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SEND YOUR NEWS AND PICS TO NEWS@STONEBRIDGEPRESS.NEWS
 Friday, September 11, 2026

VCC Harvest Festival returns to Northbridge Common

NORTHBRIDGE — The 2026 Harvest Festival, sponsored by the Village Congregational Church in Whitinsville, is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 26 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. on the Northbridge Town Common, across from Village Church at 5 Church St. (the rain date will be Sunday, Sept. 27 from noon until 4 p.m.). This year promises more vendors and more fabulous raffle prizes!

A fair for all ages in our 18th year brings our community a day of arts, crafts, vendors, food court, music, children’s activities, obstacle course, face painting, Maggie the Clown, a huge variety of raffle prizes, Blessing of the Pets at 10:30 a.m., a tag sale at Village Congregational Church and a 50/50 raffle!

All proceeds from the festival and the raffles benefit our wider missions:

- * Thanksgiving & Easter food baskets for families in need.
- * NAC Food Pantry and Peace of Bread Mission
- * School Supply Drive for local students
- * Blackstone Valley Emergency Warming & Cooling Centers

Treat yourself to a wonderful fall day at the VCC Harvest Festival, a unique slice of life and family fun in a historical New England town. For more details, visit www.vccucc.org.

Municipal vulnerability preparedness marches on in Uxbridge

UXBRIDGE — The Gray Rock Pocket Forest Posse continues to develop a design for this land. We were

present at the Riverpulloozza concert on Aug. 8 and at Uniquely

Uxbridge Day on Sept. 5. Our ongoing outreach is continuing through a survey and these community events.

If you have never visited the Pocket Forst land, drop by. It is located at

the corner of Crown and Eagle Road and E Hartford Avenue. Park on Crown and Eagle Road. Enjoy the cool shade of the trees. Stay in touch with us through our Facebook page (Gray Rock Pocket Forest (3) Facebook).

The Home Brew Dam on Blackstone Street is history, and Meadow Brook is finding its natural flow once again. The exposed bottom of the pond is already becoming green and native grasses are preventing the banks from eroding. We will be planting native trees and shrubs to permanently restore the area and support the return of wildlife and biodiversity. Two events are scheduled: Friday, Sept. 18 and Saturday, Sept. 19 from 9 a.m. to noon each

day. Want to come and help? We supply shovels and gloves or bring your own. Enjoy getting close to the earth! Kids are welcome if accompanied by an adult and given

parental permission. This event is being held with the blessing of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor as part of their Volunteers-in-Parks program. Register at dtapscott@uxbridge-ma.gov. Leave your name, email, and which session(s) you are planning to attend.

Local Girl Scout earns prestigious Gold Award through Children’s Mental Health Project

NORTHBRIDGE — After 13 years as a Girl Scout, Abigail Kay has reached one of the highest milestones in her Girl Scout journey: earning the Girl Scout Gold Award.

Kay recently completed her final meeting with the Gold Award committee, where her project was approved. She will be formally honored and receive her Gold Award pin at a special ceremony in June 2027.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest award a Girl Scout can earn. Recipients are challenged to identify an issue that is meaningful to them and create a project that provides a lasting solution and makes

a positive impact on their community. For Abigail, that issue was children’s mental health.

Chamber to host ribbon cutting for Keller Williams Realty Pinnacle Central – Sutton office

For her Gold Award project, Abigail wrote and published a children’s book, “Be Kind to Your Mind,” which introduces young children to the importance of understanding and caring for their mental health. Abigail wanted the project to go beyond simply writing a book. She also created a curriculum guide to accompany a video of herself reading the story and developed a series of workshops to bring the message directly to children.

The workshops introduced children to age-appropriate mental health topics, including self-care, recognizing and understanding emotions, and knowing when and how to talk to



Abigail Kay



Courtesy

Michael Shain, the president and founder of Thanks To Yanks, a local charity that serves our military community, is pleased to announce that the organization has a new Director of Marketing, Ms. Hiran Jani. She says the following: “I’m Hiran a proud resident of Franklin for 12 years. I truly love the town, my greatest strength and inspiration comes from my loving husband and son. I have a deep love of my town, my community and my country. I believe in giving back and supporting one another to help build a kinder community. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to serve our military families and make a positive impact, in their lives today and in the future.” For more information on Thanks To Yanks, please “Like” them on Facebook.

SUTTON — The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the Sutton office for Keller Williams Realty Pinnacle Central. The ceremony will take place on Wednesday, Sept. 16 at 10 a.m. at 156 Worcester-Providence Turnpike, Suite 33, Sutton.

The ribbon cutting will celebrate Keller Williams Realty Pinnacle Central’s continued presence and commitment to serving clients, agents, and communities throughout the Blackstone Valley and Central Massachusetts, with its Sutton location providing office space for the company’s larger teams and a private conference room to serve clients.

Keller Williams Pinnacle Central is a full-service real estate brokerage serving Central Massachusetts from its offices in Worcester and Sutton. Locally owned and led by Operating Principal and Principal Broker Sarah Gustafson, the brokerage

is part of Keller Williams Realty International.

Keller Williams Realty was ranked the No. 1 real estate franchise in the United States by T3 Sixty in 2025, based on agent count, transaction sides, and sales volume. The company was also recognized as one of Glassdoor’s Top 5 Best-Led Companies in 2025. As a woman-owned business, Keller Williams Pinnacle Central is intentional about providing the support, and technologies that are essential for agents to operate at the highest professional level, create community engagement, and develop as entrepreneurs. Its associates unite around a shared mission of building careers worth having, businesses worth owning, lives worth living, experiences worth giving and legacies worth leaving while serving communities throughout all of Central Massachusetts.

“Real estate looks a little different these days, we knew we needed to be intentional with the spaces that our agents need to be successful and empowered,” said Sarah Gustafson, Operating Principal and Principal Broker of Keller Williams Pinnacle Central.

Ribbon cutting ceremonies are free and open to the community, and local business owners, community members, Chamber members, and future members are encouraged to attend and help celebrate this exciting milestone! To learn more, please visit www.blackstonevalley.org/events.

Memorial motorcycle run to honor fallen Uxbridge police officers

UXBRIDGE — The Uxbridge Police Fallen Officers Foundation will honor the lives and service of Officers Chester “Chet” Dzivasen and Stephen LaPorta with its “Let’s Ride” Memorial Motorcycle Run on Sunday, Sept. 13.

Organized in partnership with the American Legion Riders, Uxbridge Chapter 33, the event will raise money to support the foundation’s mission of assisting local students pursuing careers in law enforcement.

Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. at McCloskey Middle School, 62 Capron St., with kickstands up at 11 a.m. The registration fee is \$20 per person.

A police escort will accompany riders along the route before the run concludes at the Uxbridge American Legion/VFW hall on Cross Road. Following the ride, participants and members of the community are invited to gather for a chicken barbecue, live music and raffles.

The event will also include a police escort and other

activities. All proceeds will benefit the Uxbridge Police Fallen Officers Foundation.

The foundation was established in 2026 following the line-of-duty death of Uxbridge Police Officer Stephen LaPorta on Jan. 7.

LaPorta began his public safety career as a dispatcher, working in multiple Blackstone Valley communities. He later completed the police academy and advanced from dispatching to serving as a patrol officer.

His death came nearly 25 years after the Uxbridge

Police Department lost Officer Chester “Chet” Dzivasen, who died April 9, 2001. A memorial scholarship was subsequently established in Dzivasen’s name to assist local students.

The creation of the Uxbridge Police Fallen Officers Foundation expanded that effort. Organized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the foundation is dedicated to preserving the memories of Dzivasen and LaPorta while helping another generation pursue public safety careers.

The organization provides financial assistance to area students seeking degrees in fields applicable to law enforcement. Its mission also recognizes the career path taken by LaPorta by supporting dispatchers seeking to make the transition from emergency communications to becoming police officers.

That process can require significant investments of both time and money as candidates complete education, training and police academy requirements.

The Sept. 13 motorcycle run will provide an opportunity for police, motorcycle riders and community members to remember both officers while helping future public safety professionals begin their own careers.

The partnership with American Legion Riders Chapter 33 also brings together two organizations with strong connections to public service. After the police-escorted ride, the gathering at the American Legion/VFW will give participants an opportunity to continue the memorial event with food, music and raffles while supporting the foundation.

The event is open to riders and community members who want to participate in the post-ride activities.

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 13, at McCloskey Middle School, 62 Capron St., Uxbridge. The motorcycle run departs at 11 a.m. and concludes at the Uxbridge American Legion/VFW on Cross Road. Registration is \$20 per person, with proceeds benefiting the Uxbridge Police Fallen Officers Foundation.

