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SEND YOUR NEWS AND PICS TO [NEWS@STONEBRIDGEPRESS.NEWS](mailto:NEWS@STONEBRIDGEPRESS.NEWS)

Friday, January 30, 2026



Timothy Ryan — Courtesy

Grand Knight Jeff Highcove of Knights of Columbus Council 15829 in Blackstone is presented the Columbian Award from Supreme Knight Patrick Kelley. Presenting the award is District Deputy Timothy Ryan (left) and Mass State Advocate Michael Gibson (right).

## Love, Lace & Legacy

ENJOY A  
VALENTINE'S  
EVENING AT  
ASA WATERS  
MANSION

MILLBURY — The Asa Waters Mansion invites the community to step into an evening of romance, history, and timeless elegance with Love, Lace & Legacy: A Valentine's Evening at the Mansion, taking place on Friday, Feb. 13. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. at the historic Asa Waters Mansion, located at 123 Elm St., Millbury.

This unique Valentine's event blends local history, social charm, and classic romance, highlighting the fascinating story of Esther Howland, a pioneering Worcester, Massachusetts entrepreneur who revolutionized Valentine's Day with her beautifully adorned cards.

Guests will enjoy a cocktail reception, seasonal Valentine inspired sweet and savory bites, raffles, and a cash bar provided by Spicy Water Distillery and Broken Creek Winery. The evening also features an engaging historical presentation by Robert Stacy, Historian from the Museum of Worcester, offering insight into Esther Howland's lasting impact on American culture,

Turn To LOVE page A10

# New England Legends presents Valentine's Day Freak Formal to benefit Project Just Because

MILFORD — New England Legends, the creators of the popular New England Legends podcast, are thrilled to announce the return of their much-anticipated annual charity ball on Saturday, Feb. 14 at 7 p.m.

The "Freak Formal" is a ghoulishly delightful event that will take place at the DoubleTree Hotel in Milford, Massachusetts, promising attendees an unforgettable night of monsters, ghosts, zombies, dancing, games, raffle prizes, and a pizza party—all in the spirit of raising funds for Project Just Because, a 501(c)3 charity based in Hopkinton that provides for struggling families in their times of greatest need by supplying basic necessities including warm

clothing, food, and school supplies.

Hosted by Jeff Belanger and Ray Auger, the minds behind the New England Legends podcast, the Freak Formal has become a cherished alternative celebration for those looking to escape the clichés of Valentine's Day.

"We look forward to this parade of the macabre all year long," said Jeff Belanger, author and co-host of the New England Legends podcast. "Formerly called 'Zombie Prom,' we decided to rename it to the Freak Formal to cast the horror net a little wider."

"People can dress up as any weird character they like, or just attend to watch the spectacle—all for a great local

cause," added Ray Auger, co-host of the New England Legends podcast. "Best costumes will be crowned King and Queen of

Turn To FORMAL page A10

## Tex's Troubadours to perform at Grass Roots Coffeehouse



NOTHBRIDGE — The Grass Roots Coffeehouse will be hosting Tex's Troubadours on Saturday, March 7, at 7 p.m. The band is making its first appearance at Grass Roots, as well as here in central Massachusetts.

The group often is mix of various New England based Bluegrass musicians and is led by Dave (Tex) Orloski on guitar, banjo and vocals from western Connecticut. This particular group has played

together for three years and also features John Stey on mandolin, guitar and vocals from western Connecticut, Ellen Carlson on fiddle and vocals from the seacoast area of New Hampshire, and Bob Dick from Northbridge on bass and vocals. We'll be playing a mix of standard and original bluegrass music with some traditional country and fiddle tunes mixed in.

The concert will take place in function room

of the Rockdale Cong. Church, 42 Fowler Rd., Northbridge. Prior to the show, come have a bowl of soup or chili, or hot slider sandwich, and at intermission have dessert and coffee. Proceeds go to the Church.

Admission to the show is \$20 at the door only. Doors will be open at 6 p.m. Seating is at a first come/first served basis. For more information, call or text Bob Dick at 617-429-0347.

## Executive functioning: A key to student success

WHITINSVILLE — When you read about helping students succeed in school, the focus is often on strong academic skills like reading and math. What gets less attention, but makes a big difference, is a set of mental skills called executive functioning.

"Executive functioning is the brain's management system. It helps students plan, stay organized, manage time, focus attention, control impulses, and adapt to change," said Annaliese Wheeler, Educational Support Services Director at Whitinsville Christian School. "Students who struggle with executive functioning may forget assignments, have trou-

ble starting or completing tasks, get overwhelmed by changes in routine, or lose track of materials or time." These challenges are common among all students, and can be more pronounced in those with attention differences, anxiety, or other learning needs.

Recognizing the importance of these skills, Whitinsville Christian School provides comprehensive support to help students thrive academically and personally through its Educational Support Services (ESS) department, which combines Student Academic Services and Health and Wellness. WCS offers individualized help from kindergarten through 12th grade. The program

includes progress monitoring, direct instruction in areas such as study skills and academic support, and services delivered both in the classroom and in small groups or one-on-one settings. ESS also assists families and teachers by recommending strategies, coordinating assessments, and developing Individual Learning Plans or accommodations when appropriate.

"By supporting each child's unique learning needs, we are helping students build the executive functioning skills that matter - not just for school, but for life beyond the classroom," said Wheeler.

# WHITINSVILLE SOCIAL LIBRARY

Web site: northbridgemass.org/WSL  
Phone: 508-234-2151

**Hours:**  
Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.  
Friday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Holiday Hours: Closed Feb. 9 for Presidents Day

**Super Book Sale**  
Saturday, Feb. 7 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
The Friends of WSL's annual Super Book Sale is at the Village Congregational Church. Great deals on used books. All proceeds go right back to funding the library.

**February Vacation week programs:**  
Tuesday, Feb. 17, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Craft Day — drop-in, self-guided creative fun.

Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 3 p.m.  
**Intro to Coding**  
Explore the basics of coding through hands-on play with Dash, an interactive robot that responds to commands, sounds, lights, and movement. Led by MobileQuest Adventures, participants will use simple, age-appropriate coding tools to program Dash to move, navigate challenges, and complete fun tasks—all while building problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. No prior coding experience needed; just curiosity and a willingness to experiment! Register.

Thursday, Feb. 19, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.  
**Building Day** — open-ended building and designing.

Friday, Feb. 20, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.  
**Game Day** — casual games and laid-back play.

**Weekly Programs:**

**Library Littles**  
Mondays at 10:30 a.m.  
Stories, songs, and playtime for children two and younger and their caregivers. A great opportunity to introduce your child to the library and meet new friends!

**Preschool Storytime**  
Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.  
Join us each week for stories, songs, movement, and fun! Designed just for preschoolers, but open to everyone, our storytime helps build early literacy skills through play, imagination, and social interaction. Come ready to wiggle, giggle, and grow a love of reading! Drop-in.

**Builders & Makers**  
Thursdays at 3 p.m.  
Our LEGO club meets weekly. Stop-in and create something new.

**Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins**  
Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.  
Join Miss Deb for singing, dancing, games, stories, and lots of fun. Ages one to five. Registration required.

**Dungeons & Dragons Campaigns**  
For grades 8-12 Feb. 11 at 3 p.m.  
For grades 6 & 7 Feb. 18 at 3 p.m.  
Calling all adventurers! Beginners welcome. First level character sheets will be provided if you don't have your own. Dice and snacks will be provided. Registration required for the correct age level.

**More February Events:**

**Get Help with Jenna**  
Monday, Feb. 2 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. & Thursday, Feb. 19 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
Sign up for a 30 minute session with Community Health worker Jenna Gouin. Get assistance with applying for MassHealth, SNAP, WIC, Fuel Assistance, Medicare, Social Security, Veteran's benefits, and more. Register online or by calling.

