for the 2025 fall semester.

Haffty has a primary major of Health Science / Pre-PA.

Springfield College has named Katherine Wade from Sturbridge to the dean's list for academic excellence for the 2025 fall semester.

Wade has a primary major of Communication Sci & Disorders.

Springfield College has named Morgan Izbicki from Charlton to the dean's list for academic excellence for the 2025 fall semester.

Izbicki has a primary major of Health Science.

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

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

B I D D E F O R D / PORTLAND, Maine — The following students have been named to the University of New England's Dean's List for the fall semester 2025. The University of New England is Maine's largest independent university, with two beautiful coastal campuses in

Charlton
Josie Ducharme
Bridget Hast
Emily LeBrun

Wales
Leanna Matczak

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

LEGALS

The Brimfield ZBA will hold a public hearing at 5:00 pm on February 23, 2026 at the Hitchcock Free Academy, 2 Brookfield Rd, Brimfield on behalf of Christopher and Crystal Harry of 212 East Hill Rd. Assessor's parcel 5-A-4.2, Book 19519, Page 438. The applicants are seeking reversal of zoning enforcement actions pertaining to their home-based auto detailing business in the AR district. Abutters are welcome to attend and share feedback.

January 30, 2026
February 6, 2026

MORTGAGEE'S NOTICE OF SALE OF REAL ESTATE

By virtue of and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain Mortgage given by Ben Wright and Heather Wright to Champion Mortgage, a Division of Keybank National Association, dated November 25, 2005 and recorded with the Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds at Book 37952, Page 128, subsequently assigned to Household Finance Corp II by Champion Mortgage, a division of Keybank, NA, A National Bank by assignment recorded in said Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds at Book 40970, Page 240, subsequently assigned to DLJ Mortgage Capital, Inc. by Household Finance Corporation II by assignment recorded in said Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds at Book 55824, Page 293, subsequently assigned to U.S. Bank National Association, as indenture trustee, for the CIM Trust 2016-1, Mortgage-Backed Notes, Series 2016-1 by DLJ Mortgage Capital, Inc. by assignment recorded in said Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds at Book 60063, Page 29, subsequently assigned to U.S. Bank National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely in its capacity as indenture trustee of CIM Trust 2021-NR1 by U.S. Bank National Association, as indenture trustee, for the CIM Trust 2016-1, Mortgage-Backed Notes, Series 2016-1 by assignment recorded in said Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds at Book 66663, Page 144, subsequently assigned to U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, as Trustee, as successor-ininterest to U.S. Bank National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely in its capacity as Indenture Trustee of CIM Trust 2021-NR1 by U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely in its capacity as Indenture Trustee of CIM Trust 2025-NR1 by U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, as Trustee, as successor-in-interest to U.S. Bank

National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely in its capacity as Indenture Trustee of CIM Trust 2021-NR1 by assignment recorded in said Worcester County (Worcester District) Registry of Deeds at Book 71976, Page 325 for breach of the conditions of said Mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing same will be sold at Public Auction at 2:00 PM on February 19, 2026 at 8 Simpson Street, Sturbridge, MA, all and singular the premises described in said Mortgage, to wit:

ALL THAT PARCEL OF LAND IN TOWNSHIP OF STURBRIDGE, WORCESTER COUNTY, COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, AS MORE FULLY DESCRIBED IN DEED BOOK 34734, PAGE 297, ID# 588-35E43-008, BEING KNOWN AND DESIGNATED AS LOTS NUMBERED 175, 176, 177, 178 AND 179 AS NUMBERED AND SHOWN UPON A PLAN OF LOTS OF BELLEVUE PLAT MADE FOR EAGLE REALTY COMPANY BY MITCHELL AND GENEREUX, ENGINEERS, DATED MAY 1919 AND RECORDED WITH THE WORCESTER DISTRICT REGISTRY OF DEEDS PLAN BOOK 33, PAGE 15. LOTS NO. 175, 176, 177, 178 AND 179. BY FEE SIMPLE DEED FROM JOHN W. GILES AS SET FORTH IN BOOK 34734 PACE 297 DATED 09/09/2004 AND RECORDED 09/30/2004, WORCESTER COUNTY RECORDS, COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

The premises are to be sold subject to and with the benefit of all easements, restrictions, encroachments, building and zoning laws, liens, unpaid taxes, tax titles, water bills, municipal liens and assessments, rights of tenants and parties in possession, and attorney's fees and costs.