Chamber celebrates An Officer and Two Gentlemen on Veterans Day

WHITINSVILLE — The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce, a special ribbon cutting ceremony for An Officer and Two Gentlemen, Inc. (AOATG) on Veteran’s Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11 at 11 a.m. This ribbon cutting ceremony will celebrate the organization’s fifth anniversary and the official opening of its new home, Bridge Point – Veterans & First Responders Center, located at 875 Hill St. in Whitinsville.

When Founder and Executive Director Mike DeFazio established An Officer and Two Gentlemen five years ago, he intentionally chose Veterans Day as the organization’s founding date. Exactly five years later, the organization will celebrate that milestone by opening the doors to Bridge Point, bringing together a meaningful reflection on the past and an exciting vision for the future.

“Veterans Day has always held a very special meaning for An Officer and Two Gentlemen,” said Mike DeFazio, Founder and Executive Director of An Officer and Two Gentlemen, Inc. “When we founded this organization in 2021, we intentionally chose Nov. 11 because of what it represents. To now celebrate our fifth anniversary on that exact same day, while officially opening Bridge Point, is incredibly meaningful. It is a reflection of how far we have come and a reminder of why we started, heroes helping heroes.”

The ceremony will include the National Anthem, a meaningful

Veterans Day observance, recognition of local veterans and first responders, remarks from elected officials and community leaders, and an introduction to the mission and vision behind Bridge Point. Created to provide a dedicated space for veterans, first responders, their families, and the broader community, Bridge Point will serve as a place for connection, fellowship, support, and continued service.

After five years of growth, the new center provides AOATG with a home from which to expand its mission of Heroes Helping Heroes and continue building meaningful connections among those who have dedicated their lives to serving others.

Following the formal ceremony and ribbon cutting, the community is invited to stay and experience Bridge Point during an open house throughout the day. Guests will have the opportunity to tour the new center, enjoy refreshments, meet members of the AOATG community, and learn more about the organization and the work taking place at Bridge Point. This event is free and open to the public.

The Mission of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is to preserve and enhance the economic vitality of the Blackstone Valley by addressing the needs and concerns of businesses and providing leadership, support and resources in connection with issues which impact commerce and the quality of life in the Valley.

Senior low impact exercise classes available

UXBRIDGE — The Uxbridge Senior Center is proud to present a live eight-week session of Low Impact Exercise classes for Seniors.

This class is a fitness program that utilizes light weights, and some Tai Chi moves to help with balance. The benefits of this program include improved balance, range of motion and coordination. This exercise is a lightweight strength circuit with gentle movements to improve flexibility. Most exercises will be seated with a focus on improving muscle strength especially around the knee area which is crucial for balance and walking and hopefully avoiding falls. This program focuses on light cardio, strength, and fun activities to train the body for real life movements and activities. Some poses can also be done standing using a chair for support.

The program will begin Monday, Sept. 28 from 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. at the Uxbridge Senior Center Satellite Site which is located at the McCloskey School at 62 Capron Street. The class will run for one hour, one day a week, on Mondays, for an eight-week time frame. The schedule will vary and is not consecutive Mondays, due to the availability of the gym. This program is free for Uxbridge residents.

There is a requested donation of \$25 for out-of-town residents. Checks can be made payable to the Uxbridge Senior Center. This is an eight-week specialized program designed for seniors. The instructor, Pamela Landi, is a certified personal trainer.

Low Impact Exercise can improve your flexibility, concentration and strength, while boosting your mood, and reducing stress and joint strain. These workouts are safe and can be done at any fitness level.

There will be an option of doing these exercises seated or standing. The class would be open to all in the community, including those outside the Town of Uxbridge.

Interested individuals should call or stop by the Uxbridge Senior Center at 508-278-8622 for more information and receive their enrollment form, the schedule, and waiver forms prior to the start of the program. The Center is located at 36 South Main Street in Uxbridge and is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Blackstone Heritage Corridor announces Fall Hike Series led by volunteer trail ambassadors

WHITINSVILLE — Blackstone Heritage Corridor (BHC) will host a series of guided hikes led by its volunteer Trail Ambassadors from Sept. 12 through Dec. 19, offering free opportunities for the public to explore the Blackstone River Valley’s trails while learning about its natural and cultural history.

Hikes will take place in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts on various Saturdays and Sundays throughout the fall season. Each hike will be led by a volunteer Trail Ambassador, who will guide participants along the route while sharing insights into the Valley’s history, natural landscape, and ongoing conservation efforts. Each hike is rated moderate to strenuous with terrain descriptions, length, and hike info on the BHC website so hikers can choose the hike that is right for them.

“Fall is one of the best times to be on the trails. In Massachusetts, we’ll hike the Grand Trunkline Trail during peak foliage. In Rhode Island, Wolf Hill climbs to Mercer Outlook for views of the Providence skyline. Our Trail Ambassadors know these places really well, and the history of each area,” said Ryan Verhoog Recreational Resources Manager, Blackstone Heritage Corridor.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, bring water, and be prepared for fall conditions. Registration is free but space is limited; sign up at blackstoneheritagecorridor.org/hikes/

The fall hike series is part of BHC’s mission to preserve, promote and celebrate the Blackstone Valley’s historic, natural, and recreational resources for current and future generations. For the full schedule of fall hikes, locations, and registration details, visit blackstoneheritagecorridor.org/hikes/ or contact Kerri Arsenault at 508-234-4242.

About Blackstone Heritage Corridor

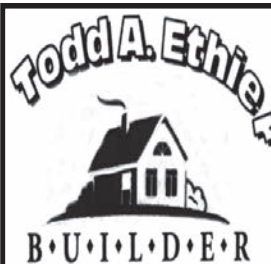
Blackstone Heritage Corridor collaborates with community partners and provides strong leadership to preserve, promote, and celebrate the Blackstone River Valley’s historic, natural, and recreational resources for current and future generations. Learn more at blackstoneheritagecorridor.org

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STUDENT RECORDS TO BE DESTROYED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE REGULATIONS

In compliance with Massachusetts Student Records Regulation, the Northbridge Public School District will destroy the Special Education records of any Northbridge student who transferred, graduated, withdrew or terminated from Special Education programs services prior to June 30, 2019. This is in accordance with the requirements to destroy such records after a period of seven years.

Any parent/guardian or student, age 14 years or older, can obtain their original record within two weeks of this notice. They may do so by contacting the Pupil Personnel Services office at 508-234-8156 x5215 no later than by Wednesday, September 30, 2026.

All unclaimed student records meeting the above criteria will be destroyed after the September 30th deadline.

Friday's Child



Elijah
Age 10
Registration #9241

He especially enjoys opportunities to get outside, explore, and stay busy.

When it's time to slow down, Eli enjoys reading and getting creative through arts and crafts. He appreciates spending time with others and is naturally social, making connections with the people around him. Eli has a wonderful ability to bring people together and enjoys participating in activities where he can interact, laugh, and share experiences with others. He approaches new experiences with a positive attitude and continues to show resilience when faced with challenges. Eli's kindness, warmth, and infectious positivity make him a joy to be around, and his caring personality shines through in the way he interacts with others.

<https://www.mareinc.org/child/27712856128>

Can I Adopt?

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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EDITORIAL

The best achievements leave something behind

There are awards that recognize what someone has accomplished, and there are awards that challenge recipients to leave something meaningful behind. The Girl Scout Gold Award belongs firmly in the second category.

Northbridge’s Abigail Kay has earned that distinction after 13 years as a Girl Scout, completing a project that addresses a subject that can be difficult even for adults to discuss: mental health.

Kay wrote and published a children’s book, “Be Kind to Your Mind,” designed to introduce young children to emotional well-being in an understandable and approachable way. But writing the book was only one part of her work.

She created a curriculum guide, recorded herself reading the story and developed workshops in which children learned about self-care, identifying emotions and recognizing when they should turn to a trusted adult for help.

That last part is especially important. Children inevitably experience worry, disappointment, frustration, sadness and fear. Growing up means learning what those feelings are, how to express them and where to turn when they become difficult to manage.

Giving children an age-appropriate vocabulary for emotions does not eliminate life’s challenges. It can, however, give them tools for dealing with those challenges and help make conversations with parents, teachers and other trusted adults easier.

There is another lesson worth recognizing in Kay’s accomplishment.