**Fiction Book Club**  
Monday, Feb. 2 at 6 p.m.  
February's selection is Starter Villain by John Scalzi. Books are available for pick up at the library or online via Libby. Refreshments provided. Please register.

**Valentine Take & Make**  
Pick Up Friday, Feb. 6  
Register to take home your own sewn Valentine kit! Sweet treat included. For adults, registration required.

**Galentine's Day Mother Daughter Craft Night**  
Monday, Feb. 9 at 6 p.m.  
Share an early Galentine's Day moment at this needle-felting workshop for moms and daughters—or any meaningful female adult/teen pair. Learn the basics of needle felting with Pop-Up Art School as you transform loose wool into an adorable penguin finished with a heart. This guided, beginner-friendly class is perfect for Valentine's Day gifting or winter decorating. Ages 10 and up. Register.

**Knits & Knots Group**  
Monday, Feb. 9 at 6 p.m.  
Calling all fiber artists! Bring whatever project you're working on and join fellow crafters at the library for creating and conversations. Refreshments provided. Drop in. Knits & Knots meets the second Monday of every month.

**The Whodunnits**  
Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 11 a.m.  
Read and discuss The Dry by Jane Harper. Copies of the book are available at the circulation desk or via Libby. Refreshments provided. This mystery, suspense and thriller book club meets the second Tuesday of each month. Register.

**Memoir Book Club**  
Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 6 p.m.  
Read Kitchen Confidential by Anthony Bourdain. Copies are available at the library and via Libby. Refreshments served.

**Silent Book Club**  
Thursday, Feb. 26 at 6 p.m.  
Come gather at the library with fellow book lovers to read and relax. There are no assigned readings. Bring your own book or browse and borrow one of the library's. Refreshments provided.

# PLUMMER PLACE

Home of the Northbridge Senior Center

The following events will take place at Plummer Place, Home of the Northbridge Senior Center. We are located at 20 Highland St. in Whitinsville. Telephone: (508) 234-2002. Northbridge residents have priority for all programming and events.

**Regular Programs:**  
**Bereavement Group**  
Monday, February 9th at 1:00pm  
Brew Crew  
Wednesday, February 4th at 9:30am  
**Book Club**  
Wednesday, February 18th at 10:30am  
**Mindful Meditation with Kelly**  
Every Thursday at 9:30am  
**S c r a b b l e**  
Mondays, February 9th and 23rd at 9:30am  
**Women's Collective**  
Thursday, February 12th at 10:00am  
Writing Your Way with Lori  
Thursdays, February 12th and 26th at 2:00pm

**Special Events and Programs:**  
**NEW Women's Collective!**  
Ladies — ignite your next chapter with our new Women's Collective — where a fresh focus on community meets bold creativity. Next meeting date: Thursday, February 12th at 10:00am. No sign up required! Please drop in and join us. Coffee/tea/hot chocolate will be available. Any questions? Please call Amy at (508) 234-2002 x1305.

**LAST CALL for the Blue Zones!**  
Are you interested in beginning a journey to better health, happiness, and a longer life? Learn where and how centenarians are living across the world in this exciting three-week program exploring the Blue Zones! This program will include a book, a guest speaker, light

refreshments, some healthy challenges, and more fun surprises! Sign up in the main office. \$20 per person payable in cash on the day of the first class.  
**Thursdays:**  
February 19th, 26th, and March 5th  
All classes will meet from 10:00am-11:00am

**Active Agers Health Fair**  
Get moving, get informed, and get inspired! Please join us at Plummer Place's first-ever Active Agers Health fair for older adults! This event is packed with fun and engaging activities, screenings, and wellness tips to keep you thriving! Your health, your way, your day!  
Wednesday, February 25th  
12:30pm-2:30pm  
The first 20 people in the door will receive a free reflective drawstring backpack. Free door prizes will be drawn throughout the afternoon and grab and go snacks will also be available, as well as bone density and blood pressure screenings. There is a \$5 attendance fee, payable in cash at the door the day of this event. Please call the main office to sign up so we can gauge attendance.

## TRIBUNE ALMANAC

REAL ESTATE

**BLACKSTONE**  
\$625,000, 57 Milk St, Pouliot, Mark, to Rushlow, Jared, and Alves, Joclyn.  
\$605,000, 244 Mendon St, Spielhagen 2nd, Bernard C, and Spielhagen, Rosalinda E, to Fortier, Peter P, and Fortier, Cathy A.  
\$459,900, 43 Edgewater Dr, Montesi, Joshua, to Pelletier, Carole S.

**NORTHBRIDGE**  
\$640,487, 33 Crestwood Cir #45, Stone Hill Partners LLC, to Clemente, Emmett A, and Clemente, Lisa B.  
\$535,000, 2767 Providence Rd, Danielson-Ewing, Nigel P, and Danielson-Ewing, Sarah E, to Bergerson, Richard.  
\$425,000, 44 Arthur Dr #44, Kelley, Zachary, and Elsasser, Isabelle, to Silva, Angel R, and Silva, Amanda M.  
\$371,500, 119 Susanne Dr, Lozier Alphege J Est, and Lozier, James, to Philbrook, Koryne, and Philbrook, Kayli S.  
\$325,000, 5 Summit St #5, Keddy, Courtney M, and Lipke, Andrew, to Mendes, Sonia.  
\$16,500, 382 Upton St, Northbridge Town Of, to Whitinsville Water Co

**UXBRIDGE**  
\$874,900, 117 Turner Farm Rd, Tf Rt, and Frateschi, Edward A, to Jencks, Christie, and Montesi, Joshua.  
\$633,250, 60 Tyler Dr, Wendt, Robert J, and Wendt, Deborah L, to Merten, Samuel, and Merten, Elizabeth.  
\$574,900, 100 Spring Hill Dr #100, Kiessling, Paula, to Vargas, Sue E.  
\$526,200, 14 Woodland Rd, Stotz, Daniel F, to Dickey, Brian.

**Ware**  
\$500,000, 130 Greenwich Plains Rd, Errante, Brian, to Fountain, Mary L, and Fountain, John.  
\$315,000, 36 Berkshire Cir, Chartier, Robert P, and Chartier, Phyllis A, to Halliday, Jack A, and Boucher, Rebecca C.

**For Advertising Information**  
Call 774-200-7308  
email: mikaela@stonebridgepress.news

# SIMON FAIRFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Simon Fairfield Public Library's January 2026 Schedule. Please note that some events do require registration. If you have any questions regarding any events, please do not hesitate to contact the library at 508-476-2695 or email at us at douglas@cwmares.org.

Address: 290 Main St., Douglas,  
Phone: 508-476-2695  
Hours: Monday-Thursday 9 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Please note that we will be closed on Monday, Feb. 16 in observance of President's Day.