TERMS OF SALE:

A deposit of FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS AND 00 CENTS (\$5,000.00) in the form of a certified check, bank treasurer's check or money order will be required to be delivered at or before the time the bid is offered. The successful bidder will be required to execute a Foreclosure Sale Agreement immediately after the close of the bidding. The balance of the purchase price shall be paid within thirty (30) days from the sale date in the form of a certified check, bank treasurer's check or other check satisfactory to Mortgagee's attorney. The Mortgagee reserves the right to bid at the sale, to reject any and all bids, to continue the sale and to amend the terms of the sale by written or oral announcement made before or during the foreclosure sale. If the sale is set aside for any reason, the Purchaser at the sale shall be entitled only to a return of the deposit paid. The purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's attorney. The description of the premises contained in said mortgage shall control in the event of an error in this publication. TIME WILL BE OF THE

ESSENCE.

Other terms, if any, to be announced at the sale.

U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely in its capacity as Indenture Trustee of CIM Trust 2025-NR1 Present Holder of said Mortgage, By Its Attorneys, ORLANDS LAW GROUP PLLC PO Box 540540 Waltham, MA 02454 Phone: (781) 790-7800 20-006878

January 29, 2026
February 5, 2026
February 12, 2026

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE LEASE OF THE DINER AT THE SOUTHBRIDGE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Town Manager for the Town of Southbridge (the "Town") is soliciting sealed proposals for the Lease of the Diner located at the Southbridge Municipal Airport. Proposals will be received by the office of the Town Manager, 41 Elm Street, Town of Southbridge, MA 01550 until **4:00 PM local time on Thursday, February 19, 2026** at which time and place they will be publicly opened and read aloud. All proposals shall be enclosed in an envelope which is clearly marked: *"Town of Southbridge Proposal for Lease of the Diner at the Southbridge Municipal Airport"* **Fax or e-mail submissions will not be accepted.** With proposal, please include Company name, address, main contact name, phone and email address.

The diner is 50's vintage with a stainless interior and is 680 sq. feet. It has a counter with stools and tables for seating with a grill behind the counter. There are (2) bathrooms. Also, there is a 264 sq. foot additional dining room attached with a handicap bathroom. There is also a 62 sq. foot fully equipped kitchen. In the basement, there is a large walk-in refrigerator and several smaller freezers. There is ample parking. The diner is located on the property of the Southbridge Municipal Airport at 220 Airport Access Road, Southbridge, MA 01550.

Proposal packages may be obtained from the Office of the Town Manager, Monday through Wednesday between the hours of 8:00AM and 4:00 PM, Thursday from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. and Friday 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM (Holidays excepted). The RFP documents may also be obtained from the Town website at <https://www.ci.southbridge.ma.us/Bids.aspx>, by contacting the Town Manager's Office at townmanager@southbridgemass.org via phone (508) 764-5405. The Town reserves the right to reject any and all proposals if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the Town to do so.

January 29, 2026

MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

By virtue of and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by **174 HAMILTON STREET LLC to Alpha Real Estate Lending LLC**, dated April 11, 2024 and recorded with the Worcester South District Registry of Deeds in Book 70392, Page 189 of which mortgage **Alpha Real Estate Lending LLC** is the present holder for breach of conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same, the mortgaged premises located at 174 Hamilton Street, Southbridge, MA will be sold at a Public Auction at 1:00 PM on February 9, 2026, at the mortgaged premises, more particularly described below, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

The land, with all buildings and improvements thereon, situated in Southbridge, Worcester County, Massachusetts, bounded and described as follows:

The land in said Southbridge with the buildings thereon, situated on the easterly side of Hamilton Street, bounded and described as follows:

BEGINNING at the northwesterly corner thereof, at a drill hole in the stone curbing on the easterly line of Hamilton Street at land of Southbridge & Webster Plumbing Co., Inc., formerly of Elizabeth A. Bourdelais; THENCE easterly by land of said Southbridge & Webster Plumbing Cop., Inc., about 193 feet to an iron pin in the ground at the westerly line of the locate in of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad; THENCE southerly by said Railroad location about 80 feet to land of Tetreault, formerly of John J. O'Shaughnessy; THENCE westerly by said Tetreault land 200 feet more or less to the easterly line of Hamilton Street; THENCE northerly by the easterly line of Hamilton Street 80 feet to the point of beginning.

