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Thursday-Friday, March 28-29, 2024

Southbridge schools seek \$42 million, need “massive repair”

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

SOUTHBRIDGE — The school district will be seeking \$42 million to operate this year, with \$9.7 million coming from local taxes. According to last week's public hearing by Receiver Jeffrey Villar and Business Manager Seth Racine,

that's “the bare minimum allowed by law,” but represents an additional \$428,142 coming from local taxpayers. “We can't get much more conservative than this budget at this point,” Villar added. At the same time, Villar noted Southbridge is getting an extra \$2.86

million in Chapter 70 and other state education aid, plus has recently accumulated “more than \$2 million” in various grants. One of those links the high school to Clark University to address kids' mental health issues and could mean

\$2 million by itself over several years. As many know, the schools have been in receivership for many years, and still face significant issues. Villar said they've seen “significant progress” in

Turn To **SCHOOLS** page **A14**

Charlton police arrest student with pellet gun on bus

BY JASON BLEAU
CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON — Charlton police have released details concerning a reported firearm on a Dudley-Charlton Regional School District bus that resulted in the arrest of a student. According to a release from District Superintendent Steven Lamarche, officials at around 3 p.m. on March 14 at Shepherd Hill Regional High School were informed that a student was possibly in possession of a weapon onboard bus #53. After communicating with School Resource Officer Philip Megas of the Charlton Police Department, an investigation took place that confirmed the suspicions. “Officer Megas worked with the Charlton Police Department. Upon responding, a 12th grade Shepherd Hill Regional High School student did have a pellet gun in their possession. The student was immediately taken into custody,” Lamarche said in a statement to parents. “Bus #53 carries students from Shepherd Hill Regional High School and Dudley Middle School. This is now a Dudley and Charlton Police matter, and

Turn To **STUDENT** page **A14**



Courtesy

MUSIC BINGO AT HOLLAND COMMUNITY CENTER

The Friends of Holland Community Center will be hosting a Music Bingo event with Amanda Meli on Saturday, April 6 from 6-8 p.m. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. The Center is located at 40 Brimfield Rd. in Holland. This fundraising event has been a huge success in the past, so we suggest you purchase your tickets ahead of time by calling 413-245-3163 or stopping by the Community Center Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (We are open most evenings, you may call for evening hours.) Tickets are \$10, and you will automatically be included in the door prize drawing. We will also have a table with raffle baskets and gifts. All proceeds benefit programs and events for all ages held at the Holland Community Center.

Podunk Road pole plan draws heat

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

STURBRIDGE — Pole hearings normally last only slightly longer than it takes to read the legal notice, since they almost never have questions. But four related ones at the March 18 selectmen's meeting triggered all kinds of neighbor-

hood concerns. Combined, the four involved erecting 18 poles near and along Podunk Road to carry three-phase powerlines for electricity from a Charlton solar array. The objections started almost immediately, with Chris Williams saying she didn't want a pole stuck right in front of her home. Julie Mina said she's concerned the project will involve removing up to 50 trees, which now provide screening from traffic and generally block passing people from seeing the abandoned road behind her house. If they're gone,

she said she's worried that people might venture down there far more often than now. “I wouldn't have built [here] had I known they were going to take down those trees,” she said. She suggested having a road gate, plus a “sound barrier and dust barrier,” and also expressed concern the high-tension wires might be a health risk to her two young children.

Selectman Mary Dowling said she thought the gate was a “reasonable request,” but didn't know whether the board has the authority to order National Grid to install it. Town Administrator Robin Grimm noted that road is public, shared by both the town and state, albeit not maintained. Thus, she said she'd need to check the law to see if Sturbridge can gate it. That “might not be something we could do, even if both parties approved,” she said.

The National Grid spokesmen said they didn't know about health risks and argued a gate would slow emergency response. They said the plan called for erecting all-new poles that will be 38 feet high (taller than the present ones) and designed to carry heavier wires. One of those (at the top, called the tree wire) is not electrified, but designed to catch the weight of falling tree limbs and protect the electrified lines beneath it.

They said the upgrades will improve service to homes in that area, including laterals to them, since “service in that area is not good, not reliable.”

As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, the Bridge of Faith Youth Center re-

Turn To **SCHOTT** page **A14**

SCHOTT donates \$5,000 towards Southbridge Youth Center

SOUTHBRIDGE — SCHOTT, a local glass manufacturer, is committed to supporting surrounding communities through various efforts particularly, programs that foster growth and enrichment for our local youth. This month, SCHOTT generously donated \$5,000 to the local youth organization, Bridge of Faith Youth Center (BOFYC), to support their efforts in “bridging the gap” amongst local middle and high school-aged children in the Southbridge community. The BOFYC's program goal is to provide local youth from sixth to 12th grade, a place where they can have access to the support and resources necessary to experience higher education.

The Bridge of Faith Youth Center is constructing a state-of-the-art facility, only steps away from the SCHOTT North America, Inc. plant. On March 20, SCHOTT colleagues, Vicki Shrewsbury (Director of HR), Doug Reed (Director of Operations), and Brigitte Sterf (Marketing Manager) joined Massachu-



From left to right: Kent Boyle (BOFYC Treasurer), Doug Reed (SCHOTT), Esteban Carrasco Jr. (BOFYC Executive Director) Vicki Shrewsbury (SCHOTT), Yamilka Castillo (BOFYC Secretary), Mass. Senator Ryan Fattman (Worcester and Hampden District) Mass. State Rep Elect John Marsi (6th Worcester District)

Want to learn more about the Bridge of Faith Youth Center? Check out their website at <https://bridgeoffaithyouthcenter.org/>

setts State Senator Ryan Fattman (Worcester and Hampden District) and Massachusetts State Representative Elect John Marsi (6th Worcester District) at the youth center. During this visit, SCHOTT presented Kent Boyle (BOFYC Treasurer), Esteban Carrasco,

Jr. (BOFYC Executive Director), and Yamilka Castillo (BOFYC Secretary), a \$5,000 “Hero Sponsor” level donation to support the organization's efforts. “SCHOTT is very proud to be a part of the Southbridge community

and to support opportunities that will foster stronger community ties and empower the next generation to reach their full potential,” said Shrewsbury. “We are extremely grateful to SCHOTT for their continued invest-

ment in the youth of our community, this gift will have a generational impact,” Carrasco, Executive Director of Bridge of Faith Youth Center.

Charlton celebrates Earth Day April 27

CHARLTON — Charlton residents are invited to help clean up the Town for Earth Day 2024. The roads are strewn with trash, so show your appreciation for the planet by cleaning up a mile (or two!) on Saturday, April 27.

Online registration begins April 1 at <https://www.townofcharlton.net/238/Earth-Day-Committee>. Sign-up for a road, or portion of a road, or sign up in person the morning of the event. Beginning at 8 a.m., road volunteers may pick up yellow bags, gloves, safety vests, boxes of water, and pickers on the Town Common. Supplies courtesy of a grant from The Last Green Valley and from donations from The Charlton Recreation Commission, and sever-

al Earth Fest Planning Group members. A limited supply of pickers is available, one per family/group. Please reuse pickers from previous years if you have them.

The Earth Day Committee urges volunteers to use caution when picking up roadside trash. Use gloves and wear bright clothing or a safety vest. Never open containers containing unknown substances. If you find needles or syringes, contact the Police for disposal; do not touch or place them in bags with other refuse. Citizens can bring the filled bags to the dumpster, donated by Casella Waste, behind Town Hall.

The Charlton Middle School held its annual design contest focused on this year's Earth Day theme, Planet vs. Plastics. Sixth-grader Lia Nguyen created the winning tee shirt design (attached). These tee shirts, which are donated by Millennium Power Company, are available on a first come, first serve basis, one per person.

Charlton will continue its Earth Day celebration with Earth Fest, to be held on the Town Common from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. In case of inclement weather, the Fest will be moved inside to Dexter Hall on the second floor of the Charlton Public Library. A variety of vendors will promote environmentally sustainable lifestyle choices and teach ways to help the earth, its animals, and plants.

Vendors include AnnieMike's Honey, Blessings Farm, the Buffumville Army Corps of Engineers, Capen Hill Nature Sanctuary, Charlton Business Alliance, Charlton Conservation Commission, Charlton Garden Club, Charlton

Heritage Preservation Trust, Cornerstone Bank, Eric's Aviaries, Keep Charlton Beautiful Committee, The Last Green Valley, Local 4 Life, the Opacum Land Trust, Second Chance Mobile Adoption, and the Shepherd Hill Regional High School Envirothon Club.

The Grey Whiskey Pickers and Wormtown Mugwumps, Worcester's premier purveyors of jug band music, will provide live musical entertainment. The event will also feature several food trucks, including No

Coast Kitchen, Timeless Fry & Grill, 3 Kings BBQ, The Toasted Roasters, Suzie Q's Ice Cream, and more.

Volunteers also have an opportunity to win raffle prizes donated by Treehouse Brewery and Cornerstone Bank.

Thanks to the Charlton Recreation Commission, Cornerstone Bank, Millennium Power, and Ted's Package Store for sponsoring this year's event. The Last Green Valley has provided financial support for Charlton's Earth Day Fest.

Town to mail “leak list” notices to residents

BY GUS STEEVES
CORRESPONDENT

STURBRIDGE — After delaying it from the previous meeting, the selectmen voted 4-1 to abate half of a nearly \$3,000 water bill that hit local property owners Sylvie and Miki Baca last fall.

Town Administrator Robin Grimm also said she'd draft a letter to mail to everyone on the water system to inform them of the existence of the “leak list” and urge them to check it regularly to see if their home or business is on it. She noted the next meter reading is April 1, but the letter will go out before the bills do.

Some selectmen noted that might spark a flurry of abatement requests. To even be considered for one, people seeing issues with their bills must contact the town within 10 days of the bills being sent out. Such requests go through the finance department first, but can be appealed to the selectmen acting as water/sewer commissioners.

“It could be a real headache. But we have this and need to fix it,” Chair Jamie Goodwin said.

Later, he also observed, “I don't care how we stop having multiple bills for people on the leak list, but this is not acceptable. Frankly, this is on Veolia because they're the

only ones who knew about the leak list in this present group.”

The issue stemmed from a leak water contractor Veolia's routine meter-reading system picked up at 425 Main St., initially last summer. Veolia superintendent Shane Moody described the “leak list” at the last meeting, noting it has existed for years, but has been used only when customers complain about bills. He wasn't at this meeting.

Mary Blanchard was the sole no vote, saying she didn't see the issue as the town's fault. To her, abatements in general mean “other ratepayers are footing the bill on this” when property owners have some responsibility to maintain their systems.

The other selectmen agreed with that point, but supported abating half the cost (meaning the Bacas will get reimbursed). Mary Lou Volpe said she's concerned about “repercussions for prior people” who were denied abatements, while Mary Dowling noted the town “could have mitigated” the leak “because we had the information.”

Technically, the board observed that Veolia is a “private vendor,” not a town department. It's overseen by the DPW, but they noted this issue predates Director Heather Blakeley's becoming director and told her not to “take ownership” of it.

She noted the “leak list” has 100

properties on it now, although some of them are probably businesses that use water 24 hours a day, and thus not actually leaking. They initially talked about sending the notice with the next bill, but Blakeley said they contract out billing and can only add two lines to it, not a detailed note. But they will be posting the list on the website and updating it often.


As Goodwin put it, the leak list is “complicity. I don't think it's the cause” of this problem. He decried using the list as Veolia has been, rather than “to circumvent our wasting hundreds of thousands of gallons of water. That is problematic, and that is not your [Blakeley's] fault.”

Blakeley said she was “not sure who made that determination” to create and use the leak list this way. But because of the recent concerns, Grimm has had her start reviewing the billing data before mailings with Finance Director Barbara Barry, although “that's never been a DPW duty.” Grimm noted they've been finding “a whole host of errors in inputting and data entry” they didn't know about previously.

That change somewhat riled Goodwin, who said it amounted to setting policy without selectmen's approval.

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

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The Town of Brookfield is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Town Administrator. Responsibilities include professional, administrative, supervisory, and technical work. See job description at brookfieldma.us. Salary commensurate with experience. Current appropriation \$89,989.00

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Friday's Child



Lilyann
Age 14

Hi! My name is Lilyann and I want to be a teacher!

Lily is a creative, energetic, and caring girl. She likes to sing and learn TikTok dances. Lily loves gymnastics. She likes to listen to music and journal. She has a great sense of humor with playful banter. Lily is a leader with a take charge attitude. She's a great advocate for herself and others. She wants to be a teacher in the future.

Lily attends school daily and receives some additional support in school. She is a strong student and does well academically. Lily takes initiative and thrives with one on one attention.

Lily would do well with a family of any constellation who would be able to support a gradual, planful transition. Lily says she would love to have two parents and a younger sibling. She loves animals and would love to have a dog. Lily is of Caucasian descent. Lily would do well with experienced parents who can provide a supportive, consistent structure. She would like to maintain contact with her former foster mother. She has contact with two younger siblings, as well as phone contact and occasional visits with her father, who resides out of state.


<https://adopt.mareinc.org/waiting-child-profiles#gallery/child/8795>

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.



Southbridge Senior Citizens Association announces bus trip to Hart's Turkey Farm

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Senior Citizens Association, based at the Casaubon Senior Center, 153 Chestnut Street in Southbridge is pleased to announce that it is accepting reservations for its trip to Hart's Turkey Farm restaurant in Meredith, New Hampshire.