**Children's Book Clubs (Registration Required)**  
Wednesday, Feb. 4 at 4 p.m. - Book Wizards (Grades 5-7), "The Highland Falcon Thief" by M.G. Leonard  
Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 4 p.m. - Young Readers (Grades K-2), "A Little Bit of Winter" by Paul Stewart  
Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 4 p.m. - Book Bunch (Grades 2-4), "We the Children" by Andrew Clements

**Children's Happenings**  
Monday, Feb. 2, 9, and 23 at 10 a.m. - Winter Storytime (Registration Required)  
Tuesday, Feb. 3 and 17 at 11:30 a.m. - Music & Movement with Deb Hudgins  
Tuesday, Feb. 3 at 3:30 p.m. - Lego Club I (Registration Required)  
Tuesday, Feb. 3 and 17, at 4 p.m. - Dungeons & Dragons Club (FULL)  
Wednesday, Feb. 4 and 11 at 11:30 a.m. - "Young Scientist's" - STEM Program (Registration Required)  
Thursday, Feb. 5, 12, and 26 at 10 a.m. - Winter Storytime (Registration Required)  
Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 3:30 p.m. - Lego Club II (Registration Required)  
Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 5:45 p.m. - Reading to Bryce (Registration Required)  
Tuesday, Feb. 24 at 3:30 p.m. - Lego Club III (Registration Required)

**Adult Book Clubs**  
Thursday, Feb. 5 at 6:30 p.m. - Greatest Book Club Ever, "Pay it Forward" by Catherine Ryan Hyde  
Tuesday, Feb. 9 at 6:30 p.m. - Intrepid Readers, "I Hope This Finds You Well" by Natalie Sue  
Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 6:30 p.m. - SciFi Book Club, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams  
Monday, Feb. 23 at 6:30 p.m. - Plot Twisters, "Then She Was Gone" by Lisa Jewell

**Adult Happenings**  
Monday, Feb. 2 at 11 a.m. - Get Help with Jenna Gouin (Registration Required)  
Monday, Feb. 2, 9, and 23 at 6 p.m. - Writer's Accountability Group  
Wednesday, Feb. 4, 11, 18, and 25 at 10 a.m. - Fiber Arts Friends  
Wednesday, Feb. 11 and 25 at 5:45 p.m. - Fiber Arts Friends  
Saturday, Feb. 21 at 10:30 a.m. - SFPL Gardeners

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mikaela@stonebridgepress.news

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**BLACKSTONE VALLEY TRIBUNE**  
PUBLISHED BY  
**STONEBRIDGE PRESS**

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The Blackstone Valley Tribune (USPS 024-873) (ISSN 0745-8673) is published weekly by Stonebridge Press, 25 Elm St., Southbridge, MA 01550. Periodical postage paid at Southbridge, MA and additional mailing office(s). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Blackstone Valley Tribune, P.O. Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550.

# Whitin Community Center announces Children's Benefit celebrating more than 50 years of impact

SUTTON — The Whitin Community Center (WCC) is proud to announce its upcoming Children's Benefit, taking place on Wednesday, March 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the beautiful Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton.

This special evening will celebrate more than 50 years of memories, milestones, and meaningful impact made through WCC's children's programs. Designed as a fun event to celebrate the successes of our youth, the event will bring together alumni, families, community members, and supporters for a night of connection, celebration, and giving.

Guests will enjoy a cocktail hour with passed hors d'oeuvres, followed by a light buffet. The evening will also feature alumni recognition and community spotlights, highlighting individuals and stories that exemplify the positive

influence of the WCC's children's programs. A special Youth Theatre performance will showcase the talent and confidence fostered through the Outreach program.

In addition, attendees will have the opportunity to support WCC's mission through a Fund-A-Need, directly benefiting children's programs that continue to enrich and empower youth throughout our community.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for businesses and individuals looking to make a meaningful impact while gaining visibility within the community. Those interested in sponsoring the event are encouraged to contact Development Director, Victoria Waterman at Victoria.Waterman@OurGym.org.

Tickets for the WCC Children's Benefit will be available online soon. For updates and addition-

al information, please visit [www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com](http://www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com) or call 508-234-8184.

The Whitin Community Center is committed to enhancing the health and well-being of individuals and families and building a strong community in the Blackstone Valley. We offer social, recreational, educational, and outreach programs that bring community members of all ages and backgrounds together. The Whitin Community Center is the Blackstone Valley's most complete family and recreation center with two swimming pools, a gym, fitness center, early learning programs, summer camps and a seven and a half acre park. For more information, call 508-234-8184 or visit [www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com](http://www.WhitinCommunityCenter.com).

# BVCC's Women's Success Network hosts Business After Hours at District V House in Sutton

SUTTON — The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's (BVCC), Women's Success Network (WSN) invites local professionals and business leaders to attend the Business After Hours on Thursday, Feb. 12 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at District V House, located at 356 Manchaug Rd., Sutton.

Please join us for this engaging networking event offering attendees the opportunity to connect with fellow professionals, build meaningful business relationships, and enjoy a relaxed evening in one of Sutton's most stylish local spaces. Guests will have the chance to sip, shop, and enjoy light bites while learning more about the businesses and organizations that make up the Blackstone Valley's vibrant economy. "Business After Hours events are more than just networking, they're about bringing professionals together in a way that feels genuine and welcoming," said Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Liz O'Neil. "These gatherings give business leaders the opportunity to step away from the office, meet new faces, and build meaningful connections. The WSN, and District V House allow us to create an engaging environment that

supports collaboration, community, and local business."

Members of the BVCC are invited to attend for a fee of \$25, while the price for future members

is set at \$35. Interested parties are encouraged to RSVP by February 5, 2026, to secure their place. Register online at, [www.blackstonevalley.org/events](http://www.blackstonevalley.org/events). For more

information, please contact Liz O'Neil at, 508-234-9090, or [loneil@blackstonevalley.org](mailto:loneil@blackstonevalley.org).

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

# Coffee Break Women's Bible Study turns to 1 & 2 Peter

WHITINSVILLE — Coffee Break, a community Bible study for women, will continue its winter/spring season with a study of 1 & 2 Peter: Built to Belong on Feb. 10. God loves us and has wonderful plans for our lives – no matter what the current events look like. Come join with others in a study of 1 & 2 Peter: Built to Belong as we look at who God is and the power and glory He is about to display in the earth. Our God is so trustworthy. All peace and joy are found in Him. You're only allowed to be a newcomer the first week. After that, we're all friends. We look forward to meeting you.

Refreshments and childcare are provided—There's loving care for your babies and toddlers through age five.

Coffee Break is held each Tuesday from 9:30 to 11 a.m. and offers women in the Blackstone Valley an opportunity to read and discuss the Bible, share questions and concerns, and develop new friendships. There's no "homework" required, and no previous Bible knowledge is necessary. Study guides and Bibles are provided free of charge.

Pleasant St. Church is located at 25 Cross St. in Whitinsville. For directions, questions, or to get more information, please call Anna 774-287-9449, email [churchoffice@psrc.org](mailto:churchoffice@psrc.org) or visit <https://www.psrc.org/adults>.

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## PET of the WEEK



MEET Siren

Meet Siren — a gentle soul who's finding her confidence more each day. She was one of nearly 50 dogs rescued from an alleged dogfighting operation in South Carolina. Thanks to our partners at Humane World for Animals, she's now safe at Baypath and beginning a new chapter. Siren can be shy at first and will do best in a patient, understanding home that allows her to settle in at her own pace. With time and kindness, she blossoms and shows just how sweet she truly is.

Treats are the key to Siren's heart. She warms up quickly when snacks are involved, and once she does, her soft, loving personality shines through. She's making steady progress and gaining confidence with each new experience.

Siren may enjoy the company of a calm, friendly dog, but she could also thrive as the only dog in a quiet, supportive home where she can continue building confidence one step at a time. If you have a loving home and the patience to let Siren grow at her own pace, she may be the perfect match for you.

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Milford Federal Bank is proud to sponsor Baypath Humane Society's Pet of the Week!

Bring your furry friend along on your next trip to MFB for a treat from our drive-up tellers, or stop in any branch and bring home a treat from our complimentary doggy treat bar.

1271 Providence Rd, Whitinsville, MA  
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Milford | Whitinsville | Woonsocket

## Friday's Child



Gabriel  
Age 10  
Registration #8685

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

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

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

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





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## EDITORIAL

# Why small-town consistency still matters

One of the quiet strengths of life in the Blackstone Valley is that most days look a lot like the ones that came before. That may not sound exciting, but it is deeply reassuring.

We know when the library opens. We know which roads flood first in a hard rain. We know that if the power goes out, the same crews will be out there again, working their way down the list until the lights come back on. In a world that often feels unsteady, that kind of predictability has real value.

Consistency is not the same as complacency. It does not mean refusing to change or clinging to outdated ways of doing things. Rather, it means that when change does come, it happens within a framework people trust. Town meetings still happen. School calendars are still published months in advance. Local boards still meet face to face and take public comment, even when the room is half empty.