Terms of the Sale: Cash, cashier's or certified check in the sum of \$10,000.00 as a deposit must be shown at the time and place of the sale in order to qualify as a bidder (the mortgage holder and its designee(s) are exempt from this requirement); high bidder to sign written Memorandum of Sale upon acceptance of bid; balance of purchase price payable in cash or current funds in thirty (30) days from the date of the sale at the offices of mortgagee's attorney, Taft & McSally, LLP, 21 Garden City Drive, Cranston, RI 02920 (401) 946-3800

January 15, 2026
January 22, 2026
January 29, 2026

Charlton Cultural Council awards grants

CHARLTON — Rep. John Marsi and Angela Casasanto, chair of the Charlton Cultural Council, have announced the award of 16 grants totaling \$9,245, for cultural programs in Charlton.

Below is a complete list of recipients and grant amounts.

The Charlton Cultural Council is part of a network of 329 Local Cultural Councils (LCCs) serving all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The LCC Program is the nation's largest grassroots cultural funding network, supporting thousands of community-based projects in the arts, humanities, and sciences every year. The state legislature provides an annual appropriation to Mass Cultural Council, a state agency which then allocates funds to each community.

A board of municipally appointed volunteers makes decisions about which activities to support at the community level. The Charlton Cultural Council members are:

Angela Casasanto, Chair
Kathleen Hylka, Co-Chair
John Lucy, Treasurer
William Arsenault, Member
Bruce Menin, Member
Annette Mitchell, Member
Lisa Aube, Member
Kenny Laferriere, Member

"I'm very excited to be working with the Charlton Cultural Council — there are so many deserving projects that deserve the attention. It's extremely important to support our local community arts and cultural programs — they benefit everyone in our town and beyond. Thank

you to all who serve on the CCC!" said Marsi.

Every year this grant funding supports many grassroots activities: concerts, exhibitions, radio and video productions, field trips for schoolchildren, after school youth programs, writing workshops, historical preservation efforts, lectures, First Night celebrations, nature and science education programs for families, and town festivals. Nearly half of LCC funds support educational activities for young people.

The Charlton Cultural Council will seek applications again in the fall. For guidelines and complete information on the CCC, contact Angela Casasanto at cultural.council@town-ofcharlton.net. Applications and more information about the Local Cultural Council Program are available online at www.massculturalcouncil.org.

This year's grantees include:

George Baker, Dixie Stomp Concert
Michelle Chalmers, Race: The Power of an Illusion Documentary
Charlton Middle School, Grade 5 "Back in Time" Field Trip
Charlton Public Library, Grow Your Mind at the Charlton Public Library
Daniel Kirouac, The Music of McCartney: The World's Most Successful Songwriter
David Maloof, Music + Education Event
James Manning, Stomp, Champ and Read
MUSIC Dance.edu, Hip Hop Chair Dance for Seniors!

Elizabeth Nelson, Belly Dancing for Seniors!
Amy Paquette, Canvases for Artist Residency
Pasture Prime Players,

STURBRIDGE — St. Anne — St. Patrick Parish is celebrating the month of March with a St. Patrick's Day Calendar raffle. One lucky winner will be drawn each day. The winning ticket will be reentered for more chances to win. Raffle tickets are \$10 each.

The calendar features four \$100 prizes drawn every Saturday in March as well as several random cash prizes throughout the month. On

St. Patrick's Day, the lucky winner will receive \$500.

Other prizes include gift cards to St. Anne's Gift Shop, Tutti Quanti, Napoli's Pizzeria, Elm Street Café, Big Bunny Supermarket, Nova's Restaurant Holland, Publick House, and tickets to Entertainment Luxury Theater.

Raffle tickets may be purchased in the St. Anne Gift Shop and in the St. Anne — St. Patrick office. Proceeds

Lisa Shea, Writing/Publishing/Marketing Workshop Series
The Space Consortium Inc, Space Science Outreach

for Children
Timothy Van Egmond, Concert at the Senior Center
Matt York, Classic Country Music Review

Our pilgrims feel at peace walking the ground, including the Stations of the Cross and the Holy Stairs. And weather permitting, pilgrims also have access to a picnic grove. The Daily Rosary is recited at 3 p.m. in the St. Patrick Chapel, and weekend Masses are celebrated in its outdoor pavilion in the summer. Its religious gift shop is open every day from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

benefit St. Anne — St. Patrick Parish.