Community service is most valuable when it grows from genuine concern rather than an obligation to complete a certain number of volunteer hours. The Gold Award asks Girl Scouts to identify a problem and develop a sustainable response to it. Kay chose something she clearly cared about and then found several ways to reach people with her message.

Her work during high school reflected the same interests. She led an Active Minds club promoting mental health awareness among student-athletes, participated in Unified Sports programming for Young Athletes in partnership with Special Olympics and worked with children with autism as a Registered Behavior Therapist.

Now a freshman at Villanova University studying nursing, she is carrying that interest in helping others into the next stage of her life.

There is something encouraging about seeing a young person leave high school having already learned an important lesson about leadership: Leadership does not always require a title, a microphone or a large audience. Sometimes, it means noticing a need and deciding to do something about it.

That is one reason programs such as Girl Scouts remain valuable to communities. Badges, ceremonies and awards are part of the tradition, but their greater purpose is developing confidence, responsibility, leadership and service. The ultimate measure of those programs is what young people eventually do with those qualities.

In Kay’s case, the Gold Award pin she will formally receive next June will recognize years of work. But the more meaningful legacy may be found elsewhere.

It will be in the children who heard her presentation, the families who read her book together and perhaps in a young person who learned that feeling worried, sad or overwhelmed is something that can be talked about.

Northbridge has good reason to congratulate Abigail Kay on earning the Girl Scout Gold Award. More importantly, the community has reason to appreciate what she chose to do to earn it.

The finest accomplishments are rarely those that end with an award ceremony. They are the ones that keep doing some good after the applause has stopped.

OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Blackstone Valley and beyond

DCR plans full slate of October hikes, programs in Blackstone Valley

UXBRIDGE — Autumn foliage, local history, wildlife and even the night sky will be part of a busy October schedule of free outdoor programs offered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation at parks and forests throughout the Blackstone Valley.

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park will serve as the hub for many of the activities, with additional recreational hikes planned at Douglas State Forest and Upton State Forest.

All programs are free and open to the public, and registration is not required. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

The month’s recreational hiking series begins Sunday, Oct. 4, from 2 to 4 p.m. with the Goat Hill Loop at Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park. Hikers will meet at the River Bend Farm Visitor Center parking area, 287 Oak St., Uxbridge. The approximately two-mile hike travels over rocky and rugged forest surfaces with steep inclines.

The series moves to Douglas State Forest on Sunday, Oct. 11, from 1 to 4 p.m. for the Grand Trunk Trail Loop. The approximately five-mile hike includes rocky and compacted gravel surfaces with mild inclines.

On Sunday, Oct. 18, hikers can explore the Dean Pond Loop at Upton State Forest from 2 to 4 p.m. The approximately 3.5-mile route includes loose gravel surfaces and steep inclines. Participants will meet at the Civilian Conservation Corps camp parking area.

The month’s recreational hiking schedule concludes Sunday, Oct. 25, from 2 to 4 p.m. with the Bad Luck Pond Loop at Douglas State Forest. The approximately 3.5-mile hike covers loose gravel surfaces with moderate inclines and begins at the Route 16 parking area.

DCR is also offering several interpretive programs at River Bend Farm throughout October.

The Woodlands and Waterways Tour will be held Saturday, Oct. 3, from 1 to 2 p.m. Participants will walk about a mile along the Blackstone Canal while looking for signs of wildlife and learning about the watershed and efforts to keep it clean.

On Saturday, Oct. 10, from 1 to 2 p.m., “A Shuttle into the Past Textiles Talk” will examine how clothing moves from unprocessed wool to woven material.

The following Saturday, Oct. 17, the Israel Plummer’s Canal Store Tour will explore Plummer’s Landing and the canal-era businessman for whom it is named. The approximately two-mile guided walk begins at 1 p.m. at the Plummer’s Landing parking area.

Families with younger children can also visit River Bend Farm on Fridays from 10 to 11 a.m. for Kidleidoscope. Designed for children ages 3 to 6, the weekly program combines a story with a hands-on activity focused on the natural world. Siblings are welcome.

Upton State Forest will host “Becoming Better Stewards: The CCC at Upton State Forest Tour” on Saturday, Oct. 24, from 1 to 2 p.m. Visitors will explore the forest’s former Civilian Conservation Corps camp and learn how the New Deal-era program helped shape the property. The walk is less than a quarter-mile on a flat, paved surface.

Two additional programs will offer different ways to experience the Blackstone Valley.

A Night Sky program will take place Friday, Oct. 23, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the field across from the River Bend Farm Visitor Center. Participants will use a telescope to get a closer look at the moon, stars and neighboring planets. Saturn and Neptune are expected to be among the planets visible that evening.

On Halloween, Saturday, Oct. 31, DCR will offer its Bike the Blackstone Rec Ride from 1 to 2 p.m. Participants will meet at the Depot parking area, 85 Canal St., Blackstone, for an approximately four-mile ride along the paved Blackstone River Greenway. The program is intended for ages 12 and older, and riders age 16 and younger must wear helmets.

DCR advises participants to dress for the weather and wear footwear appropriate for each activity. Bug spray is also encouraged. Bathrooms and drinking water are not available at several program locations.

Programs are subject to change or cancellation. For updated information, call Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park at 508-278-7604 or visit the park’s online program updates page.

Reasonable accommodations are available with advance notice by contacting Moneesha Dasgupta at 617-645-0358 or moneesha.dasgupta2@mass.gov.

The windows are open again

There is a particular day every September when I realize the windows are open. Nobody announces it.

There is no family meeting where we agree that summer humidity has officially ended and authorize the reopening of the house. One day, the air conditioner is humming away, doing

LANTERNS

ALONG

MAIN

STREET

By CHARLES

its best to keep the living room from feeling like the inside of a baked potato, and a few days later there is a breeze coming through the kitchen window. That first open-window day is one of my favorite days of the year.

I noticed it the other morning when I came downstairs. The house was quiet, and somewhere outside I could hear a truck backing up. Farther away, somebody was running a lawn mower. There were birds making whatever announcements birds feel compelled to make at 6:30 in the morning. And I could hear all of it because the windows were open.

Summer tends to seal us inside. When it gets hot enough, we close the windows, turn on the air conditioning and create our own little climate-controlled worlds. The houses along the street might be only 30 feet apart, but everybody is tucked inside behind closed windows.

September changes that. Suddenly, the neighborhood comes back. You hear someone calling the dog. You hear a screen door slam. You hear a kid bouncing a basketball in a driveway.

Somebody is doing something involving a power tool that apparently needs to begin before breakfast. You smell somebody’s coffee in the morning and somebody else’s dinner at night. And every once in a while, you hear a conversation you weren’t supposed to hear.

That is when you quietly move away from the window and remind yourself that good neighbors occasionally need to pretend they are deaf.

Open windows were simply part of life when I was growing up. We didn’t think of fresh air as an amenity. It was the cooling system.

You opened every window you could, and if the house was still hot, you found a fan. The fan was usually about 40 years old, weighed as much as a lawn mower and had metal blades capable of propelling a small aircraft.

Safety standards were apparently more of a suggestion back then.

At night, an open bedroom window brought in all the sounds of the neighborhood. Cars passing. Crickets. A dog barking three streets over. Sometimes, you could hear a radio playing somewhere. Eventually, those sounds faded into the background and you fell asleep. I hadn’t thought much about that until recently.

Modern life has become remarkably good at separating us from our surroundings. Cars have climate control. Houses have climate control. Offices have climate control. We put earbuds in when we walk. We can travel from our garage to a parking lot to a building and barely experience the outdoors at all.

Then September arrives in Massachusetts and gives us a brief stretch when the best temperature-control system is a wooden frame, a screen and a little cooperation from Mother Nature. It doesn’t last long.

Soon enough, one of those chilly mornings will arrive when somebody says, “Why is it freezing in here?” The windows will come down. Then the heat will go on.

And before long we’ll be standing beside the thermostat having the annual household debate over what temperature constitutes “perfectly comfortable” and what temperature constitutes “Do you think we’re made of money?”

For now, though, the windows are open. The curtains move a little when the breeze comes through. The house smells different. The neighborhood sounds closer. It is a small thing, certainly. But the older I get, the more convinced I become that the calendar doesn’t really tell us when the seasons change.

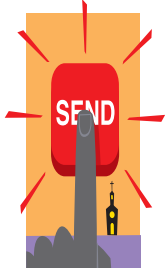
The little things do. The first morning, you need a sweatshirt. The first leaf you notice in the driveway. The first time you see apples stacked outside a farm stand.

And that September morning when you walk into the kitchen, hear the neighborhood outside and realize somebody has opened the windows again.