The bus trip will be held on Saturday, Aug. 24. The trip will depart from the St. Joseph's Church parking lot at 10 H Putnam Rd. Extension at 7:30 a.m. bound for Hart's Turkey Farm, located in Meredith, New Hampshire. Once there, trip goers will have a choice of Turkey, Roast Beef or Broiled Haddock. After enjoying a delicious meal, the bus will depart for Wolfeboro, New Hampshire to visit the Wright World War II Museum. At the museum travelers will enjoy a self-guided tour including exhibits of aircraft, tanks and everyday life during the war years. Once our visit to the museum is completed, we will board our motor coach for the return trip home. We expect to arrive in Charlton around 7:30 p.m.

The price for the trip is \$119. Seats may be reserved by filling out a reservation form available at the Casaubon Senior Center or by requesting a form at southbridgeseniorcitizens@yahoo.com and submitting a \$25 per person deposit in person or by mail to the Casaubon Senior Center, 153 Chestnut St., Southbridge, MA 01550. Checks are to be made payable to: And Away We Go Travel. Final payments are due no later than July 24. For questions regarding the trip you may call John at 774-230-6472. Come enjoy a beautiful day with your friends!

PEPIN

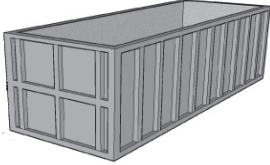
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Don't fall victim to scammers claiming affiliation with Sheriff's Office

REGION — Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis is issuing a warning to residents regarding a recent phone scam involving the Sheriff's Office. The phone scammer poses as an employee of the Sheriff's Office and informs the victim that they have an arrest warrant or charges filed in their name or that of a loved one. The scammer then demands payment of a fine to avoid being arrested and serving jail time.

Another common phone scam involves telling individuals they have missed jury duty, which also results in a fine.

"Unfortunately, we recently received a report of an individual who was scammed out of over \$20,000," commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. "With the amount of information sharing and readily available data on consumer habits, scammers may know where you bank, the products you buy, or the names of your loved ones. Scam artists will go to any length to trick you into sharing personal information or issuing irreversible payments."

According to the Federal

Communications Commission, or FCC, this type of scam is called spoofing. Spoofing is when a scammer deliberately falsifies the information transmitted to your caller ID display to disguise their identity. Scammers often use neighbor spoofing so it appears that an incoming call is coming from a local number or spoof a number from a company or a government agency that you may already know and trust.

In the case of the Sheriff's Office scam, the scammers use the names of actual officers and "spoof" the department's phone number. The

scammer asks for money to clear up a non-existent warrant. In some instances, the caller requests that payments be made in the form of gift certificates or via apps such as Venmo or Cash App. The scammer will then have the victim remain on the line until the victim purchases the gift certificates or relays specific financial information to the scammer.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office encourages people to be aware of calls like this and to never give personal or financial information over the phone to anyone whom you didn't call yourself.

"Our department does not contact residents and demand payment or ask for credit card information. Today's scam artists are always testing new tactics. Residents need to be aware of any unsolicited calls that ask for their personal or financial information," commented Evangelidis. "These callers can sound convincing, may be aggressive, and try to intimidate you with threats of jail time or steep fines. We encourage anyone who gets a suspicious call to hang up and contact their associated institutions directly to verify any requests."

QCC offers free tax return assistance through VITA program

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College is once again offering free tax assistance through the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. Certified volunteers and trained QCC students will assist with preparing tax returns for people who make \$60,000 or less and people with limited English language skills. The VITA program provides services primarily at the Main South Community Development Corporation and also offers workshops at QCC's main campus in Worcester and the QCC at Southbridge location.

"Everyone should know how to do their own taxes. This program helps us get to know where our money is going and why," said Mohamed Kanafani, a student in the Business Administration Transfer program at QCC.

"This is a good resource, especially for low-income families," said Business Administration Transfer student Nahum Echevarria, adding, "Sometimes when you're done, clients are really grateful and you get to see their smile and gratitude."

Elizabeth Coffey, another Business Administration Transfer student, noted that clients speak a variety of languages and the VITA program has an advantage over other tax establishments

in that many volunteers can translate during the tax preparation process. Coffey speaks Spanish, Echevarria speaks Spanish and Portuguese and Kanafani speaks Arabic.

QCC has been involved with the VITA program since 2018, thanks to the work of QCC Assistant Professor of Accounting Eduardo Rivas.

"Students learn about taxes, but also other skills that they can put on their resume," Rivas said.

Anna Kessler, a biology student, noted that the program has helped her learn how to work with people and remain empathetic yet professional during difficult conversations.

New to the program this year is a tax-specific platform, which allows for the entire process to be done remotely. According to Rivas, remote options were previously available but piecemealed together, whereas the new platform seamlessly allows for fully remote service including the signing and uploading of documents as well as remote communication.

QCC's VITA services are offered through April 12. For more information visit www.qcc.edu/services/income-tax-assistance or email Eduardo Rivas at erivas@qcc.mass.edu.

SOUTHBRIDGE POLICE LOG

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of March 18-25.

Sean Moodie, age 39, of Southbridge was arrested on March 18 in connection with a warrant.

Jessica M. Powers, age 42, of Southbridge was arrested on March 21 for Possession of a Class B Drug. Ryan Fortier, age 29, of Southbridge was arrested during the same incident for Distribution of a Class B Drug (subsequent offense) and in connection with a warrant.

A 21-year-old male from Southbridge was issued a summons in lieu of arrest on March 21 for Larceny From a Person over the age of 65 and Larceny of an amount less than \$1,200 By False Pretense.

Destyne Ellen McKeon, age 35, of Oxford was arrested on March 22 for Shoplifting By Concealing Merchandise.

A 26-year-old female from Worcester was issued a summons in lieu of arrest on March 22 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of license and a Motor Vehicle Lights Violation.

A 42-year-old male from Southbridge was issued a summons in lieu of arrest on March 22 for Leaving the Scene of Property Damage and a Marked Lanes Violation.

A 31-year-old male from Southbridge was taken into protective custody on March 22 for Domestic Assault and Battery, Assault on a police officer, Resisting Arrest, and Disorderly Conduct.

Iniajia Shaila Louise Johnson, age 21, of Southbridge was arrested on March 23 in connection with a warrant.

Reinaldo Rosado Ortiz, age 41, of Southbridge was arrested on March 24 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle.

Isaias Velasco, Jr., age 23, of Southbridge was arrested on March 24 for Disorderly Conduct and Interfering with a police Officer. Donnovin Michael Aviles, age 19, of Southbridge was arrested during the same incident for Carrying a Firearm Without a License, Possession of Ammunition Without an FID Card, and Possession of a Large Capacity Feeding Device.

Highway Superintendent:

The Town of Brookfield is seeking an experienced full-time Highway Superintendent. Full job description at brookfieldma.us. Please submit resume and cover letter to selectmen@brookfieldma.us. Application review will begin after March 28th. Resumes accepted until position is filled. Brookfield is an equal opportunity employer

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PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR

The Town of Brookfield is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Principal Assessor. Responsibilities include professional, administrative, supervisory, and technical work related to the enforcement and interpretation of Department of Revenue regulations as pertaining to property tax assessment and abatement; valuation of real and personal property; analysis of deeds, plans of land ownership information and other data. Administers Chapter 61, conducts field inspections, measures buildings, reviews market data and inspects interiors of structures to determine value. Qualified applicants should have experience in municipal assessing. Candidates should have Massachusetts Accredited Assessors (MAA) certification or the ability to obtain certification. Preference will be shown to applicants proficient in Vadar, GIS, Patriot and Microsoft Office. Applicants must have a valid motor vehicle operator's license and must pass a CORI check. Hours are Monday - Thursday (36 hrs.) Salary commensurate with experience. Current appropriation \$59,563.87. Please submit a resume and cover letter to Pking@brookfieldma.us. Open until filled.

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KIDS PROGRAMS
SPRING STORYTIMES
- Tuesdays and Fridays at 10:45am. April 2 through June 14th (except for April 16, 19, and May 7). Drop in for stories, songs, rhymes, and a craft! Children must be accompanied by an adult caregiver. No registration required.

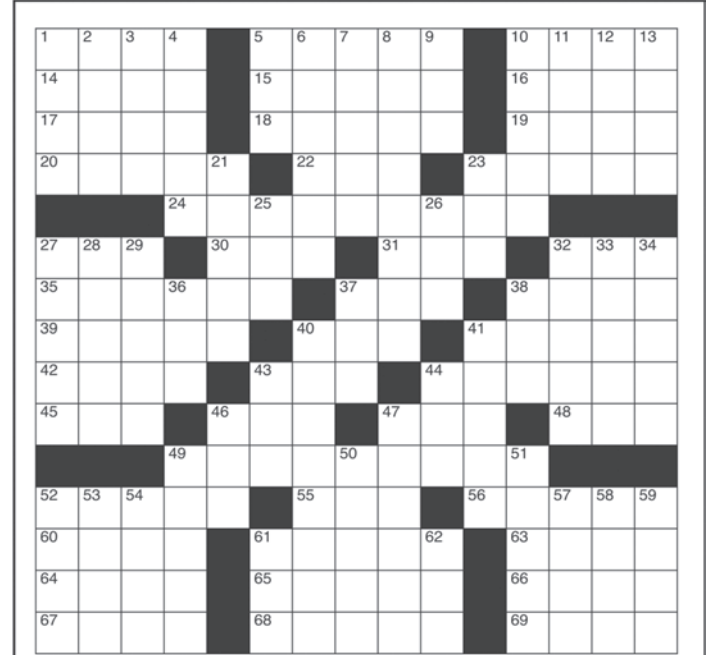
SCHOOL VACATION WEEK - Monday, April 15 through April 19.
Tuesday, April 16 at 10:30am - BUILDWAVE - a STEM workshop for kids. For ages 5+ with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.
Thursday, April 18 at 2:00pm - DIY SPA KIT with The Burncoat Center for

Arts and Wellness. For ages 8-12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.
Friday, April 19 at 11:00am - SING & SWING with Deb Hudgins. For children infant through 6 years with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.
Thursday, April 25 at 6:00pm - LEGO CLUB. Ages 5-12 with an adult caregiver. Registration is required.
ALL AGES PROGRAM
Monday, April 8 at 2:45pm - SOLAR ECLIPSE GATHERING. Join us on the Common to watch the solar eclipse. Solar eclipse glasses will be available while supplies last. No registration required.
TEEN & ADULT PROGRAMS
Tuesday, April 9th at 4:15pm on Zoom*. DATA ART. Meet artist and scientist Jill Pelto. She uses watercolors to tell stories about science data. Registration is required and you may watch the program on your own or at the Sturbridge Senior Center (located at the Federated Church) with others.
Saturday, April 27 at 1:00pm - 3D FELTED SCULPTURE presented by Pop up Art School. In this beginner's class, you will learn how to use a barbed needle and merino wool roving to create a cute otter. Needle felting is fun, easy and relaxing. For ages 13+. Registration is required.
Tuesday, April 30 from 3:00pm to 6:00pm - COMMUNITY PUZZLE SWAP. Love puzzles? Come share. Donate beforehand or on the day of the swap. Bring your own, take one home. Puzzles of all sizes. In addition, tables will be set up to work cooperatively during this time.
BOOK GROUPS
Afternoon Book Group ~ Exploring the Importance of Place - Tuesday, April 9 at 1:00pm - This month's book is "CROW MARY" by Kath-

leen Grissom. No registration required.
Archives - Travelers Book Group ~ Challenging Boundaries - Wednesday, April 17 at 6:30pm - This month's book is "THE DUTCH HOUSE" by Ann Patchett. No registration required.
World Building Book Group ~ a book group for lovers of science fiction and fantasy - Tuesday, April 23 at 6:30pm. This month's book is "SLEEPING GIANTS" by Sylvain Neuvel. No registration required.