These routines can feel mundane, especially when nothing dramatic is on the agenda. But they are the scaffolding that holds communities together. When a crisis hits, whether it is a budget shortfall, a school facilities issue, or a public safety concern, those familiar systems are already in place. There is a process. There are people who know their roles. There is a shared understanding of how decisions are made.

That reliability also shapes how residents relate to one another. In smaller towns, disagreements rarely stay abstract. You might argue with someone at a meeting on Monday and see them at the grocery store on Wednesday. That reality encourages a certain restraint. You can disagree strongly and still expect to see each other again next week. Over time, that expectation tempers extremes and keeps conversations grounded.

It is easy to overlook these qualities because they do not generate headlines. But they matter enormously to families deciding where to settle, to seniors hoping to age in place, and to young people learning, often by example, how communities function.

As the calendar turns toward another busy spring of budgets, planning decisions, and school discussions, it is worth remembering that progress does not always announce itself loudly. Sometimes it shows up as a meeting that starts on time, a service that continues without interruption, or a familiar routine that quietly does its job.

In the Blackstone Valley, that kind of steadiness is not accidental. It is the result of years of showing up, again and again, even when there is nothing urgent to fix. That may not be flashy, but it is one of the reasons these towns continue to feel like home.

## Letter submission policy

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

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

# OPINION

Opinion and commentary from the Blackstone Valley and beyond

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Entry home affordability

To the Editor:

It's time to talk turkey.

It's time to talk about the affordability of entry-level single family homes and why no developer is building them in this state.

As you all know, if you ever read the real estate column in the local paper or peruse Realtor.com, or Zillow or similar "house for sale" sites, there are no newly-built small entry level homes. Condos, yes. New small single family homes, no.

These were the homes that were built on a large scale in the 1950's and 1960's. Not now.

Is it because Massachusetts has passed burdensome laws regulating new houses? Our state requires every new home to install wiring for an electric car charging station - \$10,000 in added costs. It's called the "Right to Charge" law.

Also, state regulations require new homes to install the wiring necessary to go fully electric. New homes must have a designated roof space for future solar panels.

The new "Stretch Code" law mandates that every home have electric heat pumps as a main heating source to achieve the state goal of "decarbonizing the buildings sector."

Why? Carbon keeps us alive. Fossil fuels for electric power plants keep hospitals running and our lights on and refrigerators working, and purifying our water at the municipal water systems. Solar cannot. Wind cannot. It's the big green lie.

No renewable source can do what the massive muscle of fossil fuel can do. After all the renewable investments, we get only one percent of electricity from wind; 5 percent from solar. Itty bitty. Teeny tiny. Nearly nada.

Without building new nuclear or gas-powered electric plants, the state is requiring everyone to switch to electric. No new power plants. It is not logical. Why hasn't Beacon Hill required each new condo association on multiple acres to erect a mini nuclear power plant for their electric demand? Or require a battery storage facility on site to support their new electricity demand? Nope.

Meanwhile, new homes are ginormous, painted grey, with grey walls, grey tiles in the kitchen, grey and white bathrooms, and bedrooms painted "agreeable gray." It's a real paint name! On small lots, with a dozen other homes of the same color. They can be

yours for a mere \$750,000 or \$800,000, in Uxbridge — of all places.

Uxbridge may be famous for our First Night celebration parade, and Santa's arrival, but Uxbridge is a small town in a county far away from any metropolis, far from commuter rail or bus routes, far from the Mass Pike. Yet we have at least four battery storage facilities, at least four solar panel farms, countless pot shops, cannabis growers, and a great need for a new senior center and new town hall.

The only homes in the "affordable" category are "Grandma homes". Tiny just like Grandma. Grandma is holding out, a tiny lamp in the window, until even Grandma leaves the state for a tiny beach house in the Carolinas. Low taxes. Cheap electricity.

There is a lesson in the 1946 film, "It's a Wonderful Life," and in the 1985 film, "Back to the Future." Without heroes, the towns decay into a ruin of pot shops, crime, bars, brothels, gambling dens, and no new small homes.

When heroes fail, like when George Bailey gets his wish [that he never was born], Potter takes over and builds Pottersville. Residents rent and never achieve the American dream of home-ownership. Notice, in the film, it is Ernie the taxi cab owner, Bert the Cop, and Mr. Martini, the Italian legal immigrant, who buy homes through the Bailey Brothers Building and Loan. In Back to the Future, Bif cheats his way into wealth and corrupts idyllic Hill Valley, into a gambling, burlesque Den of Iniquity. Even Marty's Mom descends into the pit of sin.

Welcome to our state. Are we the proverbial frog in the boiling pot? Put the frog in cool water, turn on the Communist heat, and before you know it, Welcome to the warm pee bath of collectivism.

In two years, they will tax your oil, propane, and independent fuel companies because they are not green. Your bill will rise \$500 annually. They propose to limit our driving to reduce emissions and force us onto public transportation. There is no public transportation in the Blackstone Valley. Drive 20 minutes to get to commuter rail in Franklin. All this, because Communists run our state.

Have you had enough?

BEV GUDANOWSKI  
UXBRIDGE

### TACO Tuesday!

To the Editor:

In case you missed clips from Trump's speech at Davos on Tuesday — or saw sanitized versions on Fox — they were some of the most appalling, embarrassing examples of Trump's delusional dementia, exposed in all its humiliating glory on the world stage. For all his threats and bluster, all Trump accomplished was a confirmation of his derisive moniker — "TACO" — Trump Always Chickens Out!

He got nothing in exchange for berating and belittling our dearest and most crucial allies. Everything he wanted to 'negotiate' was already granted by Denmark, well before Trump's saber-rattling, threats and bribe attempts. He threatened tariffs, until his handlers reminded him of what that would do to the American economy. (The day after his tariff threat, the Dow fell 900 points.) He threatened to take Greenland "the hard way"...until Nordic countries sent troops there to defend it. Then he said "Just kidding! - there will be no military involvement." As for needing Greenland for American security, Denmark was already on record that America could build more bases there, and purchase more rare earth minerals. With Denmark a member of NATO, 32 nations would respond to any type of attack on Greenland. What could provide more security than that? Before leaving, Trump uttered his usual failure cover up — "We have concepts of a deal on Greenland!" Just like his "concepts of a health care plan."

On the plus side, Trump did manage to destroy any remaining trust in America among our allies. He encouraged our trading partners to seek other, more dependable markets for their purchases and their exports - more great news for American farmers. He did make Putin grin ear-to-ear at the prospect of a disbanded NATO, something he has dreamed of since the fall of the Soviet Union. Trump did distract from the Epstein files, which a judge ordered released

in their entirety over 40 days ago. He has issued 225 executive orders, but can't order his DOJ head to stop charging Democrats with mortgage fraud - something Trump was found guilty of - and just release the files! Why hasn't he?

In response to a local bone-head's magical rendering of history and the Monroe Doctrine:

There are written agreements and court rulings establishing Denmark's claim to Greenland, including a declaration by the U.S. secretary of state in 1916, which explicitly recognized Danish control over the territory. An international court also ruled in 1933 that Denmark held valid sovereignty over the entire island.

On the first anniversary of the April 1940 German invasion of Denmark, American Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Danish Ambassador Henrik Kauffmann signed the Denmark-United States Agreement for the Defense of Greenland. The 1941 agreement explicitly extended the Monroe Doctrine to Greenland, identifying the Danish colony for the first time as part of the hemisphere within which the United States would not tolerate the intervention of other foreign powers. The agreement also granted the American government temporary control over the security of the island, until 'the dangers to the peace and security' of the continent had passed. Nowhere does the Monroe Doctrine give the U.S. the right to annex Greenland whenever it wants. Ice sheets be damned!