That is when you know fall is on its way.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!!!

Email Us @



news@stonebridgepress.news

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.

Asa Waters Mansion to host special tribute concert benefiting senior transportation

MILLBURY — Get ready for an unforgettable evening of music, nostalgia, and community spirit as Asa Waters Mansion welcomes nationally recognized Elvis tribute artist, Dan Fontaine for Elvis at the Mansion, located at 123 Elm St., Millbury, on Friday, Sept. 18.

Set against the elegant backdrop of historic Asa Waters Mansion, the evening promises to bring the energy, charisma, and timeless music of Elvis Presley to Millbury for a special night benefiting the Friends of the Millbury Seniors Bus Transportation Program.

Doors will open at 6 p.m., with the concert beginning at 7 p.m. Guests will enjoy an evening of live entertainment, small bites, and a cash bar featuring Penny Pinchers Brewing Co. and Spicy Waters Distillery, with generous sponsorship support from Calabria Ristorante and Ballard Truck Center.

“This is more than just a night of great music, it is an opportunity for our community to come together, have some fun, and make a meaningful difference,” said Traci Parath, Executive Director of Asa Waters Mansion. “We are thrilled to welcome Dan Fontaine to the Mansion and create an evening that celebrates the spirit of Elvis while supporting transportation services that help our local seniors remain connected, independent, and active in our community.”

The Friends of the Millbury Seniors is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing programs and services that support older adults, including transportation and social services that help seniors maintain independence within the community.

For one night, the historic Mansion will trade its traditional elegance for a little rock ‘n’ roll as Dan Fontaine takes the stage with his acclaimed tribute to the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll. Guests can expect an energetic performance filled with the songs, style, and unmistakable presence that made Elvis an icon. Tickets are \$25 per person, with limited seating is available, guests are encouraged to reserve their tickets early. Tickets may be purchased online at, <https://unipaygold.unibank.com/transactionInfo.aspx?CustomerId=1686&TransactionID=38533>, or guests may contact the Mansion directly at 508-865-0855 to pay by cash or check.

For more information, please contact Asa Waters Mansion Executive Director, Traci Parath at 508-865-0855 or email Traci at, tparath@millburyma.gov.

Northbridge Cultural Council announces opening of grant cycle

NORTHBRIDGE — The Northbridge Cultural Council (NCC) is currently accepting grant applications from local artists, performers, schools, and nonprofit organizations for the FY 27 grant cycle. The grant cycle opens Sept. 1 and runs through Oct. 15. Any local individual or organization interested in applying for a grant for the first time is invited to attend a free grant writer’s workshop at the Memorial Town Hall, Whitinsville, Thursday, Sept. 24 from 3:30 to 6 p.m. If you are unable to attend and would like more information or assistance, please get in touch with the NCC at northbridgeculturalcouncil@gmail.com.

The Northbridge Cultural Council is one of the many statewide local cultural councils (LCCs), comprised of volunteers who review community applications and award funding to individual artists, cultural practitioners, non-profit cultural organizations, schools, municipalities, and community groups across Massachusetts. Funding supports the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences. The Northbridge Cultural Council (NCC) provides support for a wide range of activities, including field trips, lectures, festivals, performances, and educational experiences, in line with its funding priorities and community survey input.

The NCC invites you to participate in its annual survey, an important part of the grant award process. The survey is designed to gather information about the community’s interests, and the findings are used to help the review team prioritize grant awards. The annual survey is available on the Town of Northbridge’s Web site. Additional details regarding the Northbridge funding priorities, guidelines, and applications are available on the MassCulturalCouncil website at <https://massculturalcouncil.org/massculture.org>, on northbridgemass.org/cultural-council, and on the Town of Northbridge Web site at <https://www.northbridgemass.org/>. If you have questions or need additional info, email Northbridgeculturalcouncil@gmail.org. The community survey is located via the Town of Northbridge Web site.

Bookmark design contest celebrates Library Card Sign Up Month

WHITINSVILLE — To celebrate Library Card Sign Up Month, Whitinsville Social Library invites you to show off your creativity in its first bookmark design contest. From Aug. 20 to Sept. 30, aspiring artists of all ages can submit an original bookmark design inspired by reading, books, libraries, or your own imagination.

Participants will submit designs in the following age categories: Kindergarten – Grade 2, Grades 3 – 5, Grades 6 – 12, and Adult. Designs must be original (no copyrighted characters). Artists must reside in Northbridge. Only one entry per person.

Visit the library to pick up the entry form or download the entry form on the library’s website <https://whitinsvillelibrary.org/bookmark-contest-2026>. Creators can drop off their completed entry at

Whitinsville Social Library during business hours or submit it online.

In October, Library staff will announce the winner in each age group. The four winning designs will be made into professionally printed bookmarks and distributed to all visitors to Whitinsville Social Library

Uxbridge Cultural Council now accepting grant applications

UXBRIDGE — The Uxbridge Cultural Council is now accepting applications for the Local Cultural Council Program’s 2027 grant cycle. The council prioritizes funding for activities that enrich cultural awareness through the arts, history, music, and performances held in the town of Uxbridge and its surrounding communities. This year, the council is especially interested in funding exciting new programs in our community. Individuals, schools, and cultural organizations are eligible to apply.

Applications open on Sept. 1. The application deadline is Oct. 15. Please apply through the Massachusetts Cultural Council Web site at <https://massculturalcouncil.org/communities/local-cultural-council-program/>.

The Uxbridge Cultural Council is holding an info session and meet and greet event at the Uxbridge Free Library in mid-September. Please check the Uxbridge Cultural Council Facebook page for more details. If you have an idea for a program or questions about your eligibility, please contact us.

Uxbridge Senior Center to host flu shot clinic Oct. 6

UXBRIDGE — The Uxbridge Senior Center will host a flu shot clinic Tuesday, Oct. 6, from 9 a.m. to noon at the center, 36 South Main St.

The clinic is sponsored by Hannaford Pharmacy and will provide local residents with an opportunity to receive their seasonal influenza vaccination.

Advance registration is required. Those interested in receiving a flu shot should call the Uxbridge Senior Center at 508-278-8622 to register.

Transportation will also be available for those who need assistance getting to and from the clinic.

The clinic is scheduled as the fall flu season gets underway and offers residents a convenient local option for vaccination.

For registration, transportation information or other questions about the clinic, call the Uxbridge Senior Center at 508-278-8622.

Rockdale Congregational Church to host ice cream social

NORTHBRIDGE — The Rockdale Congregational Church will be having an ice cream social on Sept. 13 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The social celebrates the end of summer and the beginning of our Sunday School year. Enrollment will be taking place, however, are welcome if you have kids or not!

The event is free is open to all!! Our Church is located at 42 Fowler Rd. in Northbridge. We hope to see you and enjoy some tasty treats.