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- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Excessively theatrical actors
 - 5. Footwear
 - 10. A way to disfigure
 - 14. Exchange rate
 - 15. Hawaiian wreaths
 - 16. North-central Indian city
 - 17. Bungle
 - 18. Extremely angry
 - 19. A short note of what's owed
 - 20. Criminal organization
 - 22. Mimic
 - 23. Try to grab
 - 24. U.S.-born individuals
 - 27. Some are covert
 - 30. Order of the British Empire
 - 31. Don't know when yet
 - 32. Payment (abbr.)
 - 35. Winged angelic being
 - 37. Variety of Chinese
 - 38. A way to be anxious
 - 39. Famed wrestler Hulk
 - 40. Partner to cheese
 - 41. Slang for sergeant
 - 42. Canadian flyers
 - 43. Actress Ryan
 - 44. Highly unpleasant vapor
 - 45. Body part
 - 46. Halfway
 - 47. Cool!
 - 48. Consume
 - 49. Salts
 - 52. Upper bract of a floret of grass
 - 55. Housepet
 - 56. Cavalry-sword
 - 60. Symbol of a nation
 - 61. Frocks
 - 63. Used to carry food
 - 64. Portuguese folk song
 - 65. Sharp mountain ridge
 - 66. Ireland
 - 67. Where golfers begin
 - 68. Greek mythological sorceress
 - 69. Fluid suspensions

- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. "Mad Men" leading man
 - 2. Water (Spanish)
 - 3. Annoy
 - 4. Bulgarian capital
 - 5. Japanese title
 - 6. Capital of Zimbabwe
 - 7. Giraffe
 - 8. A mixture of substances
 - 9. Midway between south and southeast
 - 10. Staffs
 - 11. Turkish title
 - 12. Type of acid
 - 13. Thin, flat strip of wood
 - 21. Russian river
 - 23. Ribonucleic acid
 - 25. Partner to flow
 - 26. Airborne (abbr.)
 - 27. Earthy pigment
 - 28. Genus of earless seals
 - 29. "Key to the Highway" bluesman
 - 32. By or in itself
 - 33. Hot fluid below the earth's surface
 - 34. Partner to trick
 - 36. British Air Aces
 - 37. Ammunition
 - 38. Supervises flying
 - 40. Health care for the aged
 - 41. Flanks
 - 43. Millimeters
 - 44. Where wrestlers perform
 - 46. Not around
 - 47. Flightless bird
 - 49. Bell-shaped flowers of the lily family
 - 50. Expressed concern for
 - 51. Satisfies
 - 52. Flew off!
 - 53. Wings
 - 54. Load a ship
 - 57. Vigor
 - 58. British title
 - 59. Whiskeys
 - 61. Adams: founding father
 - 62. Body of water

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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T	N	V	W		S	E	O	H	S		S	W	V	H

REAL ESTATE

BRIMFIELD

\$320,000, 1494 Dunhamtown Brimfield Rd, Aikey, Scott C, and Aikey, Debra A, to Ja Property Group LLC.

CHARLTON

\$715,000, 124 Oxford Rd #122B, T Reardon Builders Inc, to Ricard, Jeffrey A, and Ricard, Meredith.
\$241,000, 40 Carroll Hill Rd, Butler, Patricia A, and Bank Of America Na, to Scribner Development LLC.
\$150,000, Carroll Hill Rd #5, Gunter LLC, to Doherty, Kellan P.
\$130,000, E Baylies Rd #2, Meagher, Katherine G, and Meagher, Charles F, to Kennedy, Tom, and Williams, Sarah.

HOLLAND

None

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\$333,500, 45 Sunny Hill Dr, Helliwell, John A, to Santiago, Isaías, and Desmarais, Genevieve.
\$255,000, 328 Worcester St, Scudder Bay Capital LLC, to Chamberland, Derek C.

STURBRIDGE

\$735,000, 13 Meadow View Ln, Blodgett, William A, and Blodgett, Susan F, to Singh, Bablesh, and Bhadwal, Savita.
\$715,000, 118 Leadmine Ln, Kellaher, Gary F, and Kellaher, Sherry L, to Carlson, David S.
\$715,000, 98 Gladding Ln, Paquin, Teresa, to Kellaher, Gary F, and Kellaher, Sherry L.
\$470,000, 170 Shepard Rd, Gaboury Robert L Est, and Stevens, Rose M, to Destefano Jr, Daniel, and Destefano Sr, Daniel.
\$225,000, 505 Main St, Bounphasaysonh, Jenny, to Stl505 LLC.

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Tel 508/764-6365; Worship 10:00 A.M.
- **Charlton Federated Church**, 64 Main St., 248-5550, Sunday worship 10:30 a.m.
www.fedchurchcharlton.org
- **Charlton Baptist Church**, 50 Hammond Hill Road, 248-4488, www.charltonbaptist.org, Sunday worship 10 a.m.
- **Charlton City United Methodist**, 74 Stafford St. 248-7379, web site: CharltonCityUMC.org
Sunday worship and Children's church 10am
- **St. Anne St. Patrick Church**, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (508) 347-7338
www.stannestpatparish.com
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
- **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.
- **Hope Christian Fellowship**, 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
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FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2023-2024

Households will be notified of there children's eligibility for free or reduce meals if they are members of the household's receiving assistance from the:
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Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); or
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) if the State program meets Federal standards.

Households will be notified of any child's eligibility for free meals if the individual child

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2023-2024						
	Maximum Household Income Eligible for Free Meals			Maximum Household Income Eligible for Reduced Price Meals		
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$18,954	\$1,580	\$365	\$26,973	\$2,248	\$519
2	25,636	2,137	493	36,482	3,041	702
3	32,318	2,694	622	45,991	3,833	885
4	39,000	3,250	750	55,500	4,625	1,068
5	45,682	3,807	879	65,009	5,418	1,251
6	52,364	4,364	1,007	74,518	6,210	1,434
7	59,046	4,921	1,136	84,027	7,003	1,616
8	65,728	5,478	1,264	93,536	7,795	1,799
Each additional person:	+6,682	+557	+129	+9,509	+793	+183

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If children or households receive benefits under Assistance Programs or Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs and are not listed on the notice of eligibility and are not notified by the school of their free or reduced mal benefits, the parents or guardian should contact the school or should submit an income application. Household notified of their children's eligibility must contact the LEA or school if the household chooses to decline the free and reduced benefits.
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address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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2. fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email:
program.intake@usda.gov

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Opacum Land Trust to hold Annual Meeting breakfast

PALMER — Are you interested in outdoor recreational access and protecting land, water, and wildlife for current and future generations? We invite you to join your Central Massachusetts land conservation organization, Opacum Land Trust, for the Annual Meeting Breakfast at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 27 at Pathfinder Regional Technical High School, Panek St, Palmer. Come and enjoy a hot complimentary breakfast and learn about how you can make a difference this Earth Month with Opacum Land Trust. Hear about what is happening locally to protect local land, water, and wildlife, and learn about what Opacum Land Trust has in store for 2024 and updates on current projects. There will be a 50/50 raffle, Opacum merchandise, and information about land conservation in your local community at the breakfast.
At noon, we will lead a walk with Opacum Directors at the Jean M. Booker Conservation Area on Hovey Rd, Monson. You can learn about forestry, reading

the landscape, the history of our New England landscapes, and more on this naturalist led walk.
REMEMBER TO RSVP – Please RSVP by April 18. You can RSVP online at www.opacumlt.org/events/2024-annual-meeting-breakfast/, by scanning the QR code below or call the Opacum Land Trust office at (508) 347 – 9144.
Opacum Land Trust is a regional, non-profit land conservation organization protecting land for wildlife, forestry, farming, water, and outdoor recreation. We work in a 13-town region stretching from eastern Hampden Country and southwestern Worcester County in the towns between Monson and Charlton. Founded in 2000, Opacum currently protects over 2,200 acres of land and is actively working to protect more land across the service area. Reach out to us at Opacum Land Trust, PO Box 233, Sturbridge, MA 01566; 508-347-9144, and visit the website for news and events at www.OpacumLT.org

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EDITORIAL

The origins of the Easter Bunny

The Easter Bunny will be getting a workout this season, as the newly fallen deep snow in some parts of New England may make for some difficult travel. But alas, with baskets filled with colorful eggs and chocolates, this beloved character has been a part of Easter celebrations worldwide. Where does this tradition stem from?

The legend of the Easter Bunny traces its roots back centuries, intertwining folklore, mythology, and religious symbolism. While its precise origins are a bit of a mystery, various theories and cultural influences have contributed to the emergence of this cherished icon.

One prevailing theory suggests that the Easter Bunny's lineage can be traced back to ancient pagan rituals celebrating spring and fertility. In pre-Christian Europe, the hare was revered as a symbol of fertility and new life, representing the arrival of spring after the barrenness of winter. As Christianity spread across the continent, pagan customs melded with Christian traditions, giving rise to a hybridized celebration that incorporated elements of both.

Another theory proposes that the Easter Bunny found its way into Christian festivities through German immigrants who settled in America during the 18th century. In German folklore, the "Osterhase" or Easter Hare, was believed to lay colorful eggs as gifts for children who had been good. This tradition evolved over time, with the hare eventually morphing into the familiar bunny we know today, and eggs becoming synonymous with Easter.

Furthermore, the association of rabbits with Easter can also be attributed to their prolific breeding habits, symbolizing fertility, abundance, and the cycle of life. This symbolism aligns seamlessly with the Easter narrative of rebirth and resurrection, making the bunny a fitting emblem for the holiday.

Whether nestled in the pages of children's books, adorning decorations, or delighting young hearts during egg hunts, the Easter Bunny continues to evoke a sense of wonder and joy.

Letter submission policy

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

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

OPINION

Thrift revival

BEYOND THE PEWS
.....
By REV. JOHN H.D. LUCY

CHARLTON CITY UMC


Everyone has been squeezed by inflation. Prices are up but income, for most, remains flat, whether we're on social security or still earning a wage. Once you pay for housing and food, if you can, what money is left?

And you can't walk out the door naked. You still need to clothe yourself. \$100 lululemon sweatpants are probably out of the question. Where to shop, then?

Good thing that thrift stores and thrifting are on the rise. Seventy-five percent of all U.S. consumers are willing to or prefer to shop at thrift stores; for millennials, at the bottom of the wage pool, the percentage rises to 83 percent. Thrifting is not only becoming necessary because of our wallets, it is also good for the environment, as I've written about before (2,000 gallons used in the creation of a single pair of jeans, for instance, not to mention the energy and chemicals).

Further good news that Charlton City UMC at 74 Stafford Street boasts of one of the best thrift stores in the area, and it opens for the season April 19. Starting April 19, we'll be open Fridays and Saturdays,

Time for financial spring cleaning?



FINANCIAL FOCUS
TREVOR NIELSEN

Spring is almost here, which means it's time for some spring cleaning. This year, in addition to tidying your home and surroundings, you might want to consider sprucing up your financial environment, as well.

Here are some suggestions for doing just that:

Improve your vision. Once the days are warmer and longer, you may want to get outside and clean all the winter grime and smudges from your windows, allowing you to see the world more clearly. And you may want to bring more focus to your financial vision by asking some key questions: Is my investment strategy still appropriate for my needs, goals, and family situation? If not, what changes should I make? And am I prepared for changes in my life, such as health challenges or a need to retire earlier than planned? The answers to these and other questions can help you clarify where you are, in terms of your financial picture, and where you want to go.

De-clutter. As you look around your home, you may find things such as expired health care products, old prescriptions, ancient cleaning solutions, and so on, in addition to duplicate household items (how many blenders do you really need?) and non-working equipment — printers, laptops, etc. Most people find that eliminating this clutter gives them a good feeling — and more livable space. As an investor, you can also find clutter in the form of redundant investments — for example, you might own several nearly identical mutual funds. You might be better off selling some of these funds and using the proceeds to find new investments that can help you further diversify your portfolio. As you may know, diversification is a key to investment success, but keep in mind that it can't prevent all losses.

Plant seeds of opportunity. Whether they're planting camellias and crocuses or carrots and cilantro, gardeners are busy in the spring, hoping their efforts result in lovely flowers and tasty foods. And when you invest, you, too, need to plant seeds of opportunity in the form of investments that you hope will grow enough to enable you to make progress toward your goals. So, you may want to review your portfolio to ensure it's providing this growth potential, given your individual risk tolerance.

Reduce dangers. You may not think about it that much, but your home and surroundings can contain potential hazards. You might have ill-fitting caps on cleaning products with toxic chemicals, or sharp cutting instruments protruding from shelves in your garage, or heavy, cracked tree branches hovering close to your roof. Spending some time on a spring-cleaning sweep can get rid of these dangers — and devoting time to consider the possible threats to your financial security, and those of your family, can pay off, too. For starters, review your life insurance to determine if you've got enough. Your employer may offer some coverage as an employee benefit, but it might not be sufficient, so you may need private coverage. And the same is true for disability insurance, because if something were to happen to you, and you couldn't work for a while, you'd still want to protect your family's lifestyle.

Spring is a great time for brightening your physical space — and your financial one, too.

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

Suicide – the whispered epidemic

BY DR. RB MCFEE

Did you know the theme song to the movie and television show "M*A*S*H" was titled "Suicide is Painless?"

I can assure you as a physician, suicide is anything but "painless." Any doubt, ask the ones who survived the gunshot blast, the poisoning, the other instruments of self harm. And for the ones who did die from suicide, the pain never fully leaves the ones left behind. Trust me, suicide is not painless. But like the title to MASH theme song, sadly remains largely invisible. It is a stealth pandemic.

And like so many clinical situations, there isn't one simple test or treatment for this complex, deadly challenge. While the outcomes are the same — death, disability, loss and grief, the causes and interventions are varied.

Consider the following information from the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)1

In Massachusetts, suicide is the	2nd leading cause of death for ages
10-24	2nd leading cause of death for ages
25-34	4th leading cause of death for ages
35-44	6th leading cause of death for ages
45-54	10th leading cause of death for ages
55-64	19th leading cause of death for ages
65+	

The statistics for veteran suicides are no less encouraging.

According to various mental, mental health and suicide prevention organizations, the need for greater awareness, opportunities for dialogue, places for support, counseling and therapeutic interventions are at a critical juncture. How could it be otherwise when people who otherwise are in their peak of health succumb to self inflicted harm?

Think about it...the second leading cause of death for young adults is suicide.

From the time I started an adolescent practice in New York over 20 years ago, to today suicide remains a leading cause of death afflicting teens.

Some might argue the suicide rates are worse than ever before, and in certain groups they would be right.

What are we missing?