I hope you are enjoying the deployment of fascist brown shirts in our cities. Bev certainly is giddy! ICE has abused and killed U.S. citizens. They have manhandled immigrants, pulling men, women and children from cars, homes and schools. Trump lied about the number of gang members, rapists, criminals among the immigrant community, so he has to grab everyone he can to try to approach his made-up numbers. (The New York Times reported that most immigrants

Turn To LETTER page A5

# Lanterns Along Main Street

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

Around here, late winter has its own personality. The snowbanks

LANTERNS  
ALONG  
MAIN  
STREET  
By CHARLES

shrink one cautious inch at a time. Mud season starts knocking on the door. The sun hangs around a little longer in the evenings, giving us just enough

light to feel hopeful without quite letting us relax yet. It is an in-between season, and I have come to appreciate it more as the years go by.

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

These small moments do not make the weather report, but they shape our moods more than we realize. They remind us that no season lasts forever. Not the cold ones, and not the easy ones either.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Join Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center for a tour through local history

WORCESTER — Join the Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center at Worcester for the exhibit “From Small Town to Heart of the Commonwealth” Saturdays through February from 1 – 1:30 p.m.

Join us on a tour through the exhibits of the Blackstone River Greenway Visitor Center, highlighting the history of the Blackstone Canal, the Industrial Revolution, and the City of Worcester.

Meet at the Visitor Center. Appropriate for ages eight and up. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Reasonable accommodations available upon advance request. For ADA/Reasonable Accommodations, please call 617-645-0358 or e-mail Moneesha.dasgupta2@mass.gov.

## Wine tasting event to benefit Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter

UXBRIDGE — The community is invited to support the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter at a wine tasting fundraiser event Saturday, March 7 from 7 to 10 p.m. at Blissful Meadow Golf Club in Uxbridge.

Tickets are available at [bvemergencyshelter.org](https://bvemergencyshelter.org).

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR JAN. 30 TO FEB. 6

Monday, Feb. 2

Douglas — Conservation Commission, 6:30 p.m., Resource Room, Douglas Municipal Center, 29 Depot St.

Northbridge (Whitinsville) — Community Preservation Committee, 6:30 p.m., Northbridge Town Hall, 7 Main St.

Uxbridge — Conservation Commission public hearing, 6:30 p.m., Board of Selectmen’s Room, Town Hall, 21 S. Main St.

Uxbridge — Conservation Commission public hearing, 6:30 p.m., Board of Selectmen’s Room, Town Hall, 21 S. Main St.

Tuesday, Feb. 3

Sutton — Board of Assessors, 5 p.m., Town of Sutton, 4 Uxbridge Rd.

Sutton — Select Board, 6 p.m., Town of Sutton, 4 Uxbridge Rd.

Douglas — Board of Selectmen, 7 p.m., Resource Room, Douglas Municipal Center, 29 Depot St.

Wednesday, Feb. 4

Douglas — Zoning Board of Appeals meeting (regular meeting night), 7 p.m., Resource Room, Douglas Municipal Center, 29 Depot St. (Agenda typically posted in advance.)

Uxbridge — Zoning Board of Appeals, 6 p.m., Board of Selectmen’s Room, Town Hall, 21 S. Main St.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Remember the outrage against Obama? Neither do I

To the Editor:

Here are the facts. From 2009 to 2017, AI confirms that there were 68 illegal immigrant deaths in the Obama/Biden administration’s ICE detention centers.

Meanwhile, the same administration used ICE to deport over three million illegals.

Remember how vociferously the

Democratic Party’s wicked great leaders oh so dutifully informed us all that such scurrilous acts of despotic tyranny could only be stopped by removing Barack Obama from office?

That’s funny. Neither do I.

STEPHEN GAMBONE  
NORTHBRIDGE

### LETTER

continued from page A4

arrested in city crackdowns have no criminal record.) All that ICE-goon money could be used to establish infrastructure – judges, courts, holding facilities, border patrol, and administration to legally process immigrants, rather than to purchase two – that’s ‘two’ with a ‘t’ - new jets for Kristi Noem to fly to her botox doctor appointments. This cruelty speaks to Trump’s vile, racist MAGA base – it’s him throwing carrion to jackals.

Here are some interesting facts regarding deportations by President:

Clinton -12.5 million; GW Bush – 10 million; Obama – 5.2 million; Biden 7 million; all with no Gestapo/ICE tactics. Trump – 1.2 million, with more than riots. By the way, red state Texas has 2.1 million undocumented immigrants; red

state Florida has 1.6 million. Blue state Minnesota has 130,000. So, why is ICE in Minnesota? This isn’t about illegal immigrants, is it?

The New York Times just reported that Trump has made \$1.2 billion – as Bev would say, that’s “One-point-Two with an “O-p-T,” and Billion with a “B” - so far in his first year. That, my friends, is in your face, grand scale corruption! But his Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, in response to normal Americans having to deal with high grocery prices, stated that we should be able to prepare and enjoy a healthy meal for roughly \$3 - a piece of chicken, a piece of broccoli, a corn tortilla, and another unspecified item...maybe a tea bag or piece of gum? So what’s the problem, y’all? Bon appetite!

RICK BEVILACQUA  
WHITINSVILLE

## Special events at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park

UXBRIDGE — The Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park has announced its program offerings for the month of February.

Meet in the River Bend Farm Visitor Center unless stated otherwise. All programs are free and open to the public. Registration is not required. Appropriate for all ages. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Programming is subject to change or cancellation. For the most up to date programming information, call (508) 278-7604 or visit [bit.ly/blstupdates](https://bit.ly/blstupdates).

Reasonable accommodations available upon advance notice. To make a request, please contact Moneesha Dasgupta at [moneesha.dasgupta2@mass.gov](mailto:moneesha.dasgupta2@mass.gov) or (617) 645-0358.

The Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park is located at 287 Oak St., Uxbridge.

Maple Sugaring Weekend  
Saturday, Feb. 21 and Sunday, Feb. 22, 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park  
It’s that sweet time of year again! Join us on February 21st and 22nd for our annual Maple Sugaring Weekend. Guided tours will be offered at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m., running for about 90 minutes.

Registration is not required but preregistration for guided tours is strongly recommended as capacity is limited. Preregistration is available online at [bit.ly/blstsugaring26](https://bit.ly/blstsugaring26). Same day registration for guided tours is limited but available at the door on a first-come, first-serve basis. Tours include outdoor elements. Please dress for the weather and wear appropriate footwear.

## Northbridge Elementary announces Kindergarten registration

NORTHBRIDGE — Kindergarten registration for the 2026-2027 school year is currently open online through Feb. 20.

Children currently enrolled in the NES Pre-School program are already registered and do not need to do anything. Any Northbridge child who will turn five on or before Aug. 31 is eligible to attend Kindergarten in fall of 2026.

The first step for all new Kindergarteners is completion of the online registration. Visit the district website at [www.nps.org](http://www.nps.org) and click on Northbridge Elementary School. You will then choose «2026-2027 Kindergarten Registration» from the «Latest News» section of the NES webpage. Visit the «Registration Information & Link» for further instructions on how to begin your online registration (OLR). Once your OLR is received, an email will be sent to schedule an in-person appointment to complete your child’s registration.

## Nominations welcome for Uxbridge High School Athletic Hall of Fame

UXBRIDGE — The Uxbridge High School Athletic Hall of Fame will be accepting nominations for its next induction class. Nominations can be submitted on an ongoing basis, and the review of nominations for this class will be taking place in April and May of 2026. The ninth induction is being planned for November of 2026. Nominations can be submitted online using a form available on the Uxbridge High School Web site or by following this link: <https://bit.ly/UHSHOF23>.

The UHS Athletic Hall of Fame honors the tradition, commitment, and excellence of athletics at Uxbridge High School. Nominations are accepted in four categories: individual student-athletes, coaches, contributors, and teams. Criteria are available on the by-laws; individuals must have graduated from UHS at least ten years ago (prior to 2016), while a ten-year waiting period from the time of the team’s distinction must have passed before a team can be considered for induction.