St. Anne - St. Patrick Parish is an active parish community. It offers daily Mass for worship, religious education, and community ministries. It welcomes visitors to St. Anne Shrine, the new Memorial for the Unborn, the Hall of Saints, the Russian Icon Exhibit, the Votive Chapel, the Generations Statue, and the Angel of Hope Monument.

Local West Virginia University student graduates, earns President's List honor

MORGANTOWN, W.V. — Kyle LeBlanc of Charlton graduated from West Virginia University on December 20, 2025, with a B.S. in Business Administration.

LeBlanc also graduated with minors in Marketing and Communications. Additionally, he earned a spot on the Presidents List. Outstanding undergraduate academic achievement is recognized by awarding President's List status to students who obtain a 4.0 GPA in a semester. Only the highest honor is awarded, and it will be noted in the transcript. Students must be enrolled in 12 credit hours or more of graded courses to be eligible for such recognition

with no grades of I (incomplete), NR (not reported), or W (withdrawal).

West Virginia University is the premier land-grant institution in the 21st century and delivers high-quality education, excels in discovery and innovation, models a culture of diversity and inclusion, promotes health and vitality and builds pathways for the exchange of knowledge and opportunity between the state, the nation and the world. Founded

in 1867, WVU is home to more than 30,000 students and has nearly 200,000 graduates shaping our world each day. For more information on WVU, visit <http://about.wvu.edu>.

McLaughlin of Charlton named to the Regis College Dean's List

WESTON — Regis College today recognizes Emma McLaughlin, of Charlton, whose academic excellence and commitment to learning have earned them a place on the fall 2025 Dean's List.

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

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

dents long after graduation."

Founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph nearly a century ago, Regis College educates students to lead with integrity, purpose, and compassion. Through an inclusive and innovative learning community, Regis prepares graduates to build meaningful careers and make a positive impact in the world.



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Area reps co-sponsor comprehensive energy reform bill to lower costs for Massachusetts ratepayers

Will generate savings of about \$147 million in first year and \$2.38 Billion over 10 years

BOSTON — State Representatives Paul K. Frost (R-Auburn), Donald R. Berthiaume, Jr. (R-Spencer), Joseph D. McKenna (R-Sutton) and John J. Marsi (R-Charlton) are co-sponsoring comprehensive energy reform legislation put forth by Republican State Legislators to provide financial relief to Massachusetts ratepayers who are struggling to pay high energy bills. The proposal would generate energy bill savings of about \$147 million in the first year and \$2.38 billion over 10 years for Massachusetts residents and businesses.

House Docket 5554, An Act addressing energy costs, transparency, and sustainability, was recently filed by Representative Frost, Representative Berthiaume, Representative McKenna and Representative Marsi along with their Republican colleagues. It contains a series of reforms to address

rising energy costs in Massachusetts including proposals to restructure the Mass Save program, allow older homeowners and renters to factor in a portion of their utility bills to determine their eligibility for the Senior Circuit Breaker tax credit, and provide more cost transparency for consumers.

Frost commented, “Massachusetts residents and small businesses are getting crushed by some of the highest energy costs in our nation. Everyone is struggling to heat and power their homes. Businesses, especially small businesses, face difficult challenges as well and are forced to decide whether to pass those increased energy expenses onto their customers or cut elsewhere to get by. Our bill provides both short-term and long-term savings and relief for everyone.”

“Massachusetts has some of the best schools, colleges, hospitals, businesses, sports

teams, and tourism in the country. It also has some of the highest costs of living in the country forcing people to leave at alarming rates because they simply cannot afford to live here,” McKenna added. “We must do everything in our power as legislators to pursue policies that will lower costs that consumers are paying for life necessities like heating their home or business.”

Marsi said, “I talk to constituents, residents, and businesses every day about the high cost of electricity and gas, where some must make heartbreaking decisions about what to spend their hard-earned money on. People with fixed incomes such as our seniors can’t sustain these out of control increases on their monthly bills. We need to do everything possible to drive legislation to ensure people can afford to power and heat their homes and businesses.”