As a child I remember my aunts whispering the word "cancer" when talking about a family member who recently died. I asked my grandmother why the whispering. I ask myself today why when talking about the cause of death of a loved one we still whisper the word "suicide?"

We've come a long way since then; "cancer" is no longer whispered, and significant progress has been made. The public was engaged, preventive and protective strategies were pursued, money raised, research increased and therapies developed. The same can be achieved with suicide.

Thrifting

9 a.m. to 2 p. m. We are excited to once again serve the community in this tangibly meaningful way.

You may have expected me to write about Holy Week and Easter; as that is what time of year it is. But I am reminded, by our serving the homeless in Worcester on Easter day, rather than going home to our own private celebrations, that the most important thing we do as a church is to live the good news. Talking about how good God is pales in comparison to living God's goodness. And we certainly hope we are doing that by helping our community stay clothed affordably.

We'll see you April 19!

Suicide – the whispered epidemic

Sadly, the stigma of mental illness remains. It, too, in many ways is the whispered epidemic. But it is that denial and subsequent need for greater awareness of, participation in prevention strategies, availability of trained professionals and opportunities to reach out and help those who are at risk, that contributes to the problem.

How can we do better? After all, we're all in this together.

For starters, treat suicide as any other largely preventable disease. We don't need another high profile event to tell us what we know — that kids, teens, young adults and even the elderly are dying from self inflicted methods.

And, as one of the leading causes of preventable death for virtually all age groups, with rising rates and suicide attempts even in the elderly, clearly we need to stop whispering the word!

Although there is no one size fits all approach, there are ways we all can make a difference.

In addition to increasing the availability of and access to mental health services, is the underutilized but important role of protective factors.

Each of us can become a safe place. We can volunteer or share our expertise with organizations working to provide greater services.

We can be good to ourselves and others.

For example, bullying is a known contributing factor to suicidal ideation. Let's stop treating it as a right of passage, let's stop the denials ("not my child"); let's stop exhorting the victims to toughen up, and let's get involved in curtailing the physical and online bullying. One way is taking a greater interest in what your children are experiencing in their cyber world.

And we can encourage seeking help — whether mental health counseling, speaking with clergy, getting help from primary care.

There is a suicide help line in addition to general emergency numbers....

Emergency Phone Numbers
988 Suicide Help
911 General Emergency Help

Here are some common ingredients in the deadly internal mix that leads one to a dark place:

- Feeling alone
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling like he or she doesn't matter
- Feeling like there is no point or purpose to their life
- Shame/Guilt

If someone you know has mentioned, talked about or worries you concerning suicide or self harm, be a friend, save their life, help them get help.

We can take suicide from the whispered epidemic to one that is openly discussed. Thankfully there are increasing numbers of groups from musicians collaborating with mental



TAKE
THE
HINT

KAREN
TRAINOR

Spring has sprung and gardening season is around the corner! As all home growers know, it takes careful planning and many hours of labor to produce a bountiful garden. While nearly every successful gardener has their own special tricks to ensure a productive crop, the novice planter may need a helping hand to nudge green sprouts from uncooperative soil. If that's the case, the following tips culled from various "green thumbed" sources, including previously published tips from readers, may just be all you need to make this the most successful gardening season yet.

The addition of peat moss is necessary to keep window boxes and other container gardens properly watered. But, if you are not wetting down the peat moss before adding it to the soil, you may be

doing your garden more harm than good. Peat moss must be moistened before it is used in potting mixes. When dry, the substance actually repels water! Here's how to pretreat it: If you want to wet a full bag of peat moss, poke several holes in the bottom of the bag and open the top. Then pour water slowly into the top of the bag until it seeps out of the bottom holes. Push on the bag and knead it to ensure the peat is getting saturated. To test, scoop out a handful of peat moss and squeeze it. If you can squeeze water out, it is ready to use. If not, keep wetting until you can.

Here's an easy test to gauge if your garden soil is ready to plant. Simply scoop up a handful of dirt and squeeze it into a ball. If the ball crumbles when you release your fingers, the soil is all set for digging. If the ball sticks together, the soil is still to wet to work.

Flower bulbs are now

plentiful at large garden centers. But, bulbs sold at such places are a bargain only if you know how to avoid poor quality bulbs. Here are some tips:

- * Bulbs should feel solid and heavy. If they are light, they may be dried out.
- * Avoid bulbs with discolored, dark or moldy spots.
- * Make sure there are no holes or other signs of insect damage on bulbs.
- * Pick over bulbs that have sprouted; it is better if they grow roots first.

Color Tip: Garden designers recommend most flower gardens have a splash of red. The bright color acts as a stunning accent when planted in a clump among white flowers and thick greenery!

Farmer's Planting Timetables

Our forefathers took great pains to plant crops at the precise time of year to promote a bountiful crop. With this in mind, below is this column's annual reminder

of some interesting "old farmer's tales" that indicate when it is time to plant garden vegetables:

Lilac's Bloom: When the lilacs have their first leaves it is time to plant cool-weather crops such as peas, lettuce, and onions. When the lilac flowers are in full bloom, it's safe to plant tender crops such as tomatoes and corn.

Native American's Rule: The American Indians passed this reliable tip on to European colonists, and many farmers still rely on it today. Tender crops should not be planted until the leaves on an oak tree are as big as a squirrel's ear (about an inch or so long).

Moon Signs: Many natural gardeners plant successfully by the phases of the moon. Here's how: Between the new moon and the first quarter: sow or transplant leafy plants and those that bear seeds on the outside of the fruit, such

as strawberries. Between the first quarter and the full moon: plant crops whose seeds develop inside the fruit, such as tomatoes, peas, beans and squash. From the full moon to the last quarter: plant root vegetables. Never plant from the last quarter to the new moon.

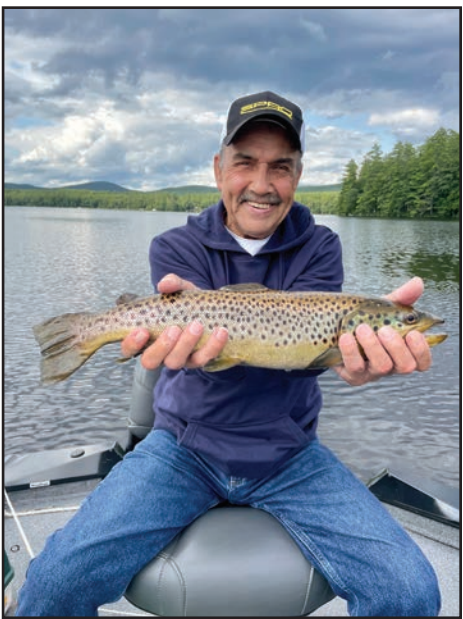
Win Dinner for Two at the Publihc House

Your tips can win you a great dinner for two at the historic Publihc House Historic Inn in Sturbridge! Simply send in a hint to be entered into a random drawing. One winner per month will win a fabulous three course dinner for two at the renowned restaurant, located on Route 131 across the town common in historic

Sturbridge. Because I'm in the business of dispensing tips, not inventing them (although I can take credit for some), I'm counting on you readers out there to share your best helpful hints!

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

Trout season produces impressive fish

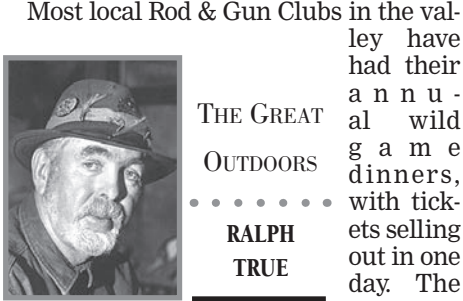


Don Cook with a nice brown trout caught last weekend at Lousia Lake.

Trout fishing is producing some impressive fish in Mass. waters, with some impressive rainbow trout being caught at various ponds and lakes in the valley. Mass. has pretty much stocked all ponds and lakes in the valley at least once, and trout will continue to be stocked up to Memorial Day weekend. Because of the high water from recent heavy rain, streams and rivers may not be stocked until waters recede. Many anglers are smoking the trout that they catch.

The Uxbridge Rod & Gun Club will open their pond for the April trout fishing derby on April 13, for members only. The pond will receive another huge trout stocking prior to the derby. The derby will start at 7 a.m., and will end at 10 p.m. Cash prizes will be awarded for the largest trout.

Trout fishing anglers need to be reminded again that Wallum Lake in Douglas is closed to all fishing until April 13, as the lake is controlled by Rhode Island regulations. When Wallum Lake opens, the trout limits are six fish per day. To check on all regulations, go to the Web site at Rhode Island freshwaterfishing.com.



THE GREAT
OUTDOORS

RALPH
TRUE

Whitinsville Fish & Game club will be holding their pistol & clay shoots every Wed at 6 p.m., and they are open to the public. Check out their newly renovated ranges.

This past week, I was driving down the road on Route 16 near my house when a large rabbit was spotted crossing the road, and it was very large, but what made him stand out was the huge ears he was sporting. It was the size of a large snowshoe hare, but it definitely was not a hare. I had one in my backyard last year. Now, there are a lot of rabbits throughout the valley area, but these do not have all the features of the standard New England cottontail rabbits we are used to seeing.

The Eastern cottontail rabbits are also located in New England, and have many of the same features of a New England cottontail. Whatever they are, they raised havoc with my vegetable garden and with my flower bed last year, prompting me to fence off the garden this year.

Bear are coming out of hibernation, and sightings are being reported by homeowners throughout the valley that have bird feeders out. They are the number one food source they enjoy eating.

Take A Kid Fishing & Keep Them Rods Bending!

Evoke positive emotions by adding Pantone Color of the Year to your garden



Heat and drought-tolerant Celosia Celway™ Salmon has spiky blooms atop 40- to 48-inch stems.

Add a warm, cozy feel to this year's gardens with the 2024 Pantone Color of the Year, Peach Fuzz. It was selected for generating a feeling of kindness and tenderness and encouraging sharing, community, and collaboration. Consider including this color in your garden to convey these emotions or as a good excuse to add more plants to your landscape. This is the 25th year the Pantone Color Institute has

selected a color that reflects the spirit of the times. These are colors you are likely to see in home furnishings, advertisements, and even our landscapes. Peach Fuzz lies somewhere between pink and salmon. Many garden plants have flowers that fit into this color spectrum and can be used in containers and garden beds.

Dianthus Vivacia® Orange is hardy to zone 7a, but can be used as an annual in colder areas. The large double flowers top 10- to 16-inch-tall plants and are showy during the cooler months of the growing season. They combine nicely with other flowers and their sturdy stems make them suitable for cutting.

SuperTrouper® Orange Dianthus has similar colored flowers that are about 20% smaller. It is hardy in zones 5 to 9 and has a spicy fragrance.

Celosia Celway™ Salmon has the same heat and drought tolerance as other celosias. The spiky blooms are held atop 40- to 48-inch stems, making them great additions to the middle or back of the border.

If you love salvias, you can



GARDEN
MOMENTS

MELINDA
MYERS

find a variety of peachy-colored blossoms. These plants tend to be deer-resistant and hummingbird magnets. Just check the plant tag for more specific information on the mature size and hardiness.

Luxury Lace daylily has subtly fragrant star-shaped flowers. Hardy in zones four to eight it has the same low maintenance requirements as other daylilies. Just water thoroughly when needed.

Geum 'Mai Tai' has vermilion red flowers that fade to a peachy pink early in the season. The 18-inch-tall burgundy stems are a nice contrast to the flowers. Grow it in full sun with moist soil in zones five to seven.

Last but certainly not least is threadleaf coreopsis 'Crème Caramel' (Coreopsis verticillata 'Crème Caramel').

Treat yourself like a million-dollar racehorse

Growing up, my dad was a huge fan of Zig Ziglar, filling our home with the sound of his motivational speeches. One story that always stuck with me was the story about a million dollar racehorse.

Ziglar poses a thought-provoking question: "If you did have a million-dollar racehorse, would you let him stay up half the night drinking coffee and booze, smoking cigarettes, and eating junk food?" Of course, you wouldn't! He then extends the analogy, asking, "Would you treat a \$10 dog or a \$5 cat that way? What about a billion-dollar body?"

The point he's trying to make is clear: You are that billion-dollar body. You may not feel like a Billion Dollars but nobody is going to bring you the life you want except yourself. It's true that you're the best investment your money can buy. You must invest in yourself to get far in life, but it takes work. Investing in yourself takes time, patience, and sacrifice.

This investment concept extends beyond the racetrack to the broader market of our personal development, where the stakes are high, and the returns on investment can be life-changing.

Consider your personal development as a portfolio. Diversification is key to any sound investment strategy. Similarly, investing in oneself encompasses various aspects: physical health, mental well-being, emotional strength, and intellectual growth.

It requires consistent effort. Whether it's committing to a regular workout

routine at the gym, attending night classes to further our education, or seeking therapy to address underlying issues, each action signifies an investment in our well-being and future success.

Through the years, I eventually started to think of myself as an investment in my future, and I thought a lot about bad habits. Just like savvy investors review and adjust their portfolios to optimize performance, we must periodically assess our habits, routines, and choices.

While we may know on an intellectual level that we need to take care of ourselves to accomplish our dreams and be healthy, it's not easy, and bad habits are hard to kick. Very few of us can kick a bad habit Cold Turkey.