Questions regarding the nomination process can be directed to the Uxbridge High School Athletic Hall of Fame Committee, via the Committee’s recording secretary or to the high school principal or athletic director.

For more information, visit <https://uhs.uxbridgeschools.com/hall-of-fame>.

## Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild to hold biennial show March 14 & 15

UPTON — Thimble Pleasures Quilt Guild will hold their biennial quilt show on Saturday and Sunday, March 14 and 15, at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Visitors to the show will have the opportunity to view the TPQG Raffle Quilt and to purchase raffle tickets to win this beautiful quilt.

The quilt measures 74.5 by 74.5 inches, and is named Dresden Bloom. The quilt was created by TPQG members Karen Pierce, Glory Torres, and Rita Partridge. Their focus in creating this quilt was to find a pattern that showcased both applique and piecing techniques. Once the pattern was determined fabrics were selected that were bright and cheerful. The quilt was custom quilted by Kimberly Cloutier of Blooming Quilts.

You are invited to attend the quilt show and view this quilt in person and purchase raffle tickets. Tickets are also available from quilt members before the show and are \$2 each or six for \$10.

## Area residents named to dean’s list at Quinnipiac University

HAMDEN, Conn. — The following area students were named to the dean’s list for the Fall 2025 semester at Quinnipiac University:

Douglas  
Hadley Gavan  
Julia Oskirko

Northbridge  
Shelby Cannon

Uxbridge  
Hayden Plourde

Whitinsville  
Joseph Carpenter  
Dakota Grazulis  
Brianna Penterson

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

with honors.

About Quinnipiac University

Quinnipiac is a private, coeducational institution located 90 minutes north of New York City and two hours from Boston. The university enrolls 9,700 students in more than 100 degree programs through its Schools of Business, Communications, Education, Computing and Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Medicine, Nursing and the College of Arts & Sciences. Quinnipiac is ranked 51st in The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse “2026 Best Colleges in the U.S.” and is also recognized by U.S. News & World Report and The Princeton Review’s “The Best 391 Colleges.” The university is expanding innovative programs for both traditional and adult learners and developing dynamic corporate partnerships. Quinnipiac recently completed a significant capital expansion on its main campus, including a state-of-the-art new School of Business and an interdisciplinary science and innovation hub. For more information, please visit [qu.edu](http://qu.edu). Connect with Quinnipiac on Facebook and Instagram and follow Quinnipiac on X @QuinnipiacU.

## Local students named to Pacific University Dean's List

FOREST GROVE, Ore. — Chip Garrigan of Whitinsville has been named to the Fall 2025 Dean's List at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. The Dean's List recognizes undergraduate students in Pacific's College of Undergraduate Studies who earn a grade-point average of at least 3.70 and complete 12 or more graded hours.

Oregon's Opportunity University, Pacific University is Washington County, Oregon's only comprehensive university, offering over 50 undergraduate majors and 28 graduate and professional degrees. With over 175 years of helping students discover their purpose, Pacific inspires its 3,400 students to think, care, create, and pursue justice in the world. The No. 1 private research institution in the Northwest, Pacific serves its communities through campuses in Forest Grove and Hillsboro, healthcare clinics throughout the Portland area and through 34,000 alumni pursuing lives of purpose globally.

## Regis College students named to Dean's List

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

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

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

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

The university congratulates the following students on this significant achievement:

- Nikolas Hayes, of Whitinsville
- Haden Houatchanthara, of Whitinsville
- Raymond Johnson, of Douglas



Courtesy

Pictured is Michael Shain of Thanks To Yanks and Samantha Cesario of the Milford Town Library. Recently, the library sponsored a donation collection drive of new winter clothing, the items pictured will be given to local military families. Thanks To Yanks is a local charity that supports, veterans, those deployed and military families.

## Students named to Champlain College Dean's List

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

- Matthew O'Neill of Douglas
- Riley Plourde of Uxbridge

Founded in 1878, Champlain College is a small, not-for-profit, private college in Burlington, Vermont, with additional campuses in Montreal, Canada, and Dublin, Ireland. Champlain offers a residential undergraduate experience from its beautiful campus overlooking Lake Champlain. Additionally, Champlain College Online provides an expansive portfolio of online degrees and certificates, reaching students across all 50 states and U.S. territories, while fostering strategic partnerships with forward-thinking workforce organizations. The College is known for its distinctive and innovative approach to career-focused education and its Upside-Down Curriculum, which helps students be ready for work, ready for life, and ready to make a difference. Champlain is ranked as one of the "Best Colleges" by U.S. News & World Report for 2025, and was named one of the "Best 390 Colleges" by The Princeton Review for 2025, including among its "Best Northeastern colleges." For more information, visit [www.champlain.edu](http://www.champlain.edu).

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Courtesy

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

## Annual Eagle Scout Recognition Dinner celebrates achievements of young leaders

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

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

What it means to be an Eagle Scout

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

Eagle Scouts are recognized for their ability to set and achieve goals, their commitment to ethical and moral values, and their readiness to take on challenges. This rank is not only a testament to their past achievements but also a foundation for future success in their personal and professional lives.

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

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

Troop 101, Auburn  
Ames Alvarado

Troop 1, Groton  
James Esten, Timothy Yafrate

Troop 3, Groton  
Arthur Johnson, George woODS

Troop 106, Grafton  
Caden Cacciapouti, Austin McCormick

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

Troop 7219, Grafton  
Morgan Gervais, Kathryn Shultz

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

Troop 131, Sutton  
Benjamin Furno

Troop 243, Sutton  
Nathanael Furno, Austin Gaska

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

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

Troop 238, East Brookfield  
Noah Clark

Troop 273, Dudley  
Riley Lepage, Charles Rollins III

Troop 316, Douglas  
Justin Dooner

Troop 338, Charlton  
Daniel Harris, Zackery Kelleher, Adam a About Heart of New England Council, Scouting America Heart of New England Council is a 501(c)(3) organization that serves about 4,000 boys and girls in more than 60 communities in central Massachusetts. We provide the nation's foremost program that teaches young people character, leadership, and citizenship through fun and exciting adventures for the entire family. We foster a culture of diversity and inclusion that makes it enriching to participate, volunteer and work in the Scouting program. Visit [www.hnescouting.org](http://www.hnescouting.org) for more information.

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



Courtesy

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

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

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

The poetry contest invited students to reflect on Dr. King's enduring legacy of equality, justice, and nonviolence, asking how young people will use their voices to contin-

ue his dream. Entries were reviewed by the MLK Jr. Poetry Committee, a panel of educators, university students, and community members. Judging criteria included creativity, originality, style, and connection to the theme.