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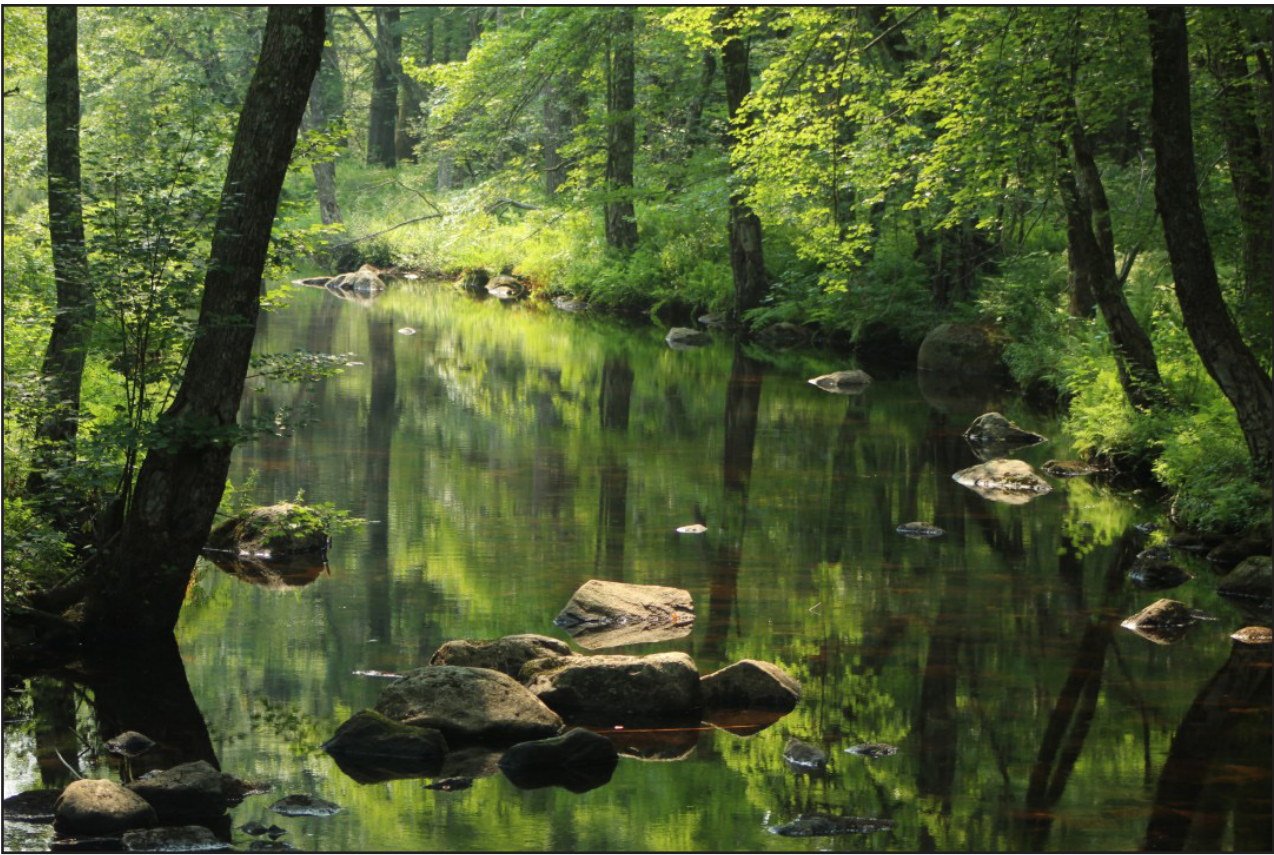
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Small Stones Festival of the Arts announces art call, exhibit dates

GRAFTON — Art Call opens Tuesday, Sept. 1 for submission of work to the 2027 Small Stones Festival of the Arts, the region’s largest juried fine art and photography exhibition. Fine art artists and photographers are welcome to join the area’s finest painters, photographers, watercolorists and other two-dimensional artists in the ninth year of the festival.

The two-week exhibition sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Art Association and the Worcester County Camera Club opens Jan. 30, 2027, at the Community Harvest Project barn located at 37 Wheeler Road in N. Grafton. The Festival runs until Feb. 7 and is free to the public.

The Art Call is open until Oct. 1. All forms of two-dimensional fine art work and fine art photography are accepted with a maximum of five entries per artist. Juried artwork will be displayed at the exhibit and showcased in the hardbound exhibition catalog. The Festival’s web galley will feature all



submitted artwork meeting minimum requirements. Visit <https://smallstones-festival.org/> to submit artwork.

A panel of six jurors who have distinguished careers as practicing artists or in curatorial capacities at area museums, galleries and colleges will select approx-

imately 144 works to be displayed. Awards include first, second and third cash prize winners and jurors’ choice (six awards). Cash awards are \$500 for first; \$250 for second; and \$100 for third place. A popular choice award for each category will be voted on by attendees.

Several awards have been endowed to honor superb artistry. Dimitry Papkov, an award winning travel and landscape photographer, created the Excellence in Landscape Photography Award to acknowledge outstanding photography. An Abstract or Non-Objective

Art Award, sponsored by Grafton Arts, Inc. president Ken Crater, is open to all painting or photography work, recognizes art which is either non-representational or imparts the strong subjective imprint of the artist. The Ted and Donna Williams Nature at its Best Award debuted

at last year’s festival, is given to artists whose work encourages the advocacy of wildlife habitat and healthy rivers. Each award offers a cash prize of \$250.

The mission of the Small Stones Festival of the Arts is to elevate the practice and appreciation of fine art and photography in the Blackstone Valley and beyond. Grafton Arts Inc., a 501 (c)(3) organization is the financial sponsor of the Festival.

The festival organizers appreciate the support of these organizations: Brigham Hill Foundation, Grafton Cultural Council, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Grafton and Millbury Cultural Councils and Yesod Foundation and businesses: Central One Credit Union, Dance It Up!, EverRise, Gastonart & Frame, Gaudette Insurance, Homefield Credit Union, Millbury Federal Credit Union, New England School of Fine Art, Pepperoni Express, Savers Bank, Uncommon Cow and Grafton Grill & Crust and UniBank.

Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship at QCC celebrates successful first year



Director Rocky Knight (standing) during a presentation at the Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship at QCC.

WORCESTER — The Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship at Quinsigamond Community College is concluding its first year dedicated to fostering student success and strengthening QCC’s role in the region’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Since opening in the fall of 2025, the Center has delivered four entrepreneurship workshops, provided more than 60 one-on-one consultations and created new opportunities for students to develop business ideas, connect with mentors and gain hands-on experience pitching their ventures.

QCC hosted its first WooTank Qualifying Pitch Competition, where nine student entrepreneurs competed for funding and the chance to represent the College on a regional stage. QCC student entrepreneur Mallory Callahan, founder of Float Lab Worcester, went on to earn a \$1,500 investment at the WooTank Intercollegiate Pitch Competition during Worcester Startup Week.

“Through mentorship, experiential learning, strategic partnerships and direct student support, the Auxilium Center has quickly become a valuable resource for aspiring

entrepreneurs,” said Director of the Auxilium Center for Entrepreneurship Rocky Knight. “As it enters its second year, the Center is well-positioned to expand its impact, helping even more students transform ambition and creativity into opportunity.”

The Center also aims to elevate student entrepreneurs beyond campus. Four QCC students showcased their ventures at WPI Demo Day, another collegiate pitch competition, gaining public-facing experience while representing the College in Worcester’s innovation community.

“The Auxilium Center at QCC gave me the tools, mentorship and support I needed to succeed as an entrepreneur while also pursuing my education and providing for my family,” said Jamie Mice, QCC student and founder of Hair by Jamie. “Starting a business feels scary and overwhelming, but with the right support, you can achieve your goals and overcome obstacles you once thought were impossible.”

The Auxilium Center at QCC was made possible through the vision of its founding supporters, the Cliff & Susan Rucker Foundation, whose early invest-

ment provided seed funding to hire the center director and help turn the vision into reality.

An Inspiring Generosity Grant from the Esler Family Foundation has provided a \$10,000 matching grant to support Auxilium Center programming. Support from Cornerstone Bank, ITServe Alliance, UniBank, and the Webster Five Foundation is helping realize the full impact of this opportunity, which must be matched dollar-for-dollar.

Every gift made through Dec. 31 brings QCC closer to securing the full \$10,000 match, helping provide students with the mentorship, guidance and resources needed to turn ideas into ventures. These gifts will also support QCC’s inaugural Entrepreneurship Week, help launch the Center’s Business Incubator and strengthen the WooTank Qualifying Pitch Competition.

More information on how to support the Inspiring Generosity Matching Grant Program can be found at www.givecampus.com/schools/quinsigamondCommunityCollege/auxilium-center-for-entrepreneurship-at-qcc.

BHS Class of 1986 seeks community’s help locating classmates for 40th reunion

REGION — As the Bartlett High School Class of 1986 prepares to celebrate its 40th reunion on Sept. 26, organizers are asking the community for assistance in locating classmates who have not yet been reached through social media or via text.

To make the process simple, the reunion committee has created a short contact-information form and is encouraging residents, friends, and former classmates to help spread the word. If you know someone on the “missing classmates” list, organizers ask that you text them the link to the form so they can update their information.

Contact Info Form: <https://tinyurl.com/BHS1986-40Years>

If it’s easier, you may also complete the form on a classmate’s behalf—so long as you have their current contact details. Organizers emphasize that any help tracking them down is truly appreciated, as personal connections often succeed where digital outreach falls short.

A list of classmates the committee is hoping to locate appears below. With the community’s support, they hope every member of the Class of ’86 will have the opportunity to join this milestone celebration.