Bad habits, in this analogy, are like underperforming assets. They drag down our overall portfolio's value—our life's potential and well-being. Just as an investor wouldn't hold onto a stock plummeting in value without good reason, we shouldn't cling to habits that don't serve our ultimate goals of health, happiness, and success.

Yet, the process of divesting from these habits isn't akin to simply clicking a "sell" button. It's a gradual, sometimes challenging process of trial, error, and perseverance.

I've been paying close attention to Bitcoin since 2016, and I'm always amazed at its volatility. Yet, amidst the ups and downs, it keeps trending upward.

Watching Bitcoin's ascent has taught me that volatility is part of the journey.

There will be days when our resolve weakens, and old habits resurface like a market correction testing investors' nerves.

However, it's not the daily fluctuations that define our success but the overall trend. If you're gradually becoming more mindful of your health, more resilient in facing stress, and more dedicated to your personal growth—even amidst occasional setbacks—you're on an upward trajectory.

Remember, the most significant investments don't yield returns overnight. They require time, belief in their value, and the patience to ride out the volatility. Your investment in yourself is no different. Each step toward breaking a bad habit, no matter how small, is a deposit into your billion-dollar body's account, accruing compound interest in the form of a healthier, more fulfilled life.

As you continue on this journey, don't beat yourself up if you have the occasional backslide, stop counting calories for a couple of days, get too busy to make it to the gym, or aren't able to stay on track the way that you thought you should. Volatility is part of the game; just keep focused on making those baby steps and keep trending upward!

Keep the image of the million-dollar racehorse in mind, and remember, that racehorse is you! Would you bet against a horse of such value by neglecting its care? Unlikely. Then why bet against yourself? By viewing each choice and habit through the lens of investment, you position yourself to succeed and thrive.

POSITIVELY
SPEAKING

TOBY
MOORE

Country Bank appoints new corporators, trustee at Annual Meeting

REGION — Country Bank, a leading financial institution in Western and Central Massachusetts, announced the appointment of four new corporators and a new trustee at its Annual Meeting on Monday, March 11.

James Phaneuf, Chair of the Board welcomed the new corporators to the Bank, stating, "We are thrilled to have these accomplished individuals join our team. Their diverse backgrounds and expertise will contribute to the continued success of Country Bank."

Ivon Gois, President of Gois Broadcasting, brings a wealth of experience to the Bank. Based in Worcester, Mr. Gois operates 12 radio stations in New England and is well-known for his contributions to the media industry, ethnic and racial diversity work and his and financial expertise.

Mechilia K. Salazar, CEO/Director of Hope for Youth and Families Foundation in Springfield, is a respected leader in the nonprofit sector. Ms. Salazar's previous role as CEO of the Ludlow Boys and Girls Club demonstrates her commitment to serving the marginalized and underbanked communities. She often serves as the bridge between local businesses and the communities they serve.

Samalid Hogan, a business consultant/CEO, and principal at Greylock Management in Ludlow, is a seasoned professional with a strong track record of success. Ms. Hogan's leadership as past President of the Springfield Rotary Club and her involvement on various boards further highlight her dedication to making a positive impact. Her passion for empowering small businesses has made her a respected leader in the industry.

Walter Pacheco, a prominent figure in the hospitality industry, owns several Western and Central Massachusetts restaurants and investment properties. Mr. Pacheco's extensive business acumen and local ties make him a valuable addition to the Bank.

In addition to the new corporators, President-elect Mary C. McGovern was appointed to the Board of Trustees. Her expertise and leadership will help guide the Bank's strategic initiatives and ensure its continued growth as she takes over as President on April 1.

Country Bank is excited about the new appointments and looks forward to these individuals' valuable insights into the markets it serves. With their combined expertise and dedication, the Bank is well-positioned to continue to make a difference in serving its customers and communities for another 175 years.

About Country Bank
Country Bank is a full-service \$1.8B mutual community bank serving central and western Massachusetts with 14 offices in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Brimfield, Belchertown, Wil-

braham, Ludlow, Leicester, Paxton, Charlton and Worcester. With a commitment to personalized service and community involvement, Country Bank offers individuals, businesses, and municipalities a comprehensive range of banking products and services. Country Bank is a member of FDIC, DIF, and the SUM network. Country Bank can be reached at 800-322-8233 or online.

Nursing class of 2024 spreads acts of kindness

CHARLTON — Christine Abdi, Evelyn Kiplangat and Catherine Ibrahim, all of Worcester and all members of the PN Class of 2024 at Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, coordinated the collection of groceries and snacks on campus to restock the practical nursing students' food pantry.

Abdi, Kiplangat, and Ibrahim recognize that some practical nursing students struggle to find the funds to cover educational expenses. The struggle to be fully nourished while juggling home, work, and school is real. By maintaining a well-stocked food pantry, the idea is to lessen the struggle. The nursing students are gladly stepping up to help their peers. Their acts of kindness do not go unnoticed. According to research, "spreading kindness not only helps others feel better about themselves -- it can also boost the giver's health and happiness!"

Gretheline Bolandrina, DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director is grateful for the members of the PN Class of 2024 for sharing their kind gestures. "Our student nurses continue to make the world a better place," she said. "Our faculty and staff not only produce competent and prudent nurses they are kind-hearted nurses. All acts of kindness, big and small, change the world, and kindness given to others is also a gift to oneself."

The PN students are happy to give and consistently does so. Bolandrina adds, "It is common for our alumni, faculty, and staff to generously give, they give of their time, resources, and many more kind gestures. Now, our students do too! When they give to nursing students, they invest in the nursing students' future and provide a legacy for more generations of nurses. We are forever grateful for everyone's support."

Giving also shows appreciation for the education and training that Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy is providing them and it gives others a chance to have a similar experience of support.



Break out of the same monotonous routine and find an exciting new job.

See the classifieds today!

Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy welcomes new Financial Aid Administrator

CHARLTON — The Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy is pleased to welcome an appointed staff member as the new Financial Aid Administrator (FAA).

Heidi Bedard, BSHS, AACJ, LPN of Brookfield assumed the role of FAA this month following Mrs. Rita Barrette's retirement. Bedard is a graduate of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy, class of 2014.

Bedard was appointed as Notary Public in 2022 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of the Secretary of Commonwealth (One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108). She joined Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy as sub secretary in 2021, and then as staff (2022) to assist with medical onboarding and light clerical duties for the 2023 cohort. Bedard was the 2021 Massachusetts Adult Immunization Conference (MAIC) Champion Awardee, and her achievement was recognized during the 26th Annual Massachusetts Adult Immunization Conference held, April 13, 2021. Bedard was the Clinical Coordinator of Vaccine Management at the Family Health Center of Worcester (FHCW). She is described by her colleagues as a "tireless champion of immunizations for the patients who receive care at the FHCW."

Bedard is responsible for many initiatives encouraging adult immunizations. Bedard's meticulous planning resulted in FHCW's provision of over 3,425 flu vaccines to low-income, culturally diverse patients in need. Her efforts almost tripled 2020's adult flu vaccination count of 1,250. Bedard and her team accomplished this through the establishment of a walk-in, six-day a week community-based flu clinic and engaging in community outreach efforts. Further, Bedard initiated efforts to decrease duplicate patient records for FHCW in the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS).

Since March 2020, Bedard has decreased the duplicate patient records in the MIIS for FHCW from more than 15,000 records to zero records. She continues to innovate and has implemented a booster vaccination catch-up program for adults (18-35). Bedard is a Certified Coordinator for Vaccine Management and is ACLS and BLS Certified (American Heart Association). She is excited to work with the 2024 and 2025 cohorts to assist with their FAFSA needs.

"We wish Mrs. Barrette all the best on her retirement and are extremely excited to have Heidi Bedard at the Practical Nursing Academy as the new FAA," stated Gretheline Bolandrina DHA, MSN Ed, RN, CRRN Academy Director. "She brings with her nursing education experience and expertise, as well as meticulous diligence that would be so inspiring and will certainly greatly benefit the PN students."



Heidi Bedard

Got Space?
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Contact Mikaela Today
774-200-7308
mikaela@stonebridgepress.news

The story of Joe Robbie

Like most New Englanders, I am a big fan of Boston sports. I'm willing to talk about the Celtics, Bruins, Red Sox, and Patriots anytime. But this interesting story has its roots in a different sports franchise, namely the Miami Dolphins.

Joe Robbie was born in South Dakota on July 7, 1916. The son of a Lebanese immigrant, he came from modest beginnings and worked a variety of jobs to earn a living. He spent time as a lumberjack, sports-writer, served in the Navy, and eventually attended the University of South Dakota where he received his law degree. Post graduation, Robbie's legal career gradually morphed into local and state politics. But it's what happened in March of 1965 that turns this into an interesting sports story.

In 1965, Robbie had a meeting with Joe Foss, the commissioner of the American Football League. Foss encouraged Robbie to look into Miami as a potential site for a new expansion franchise. As a lifelong sports fan, Robbie was very much interested in the idea, but he personally didn't have the money to make it happen. And so, Robbie formed a general partnership with a few other individuals and raised the \$7.5 million to purchase the expansion team. A couple of short years later, Robbie bought out his remaining partners and simultaneously became the primary owner of the Miami

FINANCIAL FOCUS

BY CHRISTOPHER MALLON

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
PROGRAM MANAGER

LPL REGISTERED PRINCIPAL, THE
CAPSTONE PLANNING GROUP

Dolphins.

Fast forward to the 1980's and Robbie's family net worth had skyrocketed. In 1987, he even built a new \$114 million stadium, appropriately called "The Joe Robbie Stadium."

By most measures, Joe Robbie was a very successful businessman and he amassed a substantial fortune during his lifetime. So, when he died in 1990, one would assume his wife and children should remain financially "set for life." Unfortunately, this was not the case for the Robbie heirs. When Robbie passed away most of his net worth was tied up in illiquid assets (i.e. the new stadium). The estate tax bill due upon his death was an estimated \$47 million. His wife and children did not have the funds available to pay this tax, and they were forced to sell the Miami Dolphins franchise (and stadium) at a very, very deep discount. Unfortunately, the Robbie family would no longer be a part of the NFL.

While 99.99 percent of Americans will never own an NFL franchise or amass the type of fortune Joe Robbie had, we can all learn an extremely valuable lesson from this story. Estate planning

is extremely important. Had Robbie done a few things differently, his family would likely still own the Miami Dolphins today (fun fact: the Miami Dolphins franchise currently has an estimated value of \$5.7 billion).

You don't need to be a multimillionaire to benefit from estate planning. Working with an experienced financial planner will help you create a plan for the various assets you do own (i.e., real estate, businesses, investment accounts, IRA's, etc.). The goal is to get your assets transferred to the correct people, and in a tax-efficient manner. At a minimum, a financial plan should evaluate how your accounts are titled (individual, joint, trust, etc.), who you have listed as beneficiaries, review your asset allocation, and make proper use of insurance.

If you've never had a formal financial plan prepared for your family, or if you're overdue for a review, a member of The Capstone Planning Group would be happy to assist.

This article was written by the author, Christopher Mallon.

About The Capstone Planning Group

The Capstone Planning Group is an experienced wealth management team conveniently located at Cornerstone Bank. The team offers comprehensive financial planning, asset management, and

insurance. To learn more about the team visit www.thecapstone.com and schedule a courtesy consultation please. Turn To **FINANCIAL** page **A14**

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LEGALS

(SEAL)
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Ellen Roberts
Alberta Boyle
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Act: 50 U.S.C. c. 50 § 3901 (*et seq*):
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claiming to have an interest in a
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and Sandra J. Borey to James B.
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of Deeds in Book 43621, Page
193, and now held by the plaintiff
by assignment, has/have filed with
this court a complaint for determi-
nation of Defendant's/Defendants'
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may lose the opportunity to challenge
the foreclosure on the grounds of
noncompliance with the Act.
Witness, GORDON H. PIPER, Chief
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Attest:
Deborah J. Patterson
Recorder
March 28, 2024