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

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

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

Rubin and Miranda

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

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

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

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# Bay Path announces second quarter honor roll

CHARLTON — Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School congratulates the following students who were named to the honor roll for the second quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

## Grade 12

High Honors: Addison Emily Aho, Adriana Nataly Alicea, Vincent Paul Bedard, Isabella Aria Bitar, Edward Stephen Blash, Dominic Dewayne Boyd, Aleah Claire Brink, Brianna Livia Brink, Emily Rose Casault, Lily Sabina Chartier, Frederick James Cierpich, Hunter Matthew Coombs, Emily Ann Corey, Valentina Ashley Culberson, Brody Lawrence Cunningham, Basil Oliver Doud, Jocelyn Elizabeth Evans, Jordan Mariah Ferreira, Jayla Marie Fowler, Nicholas Edward Jalbert, Samuel Arjun Kttredge, Nia Mya Laforest, Phoebe Alyson Lawendowski, Cullen Gregory MacLeod, Alexis Paige Moody, Liam Macrae Nicoll, Sebastian Alexander Nieuwenhoff, Matthew Thomas Obyrick, Mariah Lynn Pereira, Jacob Paul Pratt, Kayleigh Jean Ramm, Samantha Jeanne Raseigh, Jaxon Russell Sitko, Luke William Smolski, Anne Louise Turcotte

Honors: Bayleigh Alexis Abdella, Helena Rowan Adkins, Jacob John Archambault, Alexander Tyr Audunsson, Emma Theresa Baldyga, Rhianna Anne Balliet, Arianna Rose Belanger, Nathan Paul Bernard, David Betancur, Roger Joseph Bishop, Domnic Raymond Brodeur, Lucien Stephen Brodeur, Alissa Lynn Burlingame, Dimitri Anthony Burr, Mecheanise Monic Calo Resto, Liam Michael Carlson, Samuel Elia Ceppetelli, Charles Michael Congdon, Jacob William Creeron, Lorelie May Curboy, Connor Anthony Czechowski, Joseph Michael Daige, Samuel Richard Davis, Myiah Kiara DeLaRosa, Treyton Joseph Dery, Cody Daniel Dombroski, Max Andrew Domineck, Zenovia Irene Dupont, Yandel Feliciano, Yeleana Adelis Feliciano, Aliyah Marie Gonyea, Jocelynn Rose Gordon, Molly Elizabeth Grant, Isaiah Terrence Harris-Harrington, Sadie Lynn Hawley, Luke Robert Heller, Kolton Trevor Hemenway, Liam Wayne Hesselton, Hannah Jean Ingalls, Natalie Rose Ingles, Joshua William Irons, Christian Michael Johnson, Tabian Marschall Keegan, Ayden Matthew Kennedy, Cassie Lee Kotomski, Kristine Marie LaFlash, Marshall Thomas Lafond, Joel Carlos Landor, Jomar De Jesus Landor, Zachary Raymond Landry, Miranda Kate Linde, Nicolas Sebastian Londono, Matthew James Lopez, Michael Anthony Lulu, Philipos Anastasio Makrodimitras, Ava Rose Mastrototaro, Emily Jean McDonald, Madeline Beverly McDonald-Trimby, Felix Casey Menard, Alexis McGee Messina, Sebastian Luke Moniz, Chase Patrick Newman, Benjamin Francis Nocchi, Jeremiah Betsaleel Noel, Connor James O'Brien, Kelsey Lynn Olson, Cole Henry Paradis, Amari Audrey Pereira, Aiden Charles Perzanoski, Adam Jason Phaneuf, Jae Mia Prochnow, Taylor Lynn Richard, Nathan Alexander Rouille Montoya, Jordan Joyce Russell, Jorge Santiago, Sawyer Lyke Schultz, Brianne Marie Sentence, Alexander Charles Skladzien, Alexxis Lynne Spenard, Nathan Adam Steen, Gaiage Charles Thompson, Ashley Mikayla Tingle, Yandel Omar Torres, Thadaeus Boadi Tweneboa, Sebastian Paul Vargas, Ezekiel Velazquez, Natalie Helen Vigeant, Harley Ann Wilson Wadden, Ava Quiny Wall, Hunter Earl White, Trey Stephen Wilkin, Noah Williamson, Harrison Riley Wilson, Adrianna Marie Young

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## Grade 11

High Honors: Anais Annette Alamo-Abad, Lillian Lauren Araujo, Brett Julius Beltzer, Sagesse Mpolo Budimbu, Olivia Raychal Burgos, Clara Mae Burlingame, Michaela Sarah Carter, Jenna Lynne Cianci, Naomi Natania Cooper, Trinity Chevelle Crompton, Hunter William Defosse, Madisson Clara Drewry, Aria Faith Fournier, Brooke Nicole Fuller, Adrian Dariusz Golemo, Liam Reed Greenwood, Emma Grace Harrington,

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Honors: Trevory Riley Amaral, Kennadie Taylor Balcunas, Boden Richard Barrell, Samantha Mackenzie Belanger, Kayleigh Rose Bissell, Alexandria Helene Blanchard, Alyssa Rose Bonneville, Alexia Rose Brown, Bella Kristina Calnan, Dominic Francis Carofaniello, Evalynn Rose Cedillo, Dominic William Cincotta, Liam Zachary Colon, Madelyn Lily Creelman, Benjamin Jackson Cryan, Eric Murphy Day, Livia Cassandra Deluca, Nathan Stephen Donnelly, Brianna Nyarkoa Dwomoah, Molly Elizabeth Dwyer, Jackson Christopher Edwards, Ava Lila Erkok, Dylan Michael Filipkowski, Samantha Lynn Fleck, Ely Eric Gemboski, Emma Lynn Grensavtich, Julia Abigail Holton, Dominik Ignatovich, Vikram Kanchan Jha, Brady Nicholas Johnson, Owen John Kennedy, Alexander James Kowalski, Filip Tadeusz Kulma, Abena Kwartemaa Kwarteng, Benjamin Mitchell Labbe, Sangey Dawa Lama, Maximilian Thomas Lapriore, Evan Anthony Latuga, Bret Robert Leonard, Andrew Tadeusz Levitzky, Damon James Libby, Perry Khai Lima, James Dean Mack, Jared Thomas Magnusson, Emily Arlene Malia, Julie-Anna Marie Marchetti, Christopher Warren Martin, Finn McDaniel, Ava June McKellick, Jayden Anthony Minardi, Samantha Jean Morley, Miguel Angel Mosqueda, Nathaniel Thomas Munson, Kaiya Rowan Murphy, Thomas Andrew Nault, Daniel Anthony Nowlan, Elijah Ziarre Ofori, Jacey Okyere-Tawiah, Izabella Grace Paquin, Kiley Marie Paronto, Aylah Mae Patraw, Katie Ann Putnam, Sophia Morrigan Ramirez-Murphy, Ava Marie Rennie, Isabella Lynn Richard, Devin Matthew Robinson, Danie Roemer, Leilani Marie Rohena Torres, Trevor Anthony Rose, Isaiah Omar Santiago, Anthony Mark Savasta, Logan James Schoff, Ella Lammei Schofield, Michael Ryan Scott, Allison Marie Smith, Duane Caden Stephens, Eskil John Tranes, Kara Marie Trevarthan, Kyle Dennis Towmbly, Connor Patrick Welsh, Dashiell Robert Williams, Jazelle Gia Wolverson, Nico Anthony Yacavace, Payto Cailee Ziemski

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



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

“The luge is a high-speed physics lesson on gravity, acceleration, and aerody-

namics”, said EcoTarium President and CEO Noreen Smith. “With the help of the USA Olympic Luge Team and Norton I Saint-Gobain, visitors were able to experience the excitement of the sport and meet some of the athletes who inspire us all.”

“Partnerships like ours with Norton I Saint-Gobain help us expand how young people see science, technology, engineering, and math,” said Katie Chappell, Deputy Director of Museum Operations at the EcoTarium. “Working together with the USA

Luge team allows us to highlight the many ways STEM connects to real-world experiences like winter sports and the Olympics, while also introducing youth and families to career paths they may not have previously considered.”

“We’re incredibly excited to sponsor the Norton Luge Challenge with our partners at the EcoTarium and the USA Luge team. This event captures the creativity, teamwork, and engineering spirit behind winter sports, and it’s a fun way to share our enthu-

siasm as we look ahead to the upcoming Winter Games,” said Melanie Bonsu, Community Relations Manager, Saint-Gobain Abrasives.

The Norton Luge Challenge gave visitors the opportunity to try out the sport of luge under the expert guidance of the USA Luge Team international medalists and coaches. Participants used easy-to-manuever plastic sleds in a safe, slope-side setting. Helmets were provided to ensure a fun and safe experience for all. Adding to the high-energy

atmosphere, the USA Luge DJ kept the excitement going with upbeat music throughout the event.

During the Free Admission Day sponsored by Norton I Saint-Gobain, visitors also enjoyed full access to the museum’s interactive science exhibits, educational programming, and planetarium shows, making for an unforgettable day of learning about science, nature, and outer space.