- Richard Bernier
Sheila Bialonick
Beth Bialy
Jason Borski
Doreen Bourget
Eric Brisbois
Kathleen Brown
Paul Browning
Paul Bugar
Cindy Bullens
Sandra Butt
Mont Canterbury
Stephen Carlson
D a n i e l
Chapdelaine
Kelly Cobb
Ken Courmoyer
Timothy Decker
Tammy Deschenes
Aaron Dorcas
Daniel Doyle
D o r o t h y
DusoSelina Fife
James Gardner
Jeffrey Gatto
Tina Giakoumis
Alicia Goudreau
Richard Guerin
Robert Hamm
Scott Horanzy
Jane Houle
Todd Hufault
Joseph Hughes
Melissa Jankowski
Thor Johnson
Nena Johnston
Lisa Kozlowski
Robert Krasnecky
Jill Krause
Michael Kryger
Rick Lawson
Deborah Leite
Linda Lifer
Patricia Majewski
Renee Marchand
Jennifer Marsh
Jennifer Mason
John Meagher
Fumiyo Mochizuki
Deborah Munsch
Brett Napierata
Wayne Parmentier
Brian Poplawski
Gary Poplawski
Edward Powers
William Radcliffe
James Remy
Debra Ross
Collin Salmon
Dale Schleis
Theresa Sergel
Henry Skiba
Alan Standrowicz
Jeffrey Surozenski
Karen Toukonen
Joseph Veronick
Douglas Waldron
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Peter Allain
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Chamber announces new date, location for Yellow Tulip Project Hope Garden at Uxbridge High School

UXBRIDGE — The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce’s Women’s Success Network (WSN) is proud to announce a new date and location for its upcoming Yellow Tulip Project Hope Garden planting, bringing an important message of hope, connection, and mental health awareness to the Uxbridge community. The event will now take place on Friday, Oct. 16 at 9 a.m. at Uxbridge High School, 300 Quaker Highway, Uxbridge. The rain date is set for Saturday, Oct. 17 at 9 a.m.

As part of the Yellow Tulip Project, the WSN, Chamber members, community volunteers, and supporters will come together to plant 500 yellow tulip bulbs and create a Hope Garden at Uxbridge High School. The project is designed to help raise awareness around mental health, encourage open conversations, and help break the stigma associated with mental illness. Yellow tulips are a symbol of hope and happiness, making the garden much more than a collection of flowers. Once in bloom, the tulips will provide a lasting and meaningful reminder throughout the community that hope can grow, even during



difficult seasons. Also joining us for this year’s planting, will be the UHS Mental Health Awareness student organization!

“Sometimes the simplest things can carry the most powerful message,” said Kristen Kearman, BVCC Programs & Events Director. “Planting 500 tulips may seem like a small act, but together, those flowers will create something beautiful that reminds our community, and

especially our young people, that there is always hope, that they are not alone, and that it is okay to ask for help. We are so excited to bring this project to Uxbridge High School and watch this garden grow.”

The Blackstone Valley Chamber’s Women’s Success Network is encouraging community members, businesses, families, and individuals to join them for this special morning of service and

connection. Volunteers are needed to help plant the tulip bulbs, and participants are encouraged to bring their own gardening gloves and tools.

The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is proud to partner with the Yellow Tulip Project and the Uxbridge High School on this meaningful initiative. A special thank you to, Country Bank as the presenting sponsor of this event.

To register as a volunteer, and to help smash the stigma, please visit our website at www.blackstonevalley.org/events. This event is free and open to the public. You can also learn more about the Yellow Tulip Project at www.theyellowtulipproject.org. For more information, please contact Kristen Kearman at 508-234-9090, ext. 100 or email Kristen at, kkearnan@blackstonevalley.org.

The mission of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce is to preserve and enhance the economic vitality of the Blackstone Valley by addressing the needs and concerns of businesses and providing leadership, support and resources in connection with issues which impact commerce and the quality of life in the Valley.

Award-winning Puerto Rican film “Esta Isla” coming to Worcester



WORCESTER — “Esta Isla” (This Island), the award-winning feature film by Puerto Rican filmmakers Lorraine Jones Molina and Cristian Carretero, will screen in Worcester on Sept. 26, bringing the acclaimed Puerto Rican film to audiences across Central Massachusetts.

BoriCorridor, in collaboration with Experimento Lúdico and Vejigantes Restaurant, presents the screening as part of the BoriCorridor Screening Tour, an initiative that brings Puerto Rican artists and cultural productions to communities across the United States.

“Esta Isla” premiered at the 2025 Tribeca Film

Festival, where it won Best New Director and Best Cinematography and received a Special Jury Mention for Best U.S. Narrative Feature. In 2026, the film received the John Cassavetes Award at the Film Independent Spirit Awards, further establishing “Esta Isla” as one of the most recognized Puerto Rican films in recent years.

Set against the backdrop of Puerto Rico’s coastlines and mountains, the film follows Bebo, a teenager trying to survive amid economic hardship. After a violent incident alters his life, he flees with Lola, a young woman determined to escape her circumstances. Their journey explores

identity, belonging, and redemption in a Puerto Rico that is as beautiful as it is complex.

More than a chase thriller, “Esta Isla” offers a deeply human and contemporary portrait of Puerto Rican life, exploring inequality, resilience, and the island’s historical legacy.

“This film was born in Puerto Rico—from its landscapes, its contradictions, and its people. Being able to share it now with Puerto Rican communities across the United States is a very special opportunity for us,” said Lorraine Jones Molina, who, along with Cristian Carretero, directed and produced

the film. The screening in Worcester will include a post-screening discussion, giving audiences an opportunity to engage directly with the filmmakers and explore the film’s themes and creative process.

“‘Esta Isla’ represents the kind of stories that BoriCorridor seeks to bring to our communities: deeply Puerto Rican, honest, and contemporary narratives that invite us to reflect on who we are and how we

relate to our country, our history, and our diaspora,” said Elsa Mosquera, founder of BoriCorridor.

The Worcester screening is part of a broader nine-city BoriCorridor Screening Tour that will bring “Esta Isla” to communities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Colorado, and Texas, as well as New York City.

The tour marks the first time BoriCorridor has incorporated film into its

programming, expanding the range of Puerto Rican artistic and cultural productions it brings to the diaspora. Supported by the Mellon Foundation, the BoriCorridor Tour has spent the past three years connecting Puerto Rican artists and cultural productions with communities throughout the United States.

Tickets and additional information are available at boricorridor.com.

2026

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Sheriff’s Office Safekeep Program delivers public safety support, significant cost savings

REGION — After decades of requests from local law enforcement agencies to house individuals arrested by municipal and state police departments, the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office officially opened the first cells dedicated to its Safekeep Program in 2021. The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office (WCSO) Safekeep Program has since delivered measurable public safety improvements and meaningful cost savings to communities across Worcester County and throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The program operates from the Sheriff’s Office Intake and Medical Unit in West Boylston, a modern, purpose-built facility designed to centralize intake, medical screening, and short-term housing for individuals in custody. The facility operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides a secure environment for pre-arraignment detainees transferred from municipal police departments and the Massachusetts State Police.

By allowing local and state agencies to transfer custody of eligible detainees to the Sheriff’s Office, the program enables officers to return more quickly to patrol, investigations, and emergency response duties instead of remaining assigned to station-based detainee supervision, a major resource draw for local and state police departments.

“The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office specializes in the care, custody, and control of detainees,” commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. “I’m grateful that the Baker-Polito administration believed in this project and the potential it had to benefit the hardworking police departments of Massachusetts.”

Estimated \$1 million in taxpayer savings

The Safekeep Program is estimated to have saved approximately \$1 million in personnel and operational costs for Worcester County municipal police departments and the Massachusetts State Police. These savings are achieved through:

- Reduced overtime expenses
- Fewer officers assigned to extended detainee watch
- Decreased need for local holding capacity
- Consolidated and efficient court transport procedures
- Cost-cutting through avoiding providing meals, medical resources, etc.



WCSO Intake/Medical Build, built in 2021, where the Safekeep program is facilitated out of.

By centralizing short-term custody operations at the Intake and Medical Unit, the Sheriff’s Office helps law enforcement agencies operate more efficiently while reducing the financial burden on Massachusetts taxpayers.

Webster Police Chief Michael Shaw stated that the Safekeep program takes the burden off the officers and dispatchers. It allows these individuals to focus on more relevant tasks as opposed to monitoring, feeding, and ensuring the overall safety of arrestees.

Shaw stated that, “Having this program in place is a huge relief to our agency, which, like many others, is facing staffing difficulties. We are grateful for our partnership with the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office, not just for its Safekeep program, but the commitment to helping police departments across Worcester County.”

Program activity (July 2021 – June 2026)

2,720 successful Safekeeps placements
178 denials based on medical, safety, or eligibility criteria

Municipal departments with the highest number of successful safekeeps include: Shrewsbury (202), Westborough (180), Milford (104), Auburn (99), Rutland (94), Barre (85), Lunenburg (83), Leominster (75), Fitchburg (58), and Blackstone (52)

The Massachusetts State Police represents the largest single user of the program

These figures highlight both the strong

demand for the safekeep Program and the Sheriff’s Office’s commitment to maintaining careful screening and responsible custody decisions.