“The ever-increasing upward trend regarding the cost of energy in the Commonwealth is unsustainable and out of reach for the average middle class family,” Berthiaume said. “This meaningful legislation will seek to mitigate the high energy costs that users pay and give families some much needed breathing room when it comes to their energy bills”

Their bill seeks to provide immediate short-term relief for Massachusetts ratepayers by requiring 50 percent of Alternative Compliance Payments (ACPs) made pursuant to the Renewable Portfolio Standard to be returned to utility customers in each of the next three years. These ACPs are currently deposited in a custodial fund overseen by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center for use in clean energy

projects. This change alone will return approximately \$66-\$69 million per year to ratepayers, and between \$198 million and \$207 million over three years.

Additional first-year savings of \$78 million will be realized through basic service and energy contract changes contained in the bill, including language giving electric distribution companies the flexibility to procure default service supply through procurements of varying lengths and in combination with other companies, as well as provisions extending the contract period from 1 year to 1 ½ years and allowing electric distribution companies to collectively procure its energy supply (gas, electric, transmission, transportation or any combination thereof) together. Along with the ACP changes, this is expected to produce about \$147 million in combined savings for ratepayers in each of the first three years of implementation.

The bill also includes several proposed changes to the Mass Save program, which is an energy efficiency initiative funded by Massachusetts ratepayers through a monthly surcharge on their gas and electric bills. The program’s three-year budget for 2025-2027 is currently set at \$4.5 billion.

Their bill caps Mass Save administrative spending at 10% of the total funds allocated for the program. It also limits spending on the program’s next three-year plan (running from 2028-2030) by prohibiting the budget from exceeding the cost of the 2022-2024 plan, plus 6.25%. As the 2022-2024 plan was funded at \$4 billion, the 2028-2030 plan cannot increase by more than \$250 million. This means that by 2030, the combined annual savings from

the ACP returns, basic service changes, and the Mass Save spending reduction will produce an estimated \$396 million in ratepayer savings per year, or approximately \$2.38 billion in savings over 10 years.

It updates the Senior Circuit Breaker tax credit for homeowners and renters who are 65 or older by allowing 50 percent of their utility costs to be calculated into their income used to determine their eligibility for the credit.

Their legislation directs the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, in consultation with the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, to develop and implement the framework of a regional compact among the New England states for the purposes of research and development regarding nuclear fusion energy and establishes a Fusion Research Council to provide additional guidance. Fusion energy, although some years off from being able to supply the power grid, has the potential benefits of traditional nuclear power but without the radioactive waste.

The bill prohibits third-party competitive electric suppliers from using predatory practices to enroll customers at an artificially low rate that will increase dramatically in a short period of time. It also limits automatic contract renewals to those instances where the customer provided expressed written consent at the time of their initial enrollment.

The bill also seeks to create a special commission to analyze natural gas costs in the Commonwealth and recommend measures to contain and reduce those costs for residential and commercial consumers.

Samaritan’s Purse celebrates 12.2 million Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts

REGION — Samaritan’s Purse is celebrating a successful season after collecting 12.2 million Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts in 2025, sharing the love of Jesus with children in need around the world.

The milestone reflects the generosity of millions of shoebox packers helping to fill shoebox gifts with toys, school supplies and personal care items. Across the U.S., the project collected 10.9 million shoebox gifts in 2025. Combined with those collected from partnering countries, the ministry is now sending over 12.2 million shoebox gifts to children worldwide, including those whose lives were turned upside down by Hurricane Melissa, a category 5 storm that recently struck Jamaica.

“Each shoebox gift is an opportunity to remind boys and girls around the world that God loves them,” said Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan’s Purse. “We are so thankful for the generosity of every person who packed a shoebox. These gifts are bringing joy and the hope of the Gospel to children in need.”

For many children, a shoebox gift is the first gift they have ever received. Each one is a tangible expression of God’s

love, offering hope to children facing war, poverty, disease and disaster. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 244 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories.

While local drop-off locations are closed until National Collection Week, Nov. 16 – 23, anyone can participate year-round by packing a shoebox gift online at samaritanspurse.org/buildonline. These shoebox gifts built online go to the hardest-to-reach areas in the world—whether deep jungles, city slums, or steep mountainsides.