Town of Brimfield
Legal Notice - Request for Proposal
Solid Waste & Recyclables
Collection, Disposal, Transportation
and Processing
RFP2024BOH01
The Town of Brimfield, Massachusetts,
will accept proposals from qualified
firms for providing the following Town-
wide services:
Residential curbside solid waste col-
lection and transportation to a desig-
nated disposal facility; curbside
recyclable materials collection and
transportation to Contractor chosen
processing facility and collection and
transportation for disposal or process-
ing of solid waste and recyclable materi-
als from municipal buildings/facilities,
and other designated public areas. A
single Contractor will be chosen for
solid waste and recyclable materials. A
single Contractor, who may or may not
be the same Contractor, will be cho-
sen for collection from municipal and
other designated public areas. The
Town reserves the right to separately
contract if it is in the best interests of
the Town.
Specifications and proposal forms may
be obtained at the Office of the Select
Board, beginning
March 21, 2024, Monday through
Thursday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.
or can be requested by emailing
selectboard@brimfieldma.org.
Sealed proposals for furnishing the
above will be received at the Office of
the Select Board, Town Hall Annex, 23
Main Street, Brimfield, MA 01010 until
11:00 a.m. on Monday, April 8, 2024 at
which time the proposals will be public-
ly opened and read.
The Responder shall furnish with
proposal a consent of performance
bond of a surety company qualified
to do business under the laws of the
Commonwealth of Massachusetts and
satisfactory to the Owner, in the sum
of one hundred percent (100%) of the
annual contract.
Per Massachusetts General Laws,
Chapter 30B, §1(b)(30), a contract for
the collection, transportation,
receipt, processing, or disposal of
solid waste, recyclable or compostable
materials, is exempt from the
public bid laws of the Commonwealth
of Massachusetts. As such, the Town,
at its own discretion, will
select the firm that it believes offers the
best all-round package for solid waste
and recycling services it seeks to
obtain. Because this service is exempt
from the bidding laws, the Town is
free to negotiate with whichever firms
it chooses and in whatever manner it
believes is best suited to the Town's
needs. All firms responding to this
Request for Proposals must clearly
understand that this is not a formal
bid process pursuant to the legalities
of M.G.L. Chapter 30B. The Town of
Brimfield is utilizing this format in order
for all interested firms to provide a
proposal that allows for a more direct

comparison between all qualified pro-
posals.
Prevailing Wage Rates to be paid
as determined by the Commonwealth
of Massachusetts Executive Office of
Labor and Workforce Development
Department of Labor Standards
under provision of the Massachusetts
General Laws, Chapter 149, Sections
26 to 27H, apply.
The Responder's attention is directed
to the fact that compliance with all
applicable local, State and Federal
laws, regulations, ordinances and
rules of all authorities having jurisdic-
tion over the collection and disposal of
solid waste and processing of recycla-
bles shall be the sole responsibility of
the Responder.
The services specified shall be provid-
ed for a one-year period beginning July
1, 2024 and ending on June 30, 2025.
Each proposal shall be submitted in
accordance with the information for
Responders and the contract docu-
ments. The Town reserves the right to
extend the term of the contract up to
three (3) years by negotiation with the
awarded contractor.
The Town reserves the right to waive
any informalities, to accept or reject, in
whole or in part any or all bids, or take
whatever other action may be deemed
to be in the best interest of the Town.
Respectfully Submitted:

Martin J. Kelly, Select Board,
Chairperson
Town of Brimfield
March 21, 2024
March 28, 2024

TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE
Request for Bids for
Aeration Pipeline CIPP
Southbridge Wastewater
Treatment Plant
The Town of Southbridge invites qual-
ified firms to furnish and install CIPP
Liner at the Wastewater Treatment
Plant (WWTP). Copies of the speci-
fications are available from the Town
Website as of 09:00AM, on 3/18/2024.
The project location/details can be
viewed at the WWTP located at 83
Dresser Hill Road, Southbridge MA,
Monday-Friday between the hours of
7:30am and 3:00pm. Appointments
are necessary, call 1-508-764-4927 to
schedule.
All Bids for this project are subject
to the provisions of Massachusetts
General Las Chapter 30 Section 39M.
Prevailing Wage Rates are required
on this project. The current wage rate
schedule is attached to the bid speci-
fication package.
The bidder will provide a 5% bid depos-
it with bid.
The deadline for sealed bids is
4/3/2024 at 10:00AM. The sealed
bid shall be clearly marked "Aeration
Pipeline CIPP - WWTP". Bids are
to be addressed to Town Manager,
Town of Southbridge, 41 Elm Street,
Southbridge, MA 01550. Late bids will
not be opened.
March 21, 2024
March 28, 2024

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE
OF REAL ESTATE
By virtue and in execution of
the Power of Sale contained in a cer-
tain mortgage given by Eric Vaughan
to Mortgage Electronic Registration
Systems, Inc., as nominee for
Guaranteed Rate, Inc., dated January
31, 2018 and recorded in the Worcester
County (Worcester District) Registry of
Deeds in Book 58396, Page 54, of
which mortgage the undersigned is the
present holder, by assignment from:
Mortgage Electronic Registration
Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nom-
inee for Guaranteed Rate, Inc., its
successors and assigns to Nationstar
Mortgage LLC d/b/a Mr. Cooper,
recorded on August 22, 2019, in Book
No. 60917, at Page 335
for breach of the conditions of said
mortgage and for the purpose of fore-
closing, the same will be sold at Public
Auction at 1:00 PM on April 12, 2024,
on the mortgaged premises locat-
ed at 27 Henry Street, Southbridge,
Worcester County, Massachusetts, all
and singular the premises described in
said mortgage,
TO WIT:
The land in Southbridge, Worcester
County, Massachusetts, with the build-
ings thereon, situated northerly from
Worcester Street and on the westerly
side of Henry Street, bounded and
described as follows:
BEGINNING at the southeast corner
at an iron pin in the ground on the
westerly line of said Henry Street and
at corner of land now or formerly of
Philibert Quevillon;
THENCE northerly by said line of said
street fifty-nine (59) feet, more or less,
to an iron pin in the ground at land now
or formerly of Henry A. Morse;
THENCE westerly by land now or for-
merly of Henry A. Morse, seventy-one
(71) feet to wall and land now or for-
merly of said Morse;
THENCE southerly sixty-six (66) feet
by land now or formerly of said Henry
A. Morse to an iron pin in the ground
at land now or formerly of said Philibert

Quevillon;
THENCE easterly by land now or
formerly of said Philibert Quevillon,
seventy-two (72) feet to the point of
beginning.
Said premises are Lot #13 as num-
bered and shown on a plan of lots
made for Henry A. Morse by Arthur C.
Moore, C.E., dated August 17, 1889.
For mortgagor's(s') title see
deed recorded with Worcester County
(Worcester District) Registry of Deeds
in Book 58396, Page 51.
These premises will be sold
and conveyed subject to and with
the benefit of all rights, rights of way,
restrictions, easements, covenants,
liens or claims in the nature of liens,
improvements, public assessments,
any and all unpaid taxes, tax titles, tax
liens, water and sewer liens and any
other municipal assessments or liens
or existing encumbrances of record
which are in force and are applica-
ble, having priority over said mort-
gage, whether or not reference to
such restrictions, easements, improve-
ments, liens or encumbrances is made
in the deed.
TERMS OF SALE:
A deposit of Five Thousand
(\$5,000.00) Dollars by certified or bank
check will be required to be paid by
the purchaser at the time and place
of sale. The balance is to be paid
by certified or bank check at Harmon
Law Offices, P.C., 150 California St.,
Newton, Massachusetts 02458, or
by mail to P.O. Box 610389, Newton
Highlands, Massachusetts 02461-
0389, within thirty (30) days from the
date of sale. Deed will be provided to
purchaser for recording upon receipt in
full of the purchase price. The descrip-
tion of the premises contained in said
mortgage shall control in the event of
an error in this publication.
Other terms, if any, to be
announced at the sale.
NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE LLC
D/B/A MR. COOPER
Present holder of said mortgage
By its Attorneys,
HARMON LAW OFFICES, P.C.
150 California St.
Newton, MA 02458
(617)558-0500
24977
March 14, 2024
March 21, 2024
March 28, 2024

MORTGAGEE'S NOTICE OF SALE
OF REAL ESTATE
By virtue and in execution of the Power
of Sale contained in a certain Mortgage
given by Brian F. Haggerty to Mortgage
Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.,
as nominee for Family Choice Mortgage
Corporation, its successors and
assigns, dated October 13, 2005 and
recorded with the Worcester County
(Worcester District) Registry of Deeds
at Book 37560, Page 314, subsequent-
ly assigned to WELLS FARGO BANK,
NA by MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC
REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC.,
AS NOMINEE FOR FAMILY CHOICE
MORTGAGE CORPORATION, ITS
SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS by
assignment recorded in said Worcester
County (Worcester District) Registry
of Deeds at Book 51705, Page 205,
subsequently assigned to U.S. BANK
TRUST, NA., AS TRUSTEE FOR LSF9
MASTER PARTICIPATION TRUST by
WELLS FARGO BANK, NA by assign-
ment recorded in said Worcester
County (Worcester District) Registry
of Deeds at Book 55771, Page 8, sub-
sequently assigned to J.P. MORGAN
MORTGAGE ACQUISITION CORP. by
U.S. BANK TRUST, NA., AS TRUSTEE
FOR LSF9 MASTER PARTICIPATION
TRUST by assignment recorded in
said Worcester County (Worcester
District) Registry of Deeds at Book
60912, Page 117, subsequently
assigned to WILMINGTON TRUST,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION NOT IN ITS
INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY
AS OWNER TRUSTEE OF OSAT
TRUST 2021-1 by J.P. MORGAN
MORTGAGE ACQUISITION CORP. by
assignment recorded in said Worcester
County (Worcester District) Registry
of Deeds at Book 67172, Page 338
for breach of the conditions of said
Mortgage and for the purpose of fore-
closing same will be sold at Public
Auction at 1:00 PM on April 11, 2024 at
406 Main Street, Southbridge, MA, all
and singular the premises described in
said Mortgage, to wit:
A certain parcel of land, with the build-
ings thereon, and all the privileges
and appurtenances thereto belonging,
situated in said Southbridge, on the
northerly side of Main Street, bounded
and described as follows, to wit:
BEGINNING at a stone bound with a
drill hole in the top at the S.E. Corner of
land of the Estate of Lorenzo Plimpton;
THENCE easterly by the northerly line
of said Main Street, twenty-six and
ninety-two (26.92) feet, to an iron pin
at the westerly line of a driveway;
THENCE northerly on the westerly
line of said driveway, eighty-three (83)
feet, to a pin at land now or formerly of
William W. Buckley;
THENCE westerly on land now or for-
merly of said Buckley, sixty-three and

two tenths (63.2) feet, to land of said
Plimpton Estate;
THENCE southerly on the land of said
Plimpton Estate, about eighty-eight
(88) feet, to the point of beginning.
Reserving to said William W. Buckley,
his heirs and assigns, a right of way
for all usual purposes, to be used in
common with the grantees and others
over the N. E. corner of premises con-
veyed; which right of way is triangular
in shape and not to exceed ten (10)
feet in depth, measuring westerly and
southerly from the iron pin marking
the N.E. corner of premises herein
conveyed. And as appurtenant there-
to a right of way ten (10) feet wide,
extending from said Main Street, to
premises in the rear of tract conveyed,
for all usual purposes, which right of
way shall always be kept open and
unobstructed; the same being situated
on the easterly side of the premises
above described, which shall be used
by the grantees, in common with oth-
ers.
Also that certain tract or parcel of land
situated in said Southbridge, bounded
and described as follows:
BEGINNING at a pin in the ground at
land hereinbefore described marking
S.E. corner of said premises and ten
(10) feet from the line of a right of
way as defined in a deed of premises
from William W. Buckley to Edmund
E. Suprenant, dated April 14, 1923,
and recorded with Worcester District
Registry of Deeds Book 2295, Page
284, and extending on said right of
way on the westerly line thereof for a
distance on the land of William J. Earls
et ux., twenty (20) inches;
THENCE westerly forty-nine (49) feet,
more or less on land of said William
J. Earls et ux, to a bound at land of
the Estate of Lorenzo Plimpton, which
bound is six (6) feet northerly from
the N.W. corner of land hereinbefore
described;
THENCE southerly on land of said
Estate, six (6) feet, to the said N.W.
corner of land hereinbefore described;
THENCE easterly on land hereinbe-
fore described, the northerly line fifty-
three and two tenths (53.2) feet, to
the point of beginning.
Meaning and intending to convey a
rectangular plot which is bounded on
the east by a line twenty (20) inches
in length, on the north by a line forty-
nine (49) feet in length, on the west
by a line six (6) feet in length and on
the south by a line fifty-three and two
tenths (53.2) feet in length, all of the
above courses being marked by iron
pin driven into the ground;
BEING the same premises conveyed
to Brian Haggerty by Deed of Armand
H. DeGrenier and Susan A. Morrison,
dated April 13, 1990, and recorded at
the Worcester Registry of Deeds April
13, 1990 in Book 12733, Page 38.
I herein subordinate my Homestead
as recorded in Book 16377, Page 246
and do not wish to terminate my rights
of said Homestead by the within con-
veyance.
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 attor-
ney'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 suc-
cessful bidder will be required to exe-
cute 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 rea-
son, the Purchaser at the sale shall be
entitled only to a return of the deposit
paid. The purchaser shall have no fur-
ther recourse against the Mortgagor,
the Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's
attorney. The description of the prem-
ises 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.
Wilmington Trust, National Association
not in its individual capacity but sole-
ly as Owner Trustee of OSAT Trust
2021-1
Present Holder of said Mortgage,
By Its Attorneys,
ORLANDS PC
PO Box 540540
Waltham, MA 02454
Phone: (781) 790-7800
23-004210
March 21, 2024
March 28, 2024
April 4, 2024



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LEGALS

Public Meeting Notice

In accordance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, Chapter 131, Section 40, the Brimfield Conservation Commission will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 6:00 pm to review a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) permit application submitted by Heather Comee Wetland Consultant, C/O Jason & Courtney Cafarelli to determine whether the boundaries of

resource area(s) depicted on plan(s) and/or map(s) are accurately delineated at Brookfield Road (Assessor's Map: 3-C-7) or if it is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act (as amended).

Project location: Brookfield Road, Brimfield, MA (Assessor's Map: 3-C-7)

Meeting Location: Public Participation will be In-Person at Hitchcock Academy, 2 Brookfield Road, Brimfield, MA at 6:00 PM.