Chief Ryan Malatos of the Leominster Police Department explained that the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office Safekeep Program has been an invaluable resource for his department, particularly when a detainee is unlikely to make bail or when call volume and community needs require him to reassign officers quickly.

Malatos went on to explain that, “by providing a secure option for continued detention, the program allows us to return a uniformed officer back to the road rather than requiring that officer to assist with a detainee. This helps us maintain patrol coverage and respond more effectively to calls for service.”

Maintaining safety and professional standards

All detainees must meet established medical, mental health, and classification standards before being accepted into the program, in accordance with formal agreements between the Sheriff’s Office and participating agencies. These requirements ensure the safety of staff and detainees while upholding professional standards of care, custody, and oversight

The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office Safekeep Program demonstrates how regional collaboration and modern infrastructure can enhance public safety, improve operational efficiency, and

provide meaningful cost savings to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth.

For more information on the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office, visit www.WorcesterCountySheriff.com or follow the Sheriff’s Office on social media for updates.

Massasoit Art Guild to hold 23rd annual Art Show and Sale

SPENCER — The Massasoit Art Guild will showcase the work of area artists when its 23rd annual Art Show and Sale returns to Spencer Town Hall in October. The show will be held Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 10 and 11, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Spencer Town Hall, 157 Main St. Admission is open to the public.

In addition to giving visitors an opportunity to view original artwork, the event will feature works available for purchase, including original pieces, fine art prints and cards.

A public reception and awards ceremony will be held Saturday, Oct. 10, from 1 to 3 p.m. Cash prizes will be presented in each category.

This year’s special challenge category is “Fantasy,” with organizers specifying that entries in the category must be family friendly.

Massasoit Art Guild members interested in participating may submit up to three pieces of original artwork. The entry fee is \$8 per piece, and the deadline to submit entries is Sunday, Sept. 27.

Artwork entered in the show should be dropped off at Spencer Town Hall on Friday, Oct. 9, from 5 to 7 p.m. Following the conclusion of the show, artwork may be picked up Sunday, Oct. 11, from 4:30 to 5:15 p.m.

The event will also include a raffle table, with donations encouraged. Raffle winners will be announced Sunday afternoon.

The guild’s 2025 Best in Show honor went to artist Doug Caves for his oil painting “Intersection No. 1.”

Complete show guidelines, registration information and other details are available at the Massasoit Art Guild’s website. Questions may also be directed to massasoitartguild@gmail.com.

The 23rd annual Art Show and Sale is supported in part by a grant from the Spencer Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.



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LEGALS

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO26P2708EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Renee Rousseau
Date of Death: 01/29/2022
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Late and Limited Formal Testacy and/or Appointment** has been filed by **Norma Rousseau of Mendon MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests that: .
Norma E Rousseau of Mendon MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appear-

ance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 09/22/2026.**
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.
Date: August 25, 2026
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
September 11, 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO26P2445EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Josiah P. Burch
Also Known As: Joe Burch
Date of Death: 11/26/2025
To all interested persons:
A Petition for **S/A- Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Jane Burch of Douglas MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests that: .
Jane Burch of Douglas MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appear-

ance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 09/22/2026.**
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A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Kathryn M. Bailey, First Justice of this Court.
Date: August 20, 2026
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
September 11, 2026

Ten adults, 200 hours, one new career path

Bay Path’s Career Technical initiative graduates third Building Maintenance cohort



Courtesy
Seated, left to right: R. Zhou (Grafton), L. Pena (Southbridge), D.Raczka (Spencer), A. Vasquez (Worcester). From left to right, standing: Y. Mao (Grafton), W. Vega (Worcester), J. Wickens (Worcester), S. Shankara (Shrewsbury), J. Sweet (Worcester), and J. Watler (Worcester).

CHARLTON — Bay Path’s Career Technical Initiative (CTI) celebrated its third graduating class of adult learners on Aug. 12, honoring 10 students who completed the 200-hour Building Maintenance certificate program. The graduation luncheon, held on Bay Path’s campus, brings the program’s total number of graduates to 30 since its launch in September 2024. This cohort traveled to Charlton from Worcester, Spencer, South Grafton, Southbridge, Oxford, Shrewsbury and ranged from 22 to 50 years old. Each will leave the program with supports that can lead to job placement, OSHA 10, Bloodborne Pathogens, Asbestos

Awareness, Ladder Safety, Scaffolding Safety and Fall Protection certifications; a year of access to Interplay’s virtual reality trades training simulations and a fully stocked toolbox of the trade, presented at the ceremony in front of family and friends. “The goal of this program is really to help people get into good-paying, in-demand careers by removing the barriers that often keep adults from going back to school or getting the training they need,” said Jibrael Younis, Operations Manager for Mass Hire, the state agency working with Bay Path to facilitate the CTI program. “We partner with vocational

schools like Bay Path to provide industry-focused training that leads directly to employment in fields where employers are actively hiring for jobs that provide sustainable, livable wages.” Demand for the program continues to grow. Bay Path has scheduled cohorts through 2028, and applications for the next Building Maintenance cohort are open now, closing once the program receives 24 applications or by Aug. 26, whichever comes first. The program is open to all Massachusetts residents 18 and older who qualify. Among this cohort’s graduates are adult students charting distinct paths into the trades. One graduate is using the certificate as a springboard toward a career in building inspection. “I was previously working in the IT field and that field is shrinking because of AI technology. I needed to develop a different skill set,” said Jeff from Worcester. “I feel good, I feel like I accomplished something, taking a first step down a path for a new skill set. Job hunting is my next step; I’m not sure if I’ll go back to the IT field or if I’m going to commit to switching over to facilities maintenance. Regardless, having the skillset will be valuable and even if I don’t do it for a job, I’ll save me thousands if not tens of thousands in the future with home repair and maintenance.” “I wanted to further my education and knowledge,” said Anne from Worcester. “I liked being in the program; it helped me learn more things. I do renovations. I’m proud. It doesn’t hurt to do it; you get the knowledge, the experience, and you can go out and further your job opportunities and your resume. My plans after this are to find a job, find a house, and try to find something in this career field. Ultimately, I want to join the military but the things I’ve learned here I can take with me.” Bay Path’s CTI Building Maintenance

program prepares adult learners for entry-level careers in building and property maintenance through hands-on and classroom instruction. Since launching in September 2024, the program has graduated 30 adult learners and built a growing pipeline of skilled tradespeople for the state. In addition to Building Maintenance, Bay Path’s CTI offers additional programs in Diesel Technology, HVAC, Electrical, Welding, Automotive Collision Repair, Automotive Technology, Culinary, and Manufacturing. “Bay Path has been such a great partner because they provide excellent hands-on training that’s aligned with what local employers are looking for, giving graduates in-demand skills and credentials that make them immediately employable for local jobs that offer great wages,” Younis said. “Beyond the classroom, participants also receive support throughout the process including job readiness, career coaching and connecting directly to employers. Through Bay Path and MassHire, we can often help with supportive services, providing free tools and equipment, and funding for transportation and even childcare, so people can focus on completing their training instead of worrying about those barriers.” About Bay Path Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School prepares students for both college and careers through a rigorous blend of academic coursework and hands-on technical training. Accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Bay Path serves ten Southern Worcester County communities: Auburn, Charlton, Dudley, North Brookfield, Oxford, Paxton, Rutland, Southbridge, Spencer, and Webster. Opening in 1972 atop Muggett Hill, the school has spent more than five decades offering 23 career areas alongside its academic program.



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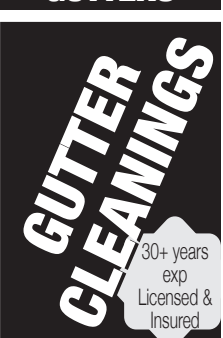
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Blackstone Headwaters Coalition settles landmark Clean Water Act Case

BLACKSTONE — The Blackstone Headwaters Coalition, Inc. (Blackstone) has announced that it has reached a settlement of its long-standing Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) lawsuit against a construction developer in Worcester, Massachusetts.

In the case, titled *The Blackstone Headwaters Coalition, Inc. v. Gallo Builders, Inc., et al.*, Blackstone alleged that the defendant developer group had violated the CWA at their residential construction site in Worcester, “Arboretum Village Estates,” by failing to take numerous measures to prevent the sediment pollution of a tributary system of the Blackstone River.