Information about ways to get involved year-round can also be found at samaritanspurse.org/occ.

Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan’s Purse, seeks to demonstrate God’s love in a tangible way to children in need around the world and, together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 244 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories.

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Cornerstone Bank supports South Worcester families with donation to Jeremiah’s Inn

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank has donated \$5,000 to Jeremiah’s Inn to support the ongoing operations of its Nutrition Center, one of the largest food pantries in Central Massachusetts. This contribution builds on the bank’s history of giving to the organization, including previous donations of \$5,000 in 2023 and 2024 for the Nutrition Center and additional support for the organization’s recovery program and food drives.

This year’s donation will help Jeremiah’s Inn meet the growing demand for nutritious food among low-income residents in South Worcester, where food insecurity has reached unprecedented levels.

In 2024, Jeremiah’s Inn served more than 32,000 individuals, a 30 percent increase from the previous year and a 167 percent increase over the past two years. At the same time, the Worcester County Food

Bank reduced food distributions to the pantry by 30 percent, creating a critical gap between supply and demand. Cornerstone Bank’s continued support ensures that children, seniors and families who rely on the Nutrition Center have access to essential meals and resources.

“Supporting our neighbors in times of need is a core part of our mission,” said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. “We are proud to continue our partnership with Jeremiah’s Inn and help ensure local families have access to the food they need to grow and thrive.”

About Cornerstone Bank

Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank’s local presence

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

Fitchburg State announces Dean’s and President’s Lists

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

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

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

President’s List

Webster

Kaleigh S. Papierski

Dean’s List

Auburn

Arielys Almeyda, Emily R. Gillespie, Mackenzie J. Mackin, Lukas M. Skalecki

Brimfield

Gabriel A. Rice

Brookfield

Zachary J. Sweet

Charlton

Cassidy M. Bousquet, Jordan A. Goulas

Douglas

Hunter G. Dunn

Dudley

August C. Eaton

Alexander Siwik

Fiskdale

Tafari U. Byfield-Felton, Carsyn M. Knapik, Madison M. Luce

Grafton

Joshua R. Miller, Elizabeth C. Morin

Groton

Aia A. Almathkhor, Kayla R. Hanlon, Christopher J. Hickman, Keren J. Noonan, Ryan M. Robichaud, Deven G. Sorrentino

Holland

Charles L. Moran

Leicester

Paige L. Ward

Milford

Owen S. Archer, Anthony L. Oliveira Dalicandro, Melvin B. Yupa

Millbury

Lillian J. Bousquet, Sophia R. Burrowes, Luke Charron, Emma L. McRae, Patrick J. Sheehan

Oxford

Susan A. Cicerchia, Raegan L. Perreault, Aaliyah B. Szkutak

Southbridge

Samuel E. Carrasco, Adam L. Fournier, Angelica Vega

Spencer

Lucinda M. Asare-Yeboah, Emilee E. Larson, Liam O’Coim, Angelika Osowiecki, Braeden M. White

Sturbridge

Grace Hope K. Kentsa, Vanshika S. Patel

Sutton

Gabriela De Mora Cooper, Kerri Grenache, Molly J. Jenkins

Upton

Kelsey E. Fournier

Uxbridge

Nathaniel J. Badzmierowski, Jessie M. Demalia, Samantha L. Jones, Rheannon A. March, Rylee A. Spear, Caileen J. Wilson

West Brookfield

Juliette R. Boos

Wales

Michael T. Bouthiller

Webster

Salaila L. Lewis, Maya S. Ortiz, Zachary C. Sargent, Rachael C. Waterson

Whitinsville

Jessica K. Caggiula, Nicolas Salamack



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

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Webster Lake Waterfront Listing!!
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ASTOUNDING Panoramic Views across mid-section of Webster Lake! Sun drenched from early morning sunrise till sunset! View the lake from all windows. Located on a peninsula providing 2 Shorelines. Fireplaced Living Room! Recent Kitchen & Bath! Primary Bedroom w/walk-in closet. Hardwood Floors. 2 Baths. FHW Oil Heat! Central Air. Garage. \$ 900,000.