Roger deBruyn – Co-Chair

Joseph Venezia - Co-Chair

03/04/2024

March 28, 2024

CHARLTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Town of Charlton Stormwater Management Rules & Regulations, the Charlton Conservation Commission will be accepting comments on the following application: The applicant, ZP Battery DevCo, LLC, has submitted a Land Disturbance/Stormwater Management Permit for a

proposed commercial battery storage project with associated utilities and access drive.

The project site is located at Sturbridge Road/Griffin Road, Charlton, MA 01507, and is also known as: Parcel ID 27-C-9 and 27-C-9.1.

Copies of Land Disturbance Application are available at the Charlton Conservation Commission office during business hours.

Thomas O'Malley

Chair, Charlton Conservation Commis-sion

UPCOMING EVENTS AT
CHARLTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Visit our Web site (charltonlibrary.org) for a full listing of programs and events.

Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday, March 30, 10:00-2:00
The Library will hold our Annual Easter Egg Hunt on the main floor of the Library.
Participants will color their bag in the Children's Room, then head upstairs to collect their eggs and get a treat! No registration is required.

Lee Irish Dance Tour
Saturday, March 30, 1:00-2:00 - Dexter Hall - No registration required
Join us for some entertaining Irish Dancing in Dexter Hall to celebrate the season!
Lee Irish Dance in Charlton is performing their "St. Patrick's Day" dance tour. Great for all ages.

Movie Matinee
Tuesday, April 2, 1:00 - Dexter Hall - No registration required
Today we will show DEAD POETS SOCIETY starring Robin Williams.
Maverick teacher John Keating returns in 1959 to the prestigious New England boys' boarding school where he was once a star student, using poetry to embolden his pupils to new heights of self-expression. 1989. Rated PG. Run time 128 min.

Better Read Than Dead Book Club

Wednesday, April 3, 11:00-12:00 - Sibley Reading Area - No registration required
Today we will be discussing STARK-WEATHER by Harry MacLean
Join us for a monthly meet-up to discuss entertaining & fascinating details about true crimes, both solved and unsolved. This true crime book club is held on the first Wednesday of the month.

Genealogy Presentation: Sustainable Genealogy-Separating Fact from Fiction in Family Legends
Thursday, April 4, 6:00-7:30 - Community Meeting Room - Registration Requested
There are a lot of textbooks that describe how to find your ancestors; in this talk by author Rich Hite, he will explain how NOT to. Sponsored by Friends of the Charlton Public Library.

Solar Eclipse Talk
Saturday, April 6, 10:00-11:00 - Dexter Hall - No registration required
In anticipation of the solar eclipse happening on April 8th, local amateur astronomer Craig Cortis will give a brief, non-technical talk on solar eclipse basics. He will explain how such eclipses happen, why they are infrequent, and share future eclipse dates. There will be time for questions and answers at the end. All participants will receive a pair of eclipse glasses (supply is limited). All are welcome and registration is not required.

bankHometown parent wins
2024 Top Workplaces USA Award

OXFORD — Hometown Financial Group, parent company of bank-Hometown, bankESB, and Abington Bank announced today it was named a winner of the 2024 Top Workplaces USA award by Energage.
Top Workplaces USA celebrates organizations with 150 or more employees that are dedicated to building an exceptional people-first culture. Winners are chosen based solely on employee feedback gathered through an anonymous, third-party employee engagement survey, issued by Energage, a leading provider of technology-based employee engagement tools. More than 42,000 organizations across the country were

invited to participate in the Top Workplaces USA survey. Results are calculated by comparing the survey's research-based statements, including 15 Culture Drivers that are proven to predict high performance against industry benchmarks.
"We're honored to be nationally recognized as an employer of choice for the second time in three years, and especially humbled that this honor resulted from positive feedback from those who know us best: our employees," said bank-Hometown President and CEO Robert J. Morton. "Every day, I'm inspired by our compassionate, dedicated, and talented group of employees, who

demonstrate passion for unlocking the full potential of our customers, our communities, and each other. We try hard to foster a work environment that's inclusive, innovative, team-oriented, and fun, and this honor proves that our employees believe we're doing it right."
"Earning a Top Workplaces award is a badge of honor for companies, especially because it comes authentically from their employees," said Eric Rubino, Energage CEO. "That's something to be proud of. In today's market, leaders must ensure they're allowing employees to have a voice and be heard. That's paramount. Top Workplaces do this, and it pays dividends."

Southbridge Lions hold successful poker tournament

SOUTHBRIDGE — The Southbridge Lions Club No Limit Texas Hold 'Em Poker Tournament, held on Saturday, March 9 at Maqui's, was a huge success. More

than 72 players competed for a prize pool of \$3,600. Food and refreshments were served throughout the event, and a good time was had by all.
The Lions would like

to thank all the participants who made this event special, and help us to benefit those in need in our community through the proceeds that were raised.

OBITUARIES

Gerard "Jigs" LaFleche Obituary



Gerard (Jigs) LaFleche passed away peacefully at home on March 8 surrounded by his loving family.
He leaves his wife of 57 years Darcy (Domijan); his daughters Kerry Mossey and her husband Keith of Ashby and Nicole LaFleche of Austin, TX; his grandsons Keegan and Owen Mossey; his siblings Paul LaFleche and his wife Lucille of Southbridge, Lucille Houde and her husband Fred of Hudson, FL and Old Orchard Beach, ME, Roger LaFleche and his wife Lenelle of Brimfield, Joseph LaFleche and his wife Margo of Southbridge, sister-in-law Gail LaFleche of Alpharetta, GA. He was predeceased by his brother Philip LaFleche.
Jigs was born November 18, 1942 in Southbridge, the son of the late Gerard E. and Louise (Bourdela) LaFleche.
He graduated from Assumption Preparatory School in Worcester and Nichols College in Dudley. His career path was varied; manager at American Optical, business owner at Beacon Craftsmen. The most rewarding chapter of his work life was with Catholic Charities of Southbridge and Worcester and as business manager at Saint Anne-Saint Patrick Parish in Sturbridge.
Volunteer work was important to Jigs. He gladly gave his time and energy to Southbridge Food Share,

Tri-Community Exchange Club and St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Anne's. He was especially proud to assist in relocating immigrants from Kosovo and Sudan.
Jigs' life was centered around his family, friends and faith. These aspects were interwoven throughout his 81 years.
His roots were planted deep within the Southbridge and Sturbridge communities. His friendships spanned decades, many of his closest began in grammar school and his years at Assumption Prep and endured still.
He loved living in his neighborhood. The community that grew there was a vital part of his family and social life. He and Darcy traveled extensively including trips to Israel, Turkey, and France with dear friends. They enjoyed many winters in Florida after their retirement.
Jigs' family connection was strong. Even after starting his own family and household, life still centered around Moon Street and the family

he was raised in. He was proud to be the oldest brother to his beloved siblings and pleased to extend that role to brother-in-law when he and Darcy began their married life together. His love for his many nieces and nephews was a mutual appreciation society.
A great joy came with the birth of his grandsons Owen and Keegan. Playing wiffle ball on the porch, debating the merits of Red Sox vs. Yankees, and playing catch anywhere created cherished memories.
He was a faithful and involved member of Saint Anne-Saint Patrick Parish. He particularly cared for morning Mass and Saturday coffee at the rectory.
He dealt with his Parkinson's Disease diagnosis and progression with strength, dignity and resolve. Darcy was by his side and his champion, unflinching caring for and cherishing him throughout the last years of his life.
In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Worcester County Food Bank at food-bank.org or St. Vincent de Paul Society of Saint Anne's Parish 16 Church Street Sturbridge, MA 01518.
Jigs' funeral services were held March 13, 2024 at St. Anne's Church. Sansoucy Funeral Home, 40 Marcy Street, Southbridge assisted the family with arrangements.
www.sansoucyfuneral.com

Noella G. Faraday, 83



Dudley - Noella G. (McDonald) Faraday, 83, died Thursday, March 14, 2024, at her home due to declining health.
Noella was born on Christmas Day 1940 in Dudley, MA. She was the daughter of the late Wilfrid and Annette (Bousquet) McDonald. She leaves behind her longtime caretaker and best friend, Dave Akeley. She also leaves three brothers: George McDonald of Sturbridge, Richard McDonald and his wife, Sandra, of Charlton, and Roger McDonald and his wife, Linda, of Sturbridge; one sister, Constance Wagner and her husband, Herb, of Webster; two grandsons Michael and David, both of Ohio; a granddaughter, Melony McNeaney, of California; her daughter-in-law, Judy (Petro)

Sobieski, of Southbridge; her sister-in-law Rosemary McDonald of Marlborough; and several nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her children, Michael Sobieski and Donna Sobieski; her brothers Norman, Lucien, Robert, Raymond, and Roland McDonald; and her sisters, Jeannette Gelineau and Lucille Dronzek.
Noella had a personality that always made people around

her laugh, and this was especially true at family reunions held at her home. Noella was very fond of animals, especially her dogs. She also liked gardening, and playing cards for fun with her family. Noella also enjoyed gold-mining and prospecting at Herkimer Diamond Mines in Herkimer, New York, traveling, Niagra Falls, horses, ducks, and chickens. She will surely be missed by all.
There are no calling hours. Burial in New Notre Dame Cemetery will be private and at the convenience of the family. Sansoucy Funeral Home, 40 Marcy Street, Southbridge, MA has been entrusted with Noella's private funeral arrangements.
www.sansoucyfuneral.com

Hydrant flushing starts Sunday

SOUTHBRIDGE — Southbridge Water Department will start its semi-annual hydrant flushing program on Sunday, April 7 at approximately 9 p.m. and continue during overnight hours for approximately six to eight weeks between the hours of 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. Flushing will start in the Westville area and continue easterly throughout the town.
The procedure will include the cleaning of the reservoir intake screens, flushing accumulated sedi-

ments from the water mains and testing the operation of each hydrant.
The department requests that during this period customers check their water before washing clothes. Customers may also get accumulated sediments in their house laterals and experience some discolored water. This will clear after a brief run of water at the tap. Please contact the Southbridge Water Department at (508) 764-3207 if you have any questions or comments.

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Webster Five Foundation awards more than \$79,000 in grants to local nonprofits

AUBURN — Following a successful year of supporting community causes in 2023, the Webster Five Foundation is thrilled to announce their first round of grant recipients for 2024. This quarter, the Foundation has awarded \$79,192 in grants to 20 organizations, 18 of which are based in Worcester County.

The Foundation provides grants each quarter to nonprofit organizations or programs that support expanding or improving access to education, culture and the arts, social services, charitable activities, and community development. In 2023 alone, the Foundation fulfilled 54 grant requests, totaling \$246,500.

“At Webster Five, our commitment to supporting local organizations that bring positive change to the community is at the core of our values,” said Don Doyle, President/CEO, Webster Five. “We’re excited to witness the impactful projects that will unfold thanks to the dedication of these deserving nonprofits.”

In this grant cycle, the Webster Five Foundation awarded funding to the following organizations:

AIDS Project Worcester, Inc. (APW) -- \$5,000 for its Supporters of Worcester Area GLBT Youth (SWAGLY) programming, a social support club for 11–18-year-old LGBTQIA+ young people and allies that has been running since 1984. APW uses advocacy, education, and collaborative initiatives to enhance the lives and health of people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C

(HCV), and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Assabet Valley Mastersingers (AVM) -- \$500 towards offering free concert tickets for seniors at upcoming concerts in Shrewsbury, Northborough, and Southborough. AVM is a regional chorus with performances in Shrewsbury, Westborough, Northborough, Southborough, and Marlborough dedicated to performance excellence and innovative programming.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/MetroWest (BBBS CMMW) -- \$6,500 to support the organization’s Big Futures – High School Mentoring Program for at-risk students in Worcester schools. For more than 50 years, BBBS CMMW has helped transform the lives of more than 30,000 children facing adversity by creating professionally supported mentoring relationships.

Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE) -- \$3,500 to support General Operations of the CWE Central MA office and its related programming. The mission of CWE is to help women business owners and aspiring female entrepreneurs launch and grow their businesses by providing greater access to the resources, tools, and support they need.

Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, Inc. (CMHA) -- \$3,000 for the organization’s 39th Annual WALK for the homeless. CMHA has more than 35 years of experience in providing direct services to homeless and at-risk families and in leading community efforts to address home-

lessness through promoting homelessness prevention and stabilization services through collaborative community partnerships.

EcoTarium -- \$3,000 to support the cost of offering scholarships for the Museum’s Discovery Camps. Located on 45 acres of natural beauty, the mission of the EcoTarium is to inspire a passion for science and nature through one-of-a-kind experiences, interactive exhibits, and accessible programming for all.

Genesis Club House, Inc. -- \$5,000 for its Older Adult Program for adults 55 years and older living with and managing a diagnosed mental illness. Genesis Club helps people in recovery from serious mental illness attain competitive employment, education, physical health, and stable housing.

Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts (GSCWM) -- \$3,000 to support the “It’s a Girl’s World” programming, which focuses on providing young women with the opportunity to foster a sense of belonging and explore their true potential and leadership abilities. GCSWM is a Girl Scout leadership council that welcomes girls of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to inspire the mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who will make the world a better place.

Horace Mann Educational Associates, Inc. (HMEA) -- \$1,500 towards HMEA’s Day Habilitation Program, which seeks to offer support programs for adults with disabilities. The mission of this Franklin-based organization is to teach,

support, and empower people with developmental disabilities and their families to live meaningful lives of their choice.