Under the terms of the settlement, as set forth in a Consent Decree entered by the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, the defendants were required to make payments totaling 2.2 million dollars, including inter alia (a) a payment of \$500,000 to the Massachusetts Audubon Society to fund two projects with Worcester Public Schools students focused on Blackstone River watershed health and stormwater pollution prevention, and (b) a payment of \$50,000 to Worcester State University to enable the purchase of water quality monitoring equipment for the university’s Tatnuck Brook water monitoring initiative. Additionally, the Consent Decree requires that the defendants comply with the CWA permit that they were found to have violated, and enables representatives of Blackstone to monitor the site for such compliance for a period of three years.

The settlement concludes a decade of extraordinarily complex and impactful litigation. Blackstone, a non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of water quality and wildlife habitat in the Blackstone River, filed its lawsuit in 2016 under the CWA’s “citizen suit” provision, 33 U.S.C. § 1365. That provision enables a person or organization aggrieved by a violation of the CWA to sue the violator, both to stop the violation and to impose monetary penalties. Blackstone alleged that the defendants’ numerous violations of the CWA permit for construction activities, the Construction General Permit (CGP), were resulting in the chronic discharge of sediment-laden stormwater from

the Arboretum Village Estates site.

At the outset of the case, the defendants filed a motion to dismiss, arguing that because the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection already had an open administrative enforcement action against them, Blackstone’s lawsuit was barred by a CWA provision under which a citizen may not bring a civil penalty action against a CWA violator when a state is “diligently prosecuting” an action for the same violations under a comparable state law. The trial court judge agreed with the defendants and dismissed the case. Blackstone appealed to the First Circuit Court of Appeals, which ultimately—six years after the case began—agreed with Blackstone that, insofar as its lawsuit sought injunctive relief, the CWA’s diligent prosecution bar did not apply. See *The Blackstone Headwaters Coalition, Inc. v. Gallo Builders, Inc.*, 32 F.4th 99 (1st Cir. 2022). In so holding, the First Circuit took the extraordinary step of overturning its own 31-year precedent. This was a landmark decision and a major victory for the environment, as CWA citizen plaintiffs are often far more aggressive in litigation, and thus far more effective in curbing pollution, than state regulators. The implications of the First Circuit’s ruling will be felt throughout the country, as federal courts elsewhere look for guidance in deciding the same issue.

After the appeal, in 2022, litigation resumed in the trial court. Two years later, the defendants filed another motion to dismiss, arguing that the stream into which their site discharged stormwater was not a “water of the United States” (WOTUS) within the meaning of the CWA as interpreted by the United States Supreme Court in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, 598 U.S. 651 (2023)—and thus, that the CWA did not apply to the site. The Court in *Sackett* held that, to be a WOTUS, a tributary to a river such as the Blackstone River had to be at least “relatively permanent.” According to the defendants, the stream into which the site discharged stormwater was not relatively permanent. The trial court judge denied the defendants’ motion to dismiss, saving the issue of the stream’s permanence for a jury to decide at trial.

A three-week jury trial as to the defendants’ liability was held in December of 2025. This was one of only several CWA construction pollution cases ever to be tried to a jury. The defendants’ case rested largely on their contention that the stream in question was not relatively permanent. Blackstone, however, had amassed overwhelming video and eyewitness evidence that the stream was not only relatively permanent, but that it flowed perennially, even in times of drought; and relatedly, that the waters downstream of the development constituted a cold-water fishery, as evidenced by the presence of native brook trout. The jury found that the stream was indeed a WOTUS, and that the defendants had committed each of the sixteen types of CGP violations with which they had been charged. A second phase of trial, on the issue of remedies for the defendants’ violations, was then scheduled. In the interim, the parties reached the settlement described above.

Sediment pollution has been identified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as the most significant cause of water quality degradation in the United States. It has a wide range of adverse effects on the ecology of wetlands and water systems, including habitat destruction, disruption of animal feeding patterns, inhibition of animal reproduction, reduction of dissolved oxygen, and increased turbidity. Through these effects, it decreases the density, diversity, and biomass of aquatic organisms of all kinds. Sediment pollution also facilitates other types of water pollution. Harmful metals, organic compounds, and fertilizing nutrients bind themselves to sediment and are thus more readily mobilized during storms. The CWA is a critical tool for combatting this pollution, and for holding polluters accountable. The result in this landmark case will send a message to the construction industry that there can be a high price to pay for polluting the nation’s waters.

Blackstone was represented in the case by James P. Vander Salm of the Law Office of James P. Vander Salm and Benjamin C. Rudolf, Maureen Carroll, and Sarah Varney of the law firm of Rudolf, Griffis, Ruggieri & Murray, LLP.



Courtesy

A DREAM YEARS IN THE MAKING!

The dream of a new Bobcat Park is finally coming to life! Trinity Catholic Academy recently celebrated the groundbreaking of our new playground—a project made possible through the incredible generosity, dedication, and support of our TCA community. We are so grateful to everyone who has donated, volunteered, spread the word, and believed in this longtime dream. What began as an idea has grown into a project that will bring countless years of play, laughter, and memories to our students.



KAY
continued from page A1

a trusted adult. At several workshops, Kay also provided children with copies of her book so they could continue the conversation with their families at home.

Through the project, she found a way to make an important and sometimes difficult topic easier for young children to understand. Her goal was to help children begin developing healthy emotional habits at an early age.

Her commitment to helping others extends well beyond her Gold Award project. During high school, Kay was a varsity athlete, led the Active Minds club, which promoted mental health awareness among student-athletes, and also led the Unified Sports program for Young Athletes in partnership with the Special Olympics. Outside of school and athletics, she worked as a Registered Behavior Therapist with children with autism and as a lifeguard at a local town beach. Now a freshman at Villanova University, she is pursuing a degree in nursing. While her Girl Scout Gold Award journey may be complete, the message behind “Be Kind to Your Mind” will continue to reach children and families.

Congratulations to Abigail Kay on earning the Girl Scout Gold Award and turning her passion for helping others into a project with a lasting impact. For more information about Girl Scouting in the Central Massachusetts area, please call 508-365-0115 or visit GSCWM.org. Kay’s book, “Be Kind to Your Mind,” is currently available on Amazon.com.



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Webster First launches ‘Pay a Person’

SEND MONEY
TO FRIENDS
AND FAMILY
INSTANTLY, NO
EXTRA APPS
REQUIRED

W O R C E S T E R
— Webster First has

announced an exciting update to its online banking platform with the launch of a new “Pay a Person” feature. Arriving this July, this convenient tool will let members send money instantly to friends and family straight from their account—no extra third-party payment apps to download or sign up for. With just a few taps, members can transfer funds in seconds, making it faster and easier than ever to pay back a friend, share expenses, or help out a loved one. Designed for speed and simplicity, “Pay a Person” puts effortless, secure payments right at members’ fingertips.

The Pay a Person tool was created to make everyday financial moments

simpler. To send money, members only need the recipient’s name and phone number or email address. There’s no need to ask for account or routing numbers. Once a transfer is started, the recipient gets a quick notification and can accept the funds in just a few steps, even if they don’t bank with Webster First.

The feature is built for the moments that come up in daily life. Members can split a dinner bill with friends, chip in for a group gift, pay a babysitter or

dog walker, settle up on shared rent or utilities, or send emergency funds to a family member in a pinch. Pay a Person makes it easy to move money quickly and securely whenever the need arises.

Webster First designed the Pay a Person feature with flexibility and affordability in mind, giving members several ways to send money based on how quickly it needs to arrive. Sending money to another Webster First member is always free and lands in their account instant-

ly, making it perfect for quick, everyday exchanges. When the money is headed to someone at a different bank, members can choose a free next-day delivery option that’s ideal for payments that aren’t time-sensitive. And for those moments when speed matters most, recipients at outside financial institutions can accept the funds instantly for a simple, low flat fee of just \$2.50. No matter which option members choose, the recipient receives a text or email with clear, step-by-step instructions on how to accept the funds.

To make sending money as simple as possible, Webster First has built Pay a Person directly into its online banking platform. Members can access the feature right from their account dashboard, with clear prompts and an intuitive layout that guides them through each transfer in just a few taps.

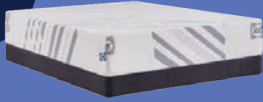
A b o u t
Webster First
Webster First is a community-focused credit union committed to helping its members make sound, responsible financial decisions. By providing modern digital tools and trusted local service, Webster First makes everyday banking simple and secure. For more information about the new online banking updates, visit websterfirst.com.



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