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Webster Lake - 302 Killdeer Island

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Troop 163’s Alison Regan earns Eagle Scout rank

BROOKFIELD — Alison Regan of Brookfield, a member of Scouting America Troop 163 of Sturbridge, has earned the rank of Eagle. She passed her Eagle Board of Review on Dec. 11.

For her Eagle project, Regan led the design, construction, and installation of four nature signs on the Trek Sturbridge trails behind Tantasqua Regional Junior High School. The signs highlight local plants, trees, birds, and mammals, and show how to identify them.

Regan, currently a senior at Tantasqua Regional High School,



joined Scouts when she was in eighth grade. She has served her troop in a variety of roles, including librarian, patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, and senior patrol leader. She was inducted into the Order of the Arrow, Scouting America’s honor society, where she earned brotherhood, and has earned National Outdoor Achievement awards in camping and aquatics. Last summer she was named Rookie of the Year staff member at Treasure Valley Scout Reservation, where she worked on the waterfront as a life-guard. Outside of Scouting America, Alison also earned a Girl Scout Silver Award, holds leadership positions in her school’s drama club, show choir, and student council, and is on the school swim team. She loves the outdoors, especially climbing trees, and wants to one day hike all forty-eight of New Hampshire’s 4,000-foot mountains. She plans to attend college next year for engineering.

Troop 163 is a Scouting America troop for girls ages 11-17. The troop is based in Sturbridge but has members across southern Worcester County. The aims of the troop are character development, citizenship, fitness, and leadership. To learn more about scouting or Troop 163, email troop-163sturbridge@gmail.com.

Courtesy Photo
(Left) Alison Regan

Pack of Paws to host greyhound adoption event

CHARLTON — Have you ever thought about adopting a Greyhound? Greyhound Options Inc., a non-profit adoption group dedicated to finding homes for retired racing Greyhounds after their racing careers are over, will be holding a Winter Social at Pack of Paws in Charlton on Saturday, Jan. 31 and the public is invited.

Greyhound Options (GO) has just entered its 30th year of operations, finding homes for more than 1,800 Greyhounds throughout Massachusetts, northern Connecticut, southern New Hampshire and Rhode Island. An all-volunteer organization, the group relies on foster families to provide a safe home for the dogs to acclimate to life after racing until a permanent home can be found. Greyhounds are known for their calm, gentle nature and are very social, fitting into almost any living situation. Widely known as “30-mile-an-hour couch potatoes”, they do not require as much exercise as people might think. They are happy with walks or a quick run in an enclosed yard.

Come see what a joy adopting a Greyhound can be or to learn more about fostering. The Winter Social is free and will be held from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. at Pack of Paws, 26A Trolley Crossing Rd., Charlton. For more information, visit greyhoundoptions.org.

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Final public hearing on CDBG Mini Entitlement grant application set for Feb. 9

SOUTHBIDGE — The Town of Southbridge will hold public hearings to receive public input on the Town's FY21- FY24 Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Mini Entitlement (ME) Program Activities and the FY2025 CDBG ME Grant Application.

Current CDBG activities include code enforcement, street improvements, housing rehabilitation, and commercial façade improvements. Potential activities include downtown beautification, business development, street improvements, and public social services. All activities are based on the FY24 Community Development Strategy.

The final hearing will be held in the Economic Development and Planning Department, Town Hall, 41 Elm St., Southbridge, on Monday, Feb. 9 at 5 p.m.

The Town encourages any member of the public wishing to provide input and be heard to attend any meeting. Comments may be submitted in writing by email to sstarkey@southbridgemass.org or by mail: Attn: Sue Starkey, Economic Development and Planning Office, Southbridge Town Hall, 41 Elm Street, Southbridge, MA 01550. Written comments will be accepted until Feb. 6 at 11 a.m. Any comments received will be read at the next public hearing.

Funding by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Massachusetts CDBG Program.



Courtesy

Congratulations, Millie (first place) and Mia (second place,) who were honored last week by the Southbridge Lions Club for their outstanding submissions to the Peace Poster Contest. Lions Club member and Peace Poster Contest chair, Jason Cantara, shared that the contest is a global Lions initiative, with more than 75 countries participating, giving youth the opportunity to express their vision of peace through art. This year's theme, "Together as One," highlights how much stronger we are when we work together. Jason spoke about the power of unity and how important that message is in today's world. The local contest received 55 entries, which included Trinity Catholic Academy's Junior High.

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