Jeremiah’s Inn -- \$5,000 for the organization’s Recovery Residence. Since 1982, Jeremiah’s Inn has worked to foster a sense of community and mutual aid through partnerships, volunteerism, and their nutrition center.

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester (LVGW) -- \$1,500 for LVGW’s English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESOL) for New Americans. The organization’s mission is culturally compassionate English language education to provide social and economic empowerment.

Mass Audubon’s Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and Conservation Center -- \$12,192 to support its “Plant and Animal Adaptations” program at Swanson Road Intermediate School, serving 190 fourth grade Auburn students. Mass Audubon is inspired by a vision where nature is valued as essential to quality of life, and people live with appreciation and respect for the complex ecological systems that sustain life on Earth, working together to ensure they are protected.

Matthew 25 -- \$2,000 and a match of up to \$1,000 to support its housing project for a new two-family house at 11 Mount Pleasant St., Worcester. Matthew 25 acquires run-down or abandoned properties, renovates existing structures or builds new construction on those properties in the Worcester area, and rents the fin-

ished homes to low-income families at a percentage of their income.

Pathways for Change, Inc. -- \$4,000 to support its General Operating Expenses. The mission of Pathways is to address the impact of sexual assault and abuse by providing quality and multicultural services to all persons whose lives have been impacted by sexual violence and education geared toward the prevention of violence.

Regional Environment Council (REC) -- \$3,500 for REC’s Youth Growing Organics in Worcester (YouthGROW) programming. The mission of the Regional Environmental Council is to bring people together to create a just food system and to build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities in Worcester and beyond.

Science from Scientists (SciSci) -- \$2,500 to support its In-School Module-Based (ISMB) Education Program for Title 1 Worcester Public Schools. Bedford-based SciSci specializes in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) experiential learning for third-through eighth-graders, with the goal of measurably improving the attitudes and aptitudes of students in STEM.

Simon Says Give Worcester -- \$3,500 to support its High Five for Supplies programming. As a kid-founded and run organization, Simon Says Give provides low- to moderate-income graduating elementary school students across the city with binders filled with supplies for middle-school (High Five for Supplies), Birthday Celebrations to at-need kids ages five to 12,

and leadership/service opportunities for kids to run their programs.

Straight Ahead Ministries, Inc. -- \$2,000 to help support its Worcester Youth Reentry Program. Straight Ahead Ministries works to break an unforgiving cycle of recidivism for justice-involved young people, ages 14 – 24, through authentic relationships and re-integration resources.

Worcester Youth Orchestras (WYO) -- \$1,000 to support its Financial Aid efforts to eliminate barriers to participation in their programming. WYO’s mission is to provide youth in central MA with an educational and enjoyable musical experience; and to provide accessible live musical and cultural enrichment to the greater Worcester community.

YMCA of Central Massachusetts -- \$10,000 to support its Achievers Program, a mentoring program focusing on assisting teens in their matriculation to college and in exploring future career paths through college preparation programming, adult mentorship, and career cluster workshops. Spanning across six full-service branches, the YMCA of Central Massachusetts has evolved into one of the region’s most significant charitable institutions, serving 26,000 members across nearly 70 cities and towns.

Since its inception in 1996, the Foundation has awarded \$3,978,700 to 296 organizations. Grant applications for the next round of funding will be accepted through June 15.

Learn to draw and stitch labyrinths at Jacob Edwards Library

SOUTHBRIDGE — Learn to Draw and Stitch Labyrinths with mixed media fiber artist Lynda Shoup at the Jacob Edwards Library, Main Street, Southbridge, on April 11 from 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Walking labyrinths has been a source of peace, contemplation and prayer for people from many religious and philosophical backgrounds throughout history. In this fast paced society, people can benefit from tools to refocus, relax and meditate. Not only are labyrinths grounding tools, but stitching has been shown to lower blood pressure and reduce stress.

Let your fingers do the walking in this class as we learn how to draw a number of labyrinths and stitch a finger labyrinth for meditation on the go.

Participants will learn how to:

- determine the difference between a labyrinth and a maze
- use a finger labyrinth
- learn several types of labyrinths and how to draw them
- stitch a labyrinth onto fabric for a portable meditation tool

In keeping with the instructor’s textiles reuse philosophy, the fabric provided will be reclaimed materials. As far as is possible, the embroidery thread offered for stitching will also be reclaimed.

Lynda Shoup is a mixed-media fiber artist who makes art journals, collages, handmade books, hands-on yarn, needlework, and printing. Her work often uses recycled materials and focuses on how disparate materials and ideas can be combined to create harmony.

This program is supported by a grant from the Southbridge Cultural Council, a local agency funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council a State agency.



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SCHOOLS

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standardized test scores but still have “a long way to go as a district.” He showed several screenshots from the state’s MCAS Explorer pages depicting Southbridge as being number 9 in eighth grade math score growth statewide, among other things.

But he admitted Southbridge faces a serious issue of teacher retention, although that’s not unique to town and has become a problem since Covid among many districts. Seventy percent of the teacher force has less than two years’ experience, and only a handful have more than 10. To him, that requires focusing on professional development and various additional support staff, often provided by various contractors and partners.

Despite that, though, he said this budget eliminates nine positions “largely through attrition.” Villar said nobody’s going to lose jobs, but most of those posts are now vacant, with the people who once did them being shifted into other roles.

On the student side, key issues are attendance, income issues, mental and behavioral health needs, and the resulting learning gaps at various grades. He noted Southbridge is defined as

90 percent “high needs,” putting it in the top 5 in Massachusetts. The higher grades have more attendance issues, with the Academy and high school both being under 90 percent when the district’s goal is 95 percent, one chart showed. Beyond that, chronic absence is very high at that level – 45 percent at the high school (50 percent among seniors specifically) and 72 percent at the Academy.

The state defines “chronic” as 10 percent of school days or more per year, but does not exempt medical or mental health issues as causes.

To help that, Villar said each school has an attendance committee that reaches out to families.

He also noted there’s been “a pretty significant uptick in disruptions of class across the district.” That’s part of the reason for the district’s 20 “full-time equivalent” counselors of various types, plus various outside vendors. One of the latter is Cartwheel, a remote counseling service which Villar said has helped address the fact that many local families have trouble getting to out-of-town services and teens generally try to avoid them anyway.

One of the biggest districtwide issues is the condition of the buildings themselves. Villar said he expects a lengthy report from Context Archi-

ture that details physical facilities needs to arrive in April. The material he has seen so far shows “the middle high school is new, but all of the other buildings are in need of massive repair.”

His presentation included several pages of photos, and he described a variety of issues with doors, windows, HVAC, energy inefficiency and more. His budget is seeking \$600,000 in capital repairs for this fiscal year, although he also noted he cut \$1 million from maintenance.

For larger work, he said a major issue will be how to fix them while the schools are in operation. One of several options Context will present is that of building a new school as “swing space” housing a rotating group of grades while other schools are being fixed and then becoming a permanent school. Others may include consolidating schools and various individual school partial- and full-repair concepts. He noted he thinks they’ll recommend “renovat[ing] as new. The best thing to do is replace it all. The structure is OK” but everything in most buildings is decades old.

Whatever option Southbridge likes will require Council approval, and very likely voter ballot approval of debt exclusions. Villar noted the estimate for

a new elementary school alone is \$75-100 million based on size. A few years ago, a similar report projected just \$30 million in district-wide needs.

If Southbridge opts to do any major project, it can seek Mass School Building Authority aid, which typically covers 70-87 percent of the total cost of a major renovation or new building. MSBA also offers the Accelerated Repair Program for partial repairs. However, neither program is fast, and both have extensive backlogs. Webster, for example, waited more than seven years for Bartlett to get approved (and had to do two ballot votes on top of that), while Oxford just voted for school repairs that MSBA had rejected a few times when criteria changed.

The school budget will go to the Town Manager for inclusion in the town’s overall budget, although the Council can only give the school budget a yes or no vote as a whole under state law. The charter calls for the council to hold hearings and vote on the full budget before the end of May, and individual sections will go through various subcommittees between now and then.

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

STUDENT

continued from page 1

they will continue to investigate with the school’s cooperation.”

The Charlton Police later released their own statement confirming the incident but did not reveal the student’s identity, likely due to limitations regarding the identification of a minor.

“Charlton Police officers stopped the school bus that the student was re-

portedly riding, and an investigation was conducted,” Charlton police said in their report. “Based on the information obtained during this investigation, the item was determined to not be a firearm. Based on these events an 18-year-old male student was removed from the bus, and appropriate action was taken. Currently the matter remains under investigation and there is no danger to the public.”

It should be noted that in the State

of Massachusetts possessing a pellet gun is not considered the same as having traditional firearms or dangerous weapons. State law limits the ownership and possession of a pellet gun to those considered adults over the age of 18 and if a pellet gun is used in a crime or is fired in public it can be considered the same as using a traditional firearm. Police did not indicate that the weapon was discharged on the bus nor were any injuries to students

reported.

The Dudley-Charlton Regional School District offered its thanks to the individual who contacted the Shepherd Hill Regional High School office to report the incident. The matter remains under investigation by both Charlton and Dudley Police. Officials did not disclose any specific charges against the student and any further discipline will be handled in the court system.

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

PODUNK RD.

continued from page 1

able.” The plan is to do the work this summer or fall, with residents experiencing brief outages (a couple hours long) at the project’s end while the lines are moved from the current poles to the new ones. One of them said they’d notify the town when that was going to happen, and it wouldn’t be in winter. One section will be put underground.

Selectmen voted to approve all four projects, but said they still have to go before the Conservation Commission. Grimm intends to hold a “neighborhood meeting” on Podunk Road in the near future with National Grid and residents to address concerns more directly.

Chair Jamie Goodwin said he wants to ensure “poles aren’t placed willy-nilly and residents who reach out don’t run

into what many people run into with National Grid, which is absolute silence.”

The board also approved a long list of smaller items. One of them was a permit for the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) to hold one of its Adventure Series bike rides along the Riverlands and Leadmine trails June 15 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

According to Trails Committee Chair Brandon Goodwin, local NEMBA members and TrailsCom people have been very active in upgrading those trails over the past year, and some have claimed they’re among the best in the region. When the event happens, they will partly block the area for safety, to avoid issues between riders and hikers, he said.

However, Elizabeth

Newlands of the Division of Fish and Wildlife, which holds the Leadmine conservation easement, said her agency is concerned about the sheer number of trails that have developed there, especially south of the gas pipeline. She argued some of them are “not consistent with the recreational master plan the town prepared in 2012,” and DFW wants to make sure the land’s “multiple recreational values are being kept.”

Brandon Goodwin agreed that some unmarked trails do exist there, mostly added to go around wetlands or by neighbors to get to the regular trails.

One item the board delayed for more information – namely cost impact and updated comparison to nearby towns – was a Grimm proposal to shift to a 70/30 insurance split. She said she’d like to see that “for the

current team and any recruitment we do because we really do have a

hard time competing [for staff] right now.”

SCHOTT

continued from page 1

lies on support from local business sponsorships, individual supporters, and state and town government grants.

“With this donation to Bridge of Faith, we are

thrilled to support the construction and renovation efforts for the new Youth Center on Charlton Street! This center will have a lasting impact on the lives of young people in Southbridge

by creating a supportive and safe environment for them to learn, grow, and develop essential life skills for their future,” said Shrewsbury.

FINANCIAL

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group.

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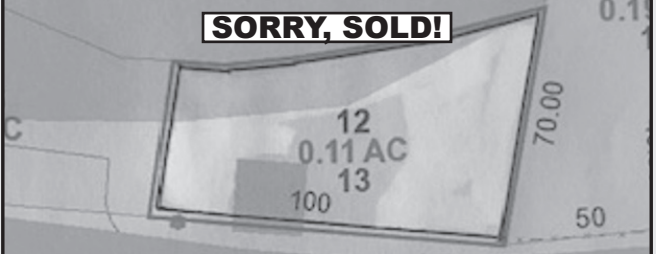
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SUICIDE

continued from page 6

health services (Annual Particle Accelerate Festival in Putnam, Ct) to the annual Out of the Darkness Walk to prevent suicide held at Polar Park (2,3).

Increasingly a strong spiritual health and faith life is being recognized as a protective factor in risk reduction of suicidal ideation, along with being part of a supportive network, including a faith community. Towards that end, recognizing churches can be a great resource for the community writ large, and for our

neighbors, in addition to our growing food bank, and other good neighbor ministries, one of the outreach missions Charlton City United Methodist church is to embarking on is addressing suicide prevention. Through a variety of programs starting March 27th, Charlton City United Methodist Church (CCUMC) will be offering a series of meditation and support groups, and possibly workshops, for those experiencing anxiety and depression or suicidal thoughts, or are survivors of suicide. The purpose of the meditation and support groups is to, once a month, gather in a

safe space without judgment to be listened to, form a community, and learn some beneficial spiritual tools. We will also be participating in a variety of outreach programs that will include a variety of professionals drawn from a wide range of disciplines and expertise directed at risk reduction, protective measures, suicide prevention, and related. For further information please contact Pastor John Lucy of CCUMC at (508) 248-7379 or john@cc-umc.org. Together, we can make a difference, and help reduce the deadly impact of suicide in our community.

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