#### About The EcoTarium

The EcoTarium is New England’s leading museum of science and nature, an indoor-outdoor experience dedicated to inspiring a passion for science and nature in visitors of all ages. Founded in 1825 as one of the oldest natural history museums in the country, the EcoTarium has been a leader in informal science and nature education for 200 years. Highlights of the 45-acre Worcester campus include the science center with three floors of interactive exhibits; Alden Planetarium; Science Discovery programs; extensive outdoor nature trails, wildlife zoo, and habitats; a seasonal railroad with the Worcester Railers Explorer Express Train; and an extensive outdoor play exhibit, Nature Explore®. The EcoTarium is located at 222 Harrington Way, Worcester, MA 01604. Parking is free, and Museum admission tickets

may be purchased online. The EcoTarium is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

#### About Saint-Gobain Abrasives

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

#### About USA Luge

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

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

WILL GENERATE SAVINGS OF ABOUT \$147 MILLION IN FIRST YEAR AND \$2.38 BILLION OVER 10 YEARS

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

House Docket 5554, An Act addressing energy costs, transparency, and sustainability, was recently filed by Representative Frost, Representative Berthiaume, Representative McKenna and Representative Marsi along with their Republican colleagues. It contains a series of reforms to address rising energy costs in Massachusetts including proposals to restructure the Mass Save program, allow older homeowners and renters to factor in a portion of their utility bills to determine their eligibility for the Senior Circuit Breaker tax

credit, and provide more cost transparency for consumers.

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

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

Marsi said, “I talk to constituents, residents, and businesses every day about

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

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

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

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

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

The bill also includes several proposed changes to the Mass Save program, which is an energy efficiency initiative funded by Massachusetts ratepayers through a monthly

surcharge on their gas and electric bills. The program’s three-year budget for 2025-2027 is currently set at \$4.5 billion.

Their bill caps Mass Save administrative spending at 10% of the total funds allocated for the program. It also limits spending on the program’s next three-year plan (running from 2028-2030) by prohibiting the budget from exceeding the cost of the 2022-2024 plan, plus 6.25%. As the 2022-2024 plan was funded at \$4 billion, the 2028-2030 plan cannot increase by more than \$250 million. This means that by 2030, the combined annual savings from the ACP returns, basic service changes, and the Mass Save spending reduction will produce an estimated \$396 million in ratepayer savings per year, or approximately \$2.38 billion in savings over 10 years.

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

Their legislation directs the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 2024, Jeremiah’s Inn served more than 32,000 individuals, a 30 percent increase

from the previous year and a 167 percent increase over the past two years. At the same time, the Worcester County Food Bank reduced food distributions to the pantry by 30 percent, creating a critical gap between supply and demand. Cornerstone Bank’s continued support ensures that children, seniors and families who rely on the Nutrition Center have access to essential meals and resources.

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

About Cornerstone Bank  
Cornerstone Bank was

formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank’s local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with opportunities through a broad range of deposit and loan products and services. Built on Trust is not just a tagline, but also one of our guiding corporate values. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone stands on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. To learn about Cornerstone Bank’s personal and business banking offerings, please visit [cornerstonebank.com](http://cornerstonebank.com) or call 800-939-9103.

## QCC receives \$148,000 for program to support adults with disabilities

WORCESTER — Quinsigamond Community College has received a \$148,993 grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to support its Massachusetts Inclusive Postsecondary Education (MAIPSE) program. MAIPSE programs provide adults with significant disabilities, ages 18 to 22, with integrated access to higher education.

QCC’s MAIPSE program provides resources to students, including textbooks, laptops and peer support. Peer mentors assist with classroom navigation, social engagement and completing coursework assignments. The funding also supports presentations and speakers on topics such as neurodiversity.

“This investment benefits students in the program, but also the campus community because we are all receiving education about disabilities,” said Director of Student Accessibility Services & Assistive Technology Kristen Proctor. “Community colleges are perfect for MAIPSE because having all students belonging and learning together parallels the mission of QCC and embeds inclusion into the fabric of the college.”

After partnering with seven local schools for referrals, the MAIPSE program has grown to more than 20 students, with signs of continued growth and demand, according to Proctor.

“Sometimes, you don’t know when you have assumptions and biases about students who have more significant disabilities. This program helps people understand that the limitations we put on people might not be needed,” said Student Accessibility Services Coordinator Cassandra Estey.

Many students in the MAIPSE program have been in self-contained classrooms throughout the majority of their lives. Being in a QCC classroom offers an integrated setting and room for growth. Staff who work with MAIPSE students have noticed an increase in their communication skills, especially when interacting with non-disabled adults in the community. Estey noted that these interactions can improve the communication skills of non-disabled adults as well, especially those coming directly from high school.

Estey has witnessed several students find success after the MAIPSE program, by enrolling at QCC as fully matriculated students or going on to obtain employment in areas they might not have considered before completing the program. One such student gained employment at Assabet Valley Collaborative after gaining interest and skills from a psychology course.

For more information on QCC’s MAIPSE program, visit [www.QCC.edu/support/specialized-support/student-accessibility-services](http://www.QCC.edu/support/specialized-support/student-accessibility-services).

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## LOVE

continued from page A1

and Valentine’s Day. Attendees will be treated to exclusive tours of the Mansion, and the Millbury Historical Society will also be open for guests to explore, adding depth and discovery to the evening’s experience.  
Designed for couples, friends, and history enthusiasts alike, Love, Lace & Legacy offers a

## FORMAL

continued from page A1

the Freaks!”  
Uniting horror enthusiasts and those with a taste for the macabre, this event offers a unique, entertaining, and light-hearted experience for attendees to revel in the delight of the unconventional.  
Event Details:  
Date: Saturday, Feb. 14

fresh and meaningful alternative to traditional Valentine’s celebrations, in a unique atmosphere.  
“Esther Howland’s legacy reminds us that love, creativity, and entrepreneurship have always gone hand in hand. Events like Love, Lace & Legacy allow us to connect the past with the present, creating meaningful moments guests will carry with them long after the evening ends,” said Traci Parath, Executive Director, Asa

Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: DoubleTree Hotel, Milford  
Ages: 18 and up  
Entertainment Highlights:  
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Ticket Information:  
Ticket information for Freak Formal 2026 can be purchased at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/freak-formal-event-presented-by-new-england-legends-tickets-1980103869978>.  
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# Bay Path nurse and educator honored at UMass Chan Medical School's 38th Annual MLK Jr. Tribute

WORCESTER — UMass Chan Medical School held its 38th annual tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jan. 26, celebrating the intersection of healthcare, service, and social justice. The virtual ceremony was highlighted by the recognition of Elizabeth Mirkuaa Lartey, an alumna and dedicated Bay Path Practical

Nursing Academy educator, and UMass Chan doctoral student, as a recipient of the 2026 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Student Service Recognition Award.

Lartey, a resident of Worcester and a second-year Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student at the Tan Chingfen Graduate School of

Nursing, was selected from a record-breaking pool of nominees. The award recognizes students whose community-focused projects and clinical dedication significantly advance health equity and justice in the Worcester area.

“Elizabeth’s work truly stood out for its dedication, impact, and commitment to health equity,”

the Service Subcommittee noted during the selection process. “Her efforts honor the enduring legacy of Dr. King by advancing justice through service to others.”

A career rooted in community and care

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



Elizabeth Mirkuaa

Flotte presented the service awards, emphasizing the school’s commitment to Dr. King’s vision of a «Beloved Community.»

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

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

Ceremony highlights

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

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## Samaritan's Purse celebrates 12.2 million Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts

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

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

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

For many children, a shoebox gift is the first gift they have ever received. Each one is a tangible expression of God’s love, offering hope to children facing war, poverty, disease and disaster. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 244 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories.

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

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

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

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